ETHNOSYMBOLISM AND NATIONALISM:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NAGA AND MIZO NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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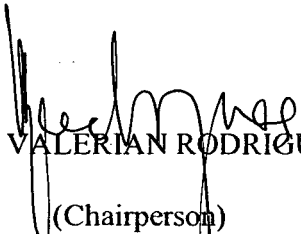2008
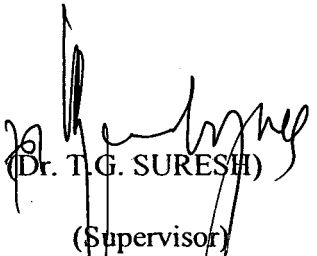
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It is certified that the dissertation entitled "Ethno-Symbolism and nationalism: A Comparative Study of Naga and Mizo Nationalist Movement" submitted by Ms. Kaini Lokho is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this university. This dissertation is original and has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of any other university. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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For my Mother

Contents

Acknowledgement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The study of nations and nationalism is a very broad and an important scholarship in the event of today's highly advanced and globalizing World. Much of the study has been around the concept and formation of nations and in terms of state formation which in actuality has given us nothing much in the understanding of the ethnic conflict and issues of ethnicity around the world. The difference of understanding among the competing definitions namely, primordialist/ perennialists, modernists, instrumentalists and Anthony D. Smith's ethnosymbolic approach as 'the continuity of pre-modern and modern form of social cohesion'[1] has not successfully shed light to this problem so far. Anthony D. Smith defines a 'nation' as a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members. In this approach he identifies the main components of nation building and nationalism in the myth, symbols, values and culture of the particular nation. Daniele Conversi and the modernists have criticized this aspect of Anthony D. Smith's argument that nations and nationalism are modern phenomena and the ethno-symbolic approach is too vague. Nevertheless, the usage of myths and historical events have never been far away from the nationalist project and therefore, it cannot be simply termed as an elitist power project because that would restrict important areas of nationalism and the strivings of ethnicity.

The modernists argument like that of Gellner, Hobsbawm and Kedourie have stressed that nations are constructed for 'industrial homogenization' or to perpetuate common economy building or that it was a construction by 'social engineers' who wants to gain power from it by arousing the masses, in order to validate their rule. This is true and Smith does not deny this position but to him it is hardly possible to create ethnicity, though there is a possibility of it been manipulated and abused in many ways.[2] On the other hand, it is also true for the minorities and native population of a country that the

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[1] Daniele Conversi, *Ethnosymbolism in the contemporary world: Walker Connor and the study of Nationalism*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2004.)
[2] *Ibid.* pp.

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concept of nationhood or the notion of living free people is embedded deeply into their myths, values, symbols, traditions and culture handed down through generations both orally and in written form. The songs about great forefathers and their legendary heroism have always been part of every society and culture and in the process of nation building this is resurrected to reach out to the people for patriotism and mass appeal. John Hutchinson, a sociological Historian whose pioneering work on cultural nationalism has greatly sufficed the argument of the ethno symbolic approach "draws three conclusions from his analysis. The first one is the importance of historical memory in the formations of nations, second, that there are usually competing definitions of the nation and their competition is resolved by trial and error during interaction with other communities. The third is the centrality of cultural symbols to group creation, which are only significant because 'of their power to convey an attachment to a specific historical identity'.[3]

The spread of Christianity and the idea of ' chosenness' and 'the promised land' in the Bible also contributed much in the formation of nations and nationalism, it shows the land and sites that sacred to a particular group of people create the ethnoscape of national territory and national frontiers. Historian Adrian Hastings cited a clear example of this, in the fourteenth century English national sentiment written by a leading ecclesiastical writer Aelfric when he translated The Book Of Judith, "it is set down to English in our manner, as an example to you people that you should defend your land against the inviting army with weapons".[4]

ETHNOSYMBOLIC APPROACH

A discourse on nations and nationalism and ethnicity gives us with plentiful of theories, paradigms, perspectives and approaches. From which exact moment or date had borne the origin and concept of nationalism and nations is unknown and the scholarly debates on this issue has drowned itself in the variegated definitions without much of a success and

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[3] John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the creation of Irish Nation State*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987) pp. It was also cited in Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of Nations and Nationalism*, (London: Routledge, 1998) pp.
[4] *Ibid*.pp

2

agreement between themselves. It was arguably said to have originated in the seventeenth century with the rebellion of British monarchy,[5] with the French Revolution and its fight for rights and freedom which stands as pillars of modernity or modern political system[6] while others like Kedourie saw Nationalism as the work of German intellectuals. Though Nationalism has not exactly remained true to these assumptions of origin, does not mean that it has become obsolete in then academic arena today. In fact more discussions have been seen in the 20th and 21st century than ever before and the revival of nationalism and consequently, nationalist movements have become more visible. The conflicts around the world from the highly developed to the underdeveloped countries are good examples of this. Ethnic conflicts or conflicts of intolerance towards people of different race or appearances are erupting from various part of the world. As a result there has been a resurgence of renewed allegiance towards the mother country. There has been tremendous work for the understanding of this kind of problem and the most important contribution in this particular area is of Anthony D. Smith's ethno symbolic approach. Smith takes into discussion the various theories of Nationalism. He takes upon the theories of Gellner, Hobsbawm, Walker Connor, Benedict Anderson etc. whose works on the subject has changed the scholarship of 'nations and nationalism'. He categorises their perspectives into four parts, they are primordialists, perennialists, instrumentalists, modernists and within these larger cross-disciplinary context he places his ethno symbolic approach. It is a very important approach where he critiques the main existing theories as well as putting forward a synthesis all the main theories of Nationalism and it could shed light to the scholarship which is 'protean' and variegated as Nationalism and Ethnicity.

Primordialism contends that ethnies are primordial, givens of the human conditions. It believes in the 'essence' of a group or ethnies (ethnic community). According to Paul Brass, primordialist argue that every person carries 'life' attachments derived from the place of birth, kinship, relationship, religion, language and social practices that are 'natural' for him, 'spiritual in character, and that provide a basis for 'affinity with other

[5] Kohn (1944), Greenfield (1991.1992) cited in Craig Calhoun, Nationalism and Ethnicity, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1993, 19: 211-239.
[6] Anthony D. Smith talks about this in the rise of classical modernism in his book, (1998) pp.

peoples from the same background.[7] Perrenialism, on the other hand postulates that nations are immemorial and existing through time. They are the basic communities as fundamental elements of historical phemomena. Another version of perrenialism also views that in most periods of time nations are continuosly formed and dissolved, on the other basis of pre-existing ethnic ties.[8] The opposite end of primordialism and perrenialism is the modernist approach where it says that nations are a modern phenomenon and recent. Modernist like Ernest Gellner focuses nationalism to the 'uneven growth of global modernization.[9] For Gellner, nationalism is an outcome of the resurgence of language and culture because of the uneven development which had led traditional forms of communities to uproot from their place of origin to the urban settings. Therefore, for him nations are not necessarily an enough ground for the creation of nationalist movements or nationalism. To quote him, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does not need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if, as indicated, these are purely negative". Some modernists even say that nations are invented or imagined by the groups for their own interest. Benedict Anderson argues about this in his book, 'Imagined Communities' and which Eric Hobsbawm term it as 'invention of tradition'. Ethno symbolism challenges these perspectives and argues that though the nation maybe a modern construct, they are not fully isolated from the past and the 'collective memories' as interpreted by modern intelligentsias are memories and symbols handed down through generations. It also explores the use of mythologies, symbols and its meanings and even traditions which all the other models of nations and nationalism have pushed aside as unimportant.

A nation, to Smith is inhabited by a "named human population sharing and occupying a historic territory, shared common myths and memories, a distinctive public culture, a common economy and common laws and customs" and ethnies (an ethnic community) is

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[7] Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, (New Delhi: Sage publishing India ltd. 1991) pp.

[8] Anthony D. Smith, Culture and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism, *International Affairs(Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, vol. 72 no.3, Ethnicity and International relations(Jul.,1996) pp.445-458

[9] Anthony D. Smith discuses this in the 2nd chapter of his book "Nationalism and Modernism: a critical survey of recent theories on nations and nationalism.

"a human population with shared myths of ancestry, common historical memories, one or more elements of culture, a link with territory, and a measure of solidarity, at least among elites". In this vein, it takes into consideration of both modernists and instrumentalist argument and primordialists or perennialists take on nations and nationalism. The works of sociobiological perspectives[10] of Peirre van den Berghe and the cultural primordialism of Clifford Geertz are part of this approach as much as the less radical modernists like Walker Connor, Donald Horowitz and instrumentalist like Paul Brass. As Smith intended his approach tries to 'envisage a combinations of elements from the main paradigms in the field, which in turn may generate some fruitful historical and comparative research programmes for the elucidation of the most vexed issues in the field''. Therefore, ethno symbolic approach can be seen as a synthesis of larger socio-political modern and perennialists/ primordialists views of nation.

KEY CONCERNS OF ETHNO SYMBOLIC APPROACH

Ethno symbolism is an approach in the study of nations and nationalism which is synonymous with Anthony D. Smith. This approach underpins myth, memory, symbols, values and traditions of a community, group or ethnie as the main components of patriotism and identity. Daniele Conversi terms it as the continuity of pre-modern and modern form of social cohesion without overlooking the changes brought about by modernity.[11] Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson sums it up as an opposition to the modernist underpinning of constructivist and instrumentalist theories of nations and cussing about this approach, first is the power is myth, memories, traditions and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular past living has been, and can be rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern intelligentsias. It is from these elements of myths, memory, symbol and tradition that modern national identities are reconstituted in each generation, as the nation becomes more inclusive and its members cope with new

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[10] It is a hybrid approach of both primordialism and instrumentalism

[11] Daniele Conversi, in Steven,Grosby, Elliot, Athena S. Leoussi and Net. Library Inc. (eds).*Nations and Ethno symbolism, History, Culture and ethnicity in the formation of nations,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2007) pp.21.

challenges".[12] He makes clear of certain concerns when discussing about this approach, first is the conceptual understanding of the approach. Anthony D. Smith stresses that Ethno symbolism is an approach and it should not be mistaken for a theory because of the protean nature nationalism, which he insists in his books and his reply to Dr. Ozkirimli critique of ethno symbolism approach. Secondly, ethnic conflicts have continued to affect different areas in various part of the world and there are some regions where conflicts of this kind have a tendency to erupt due to the multicultural environment despite the fact that there's no dearth of ways the experts have come up to contain the conflicts. Ethno symbolism argues that it could be of help to "explain which populations are likely to rise to a nationalist movement under certain [circumstances] and conditions and what the content of their nationalism is likely to be".[13]   Thirdly, according to him this approach emphasizes the importance of myths, memories, values and symbols of the *ethnies* or ethnic communities which modernist theories does not contribute. For him, Nationalism very often involves the pursuit of symbolic goals – education in a language, having your own language TV channel, the preservation of ancient sacred sites like the mosques at Ayodhya or the Wailing Wall area, the right to worship in one's own way, have one's own courts, schools and press, wear particular costume, and so on – goals which often bring protest and bloodshed, based as they are on popular memories, symbols and myths.[14] Fourthly, ethno symbolic approach asked an important question i.e., why do people respond to popular appeals which may not even benefit them materially? There is not a simple answer as to why this happens when we look into certain movements like the Scottish Nationalist movement or the nearest example on the home front, the Naga Nationalist movement which continue to persist. The answer or lets call it a practiced assumption of the scholars on these particular issues, by referring to it as merely a political problem or state breakdown, seems to be quite misleading and contrary to what is really happening in this places. Of course, this does not mean there is no truth or it is baseless an argument but the point here being, more complex and it involves other variables like historical memories and culture. There is also politicization of real and

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[12] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*, (London: Routledge, 1998).
[13] Anthony D. Smith and Ernest Gellner, The Warwick Debates, *Nations and Nationalism*, (University of Warwick, 1995).
[14]

important issues by the local politicians which has taken away the essence of the struggle and misled the resolution process. It is a definite play of elitist project for their interest. Smith takes into account of these characteristics of nationalism quite plainly and he does not deny the importance of role among the elites in the nationalist agenda which they are crucial 'in selecting cultural existing repertoire of ethnic symbols, myths and memories if they are to mobilize "the people"'.[15] Elitist project or not, the question is why does people still support it? This way, ethno symbolic approach could prove to be beneficial for the understanding of what Tom Nairn would call 'vernacular mobilization of the masses.[16]

Brief introduction of the chapters

'Nationalism' is one of the most potent terms which gives way to intense emotion from people and within this concept presents different contestations. Various paradigms and approaches have been conceived from the 'nation' being a 'construct' of the elites for political power to the 'nation' as a 'primordial', 'given' entity which is time 'immemorial'. Among these variegated perspectives, the most recent approach which has gained ground in politics, ethnicity and ethnic conflict studies is ethno-symbolism. Ethno-symbolism explores the use of mythologies, symbols and memories of the past in the formation of a 'nation'. It has a number of concerns; firstly, it is "to move away from the exclusively elite-oriented kinds of analysis characteristic of modernism. Secondly, ethno-symbolism is not 'one-way relationship', "the non-elites, partly through their cultural traditions and partly in consequence of their vernacular mobilization, influence, influence the intelligentsia, political leaders and bourgeoisie, by constraining their innovations within certain cultural parameters and by providing motifs and personnel for their cultural projects and political goals".[17] Ethno-symbolic approach is an important tool for the understanding of ethnic conflicts and ethno-nationalisms as they use symbol, myths and

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[15] Anthony D. Smith, The poverty of anti-nationalist modernism, *Nations and Nationalism*, (9(13), (2003) pp.357-370.
[16] Anthony D. Smith, the origins of life, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (1989)
[17] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge, UK; Polity press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2001) pp.57

memories to validate the pursuit of self determination. According to Anthony D. Smith, ethno-symbolism "focuses on the subjective elements in the persistence of *ethnies*, the formation of nations and the impact of nationalism". Though this does not mean the objective factors are excluded or ignored, he says, "only it gives more weight to subjective elements of memory, value, sentiment, myth and symbol, and that is thereby seeks to enter and understand the 'inner worlds' of ethnicity and nationalism".[18]

At the very core of ethno-symbolic approach is Ethnicity which plays an important part in the formation of nations, nationalism and even patriotism. Walker Connor distinguishes nationalism and patriotism as two 'distinctive loyalties' where nationalism is loyalty to "one's nation" and patriotism as loyalty to "one's state (country) and institutions" although that this difference can be of little importance where "people have an ethnically homogeneous nation-state and having cultural and political preeminence in a state" despite the presence of other ethnic groups with significant numbers. "For such people, he says, "the two loyalties tend to blur into a seamless whole".[19] As argued by political theorists, ethnicity may be a recently termed entity but it has a huge and phenomenal effect in the politics of the world. The effect could be of a positive or a negative nature. Unfortunately people who are ethnically identified often tend to be associated with ethno-nationalist movement and ethnic related conflicts all over the world. However, experts are of the view that there is 'no necessary connection between ethnicity and conflict' apart from some few isolated cases. As a matter of fact different ethnic groups and communities may relate to each other on this basis and are often peaceful and co-operative.[20] Meanwhile, ethnicity can also be a source of conflict when groups become assertive and culturally driven. Donald Horowitz makes a strong case of this and he says that ' the basis for conflict exists in the inclusion of two or more ethnic communities within a territorial state'.[21]

Within this understanding of ethno-symbolism, the chapter will focus on the play of

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[18] *Ibid*. pp.57

[19] John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Oxford Reader: Ethnicity*(Great Clarendon Street, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1996) pp.69

[20] This particular point is discussed in the introduction. *Ibid*. pp.1

[21] *Ibid*. pp.7

myths, memories and role of church in Naga Nationalism and Mizo Movement. The first chapter deals with question of Naga Nationalism. Naga nationalism is one longest running ethno-national movement and as old as the Independent India. Naga Nationalism has shown much determination and resilience in the face of constant battle with the military might of India. Social scientists and analysts are baffled with questions of this durability, of how this tiny land in the corner of the North East could have made this far. The first chapter therefore, tries to determine whys and hows of this perplexing Nationalist movement. It will give special focus to the concept of ethno-symbolism and the use of ethnic symbols like Myth of Origin, Shared customs, shared common ancestry, headhunting and the role of religion or the church. The resilient nature of this movement is to be found in the use of Mythological events through story telling and songs, which still remains active in the Naga Society today.

The Mizo Nationalist Movement, though defunct and no longer existing, will be taken up as a second chapter. Here the Mizo Movement will serve as a background for the investigation of the first chapter. It is quite interesting to look at the two movements, with the Mizo movement peacefully resolved despite the fact that it came later to the Naga movement. Comparing the two movements against each other will let you see how similar the movements are to each other except for the fact that one is over and the other is still continuing. The resilience of the Naga nationalist can be impressive in this scenario.

The third chapter is titled Comparative analysis of the case studies (Naga Nationalist Movement and Mizo Nationalist Movement. As the title itself is self explanatory, this chapter takes into consideration the two historical backgrounds, the nature of the Movement and the role of the history, myths and legends and how they are used in the movement.

Chapter 1

SYMBOLISM AND THE NAGA NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

For more than fifty years, the North Eastern part of India has been a corner of political discontent and cause of huge concern for the Government of India as well as the people living in those areas. One of the foremost rebellions is the Naga Nationalist Movement now led by NSCN-IM (Isak-Muivah) along with other faction groups like NSCN-K (Khaplang) and most recently NSCN-U (Unification). Among these factions, the NSCN-IM group is the most popular and known entity in the Movement, to the locals as well as to the world. Therefore, this chapter will concentrate on how this group formulates its campaign using the symbolic identifications found in the Naga society and if there is a question of invented tradition what are they and how are they used.

1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NAGAS

The Nagas or the Naga people inhabits the mountainous region of the North East between Upper Assam (from Brahmaputra) and the Northern Burma (to Chindwin), along the Patkai Hills both Southwest and Northwest.[1] The Nagalim or the Naga country lies ' within 23.5 N and 28 N lines of Latitude and 93 E and 97 E Longitude forming a sort of pine cone pointed at South East of China'.[2] "It is a compact area of 120,000 sq. km of the Patkai range and a tri-junction of China, India and Burma".[3] The official website and manual of the Naga Socialist Council of introduces, "Nagalim, without the knowledge and the consent of the Naga people was Nagalim borrows the Ethnographic account of the renowned Historian J. Hutton apportioned between India and Burma after their respective declaration of independence. The part which India claims is subdivided and

[1] Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the future*(New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt.Ltd., 1986) pp.1 .
[2] Quoted in Imchen, Shared Symbols and cross-cultural Communications: The Nagas, *Indian Horizons*, Vol.48, No. 3, Special Issue, 2001) pp.47
[3] V. Sumi and K. Timothy, *Cry for Justice* (NSCN-IM: Ministry of information and publicity, GRPN, 1997) pp. 6-7

placed under four administrative units, viz, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland states. The Eastern part which Myanmar claims is placed under two administrative units, Viz, Kachin state and Sagaing Division (formerly known as the Naga Hills). Nagalim, however, transcends all these arbitrary demarcations of boundary".[4] Mills defines the area inhabited by the Naga Tribes as bounded by Hukwang valley in the North East, the plains of the Brahmaputra valley in the North West, Cachar in the South-West and the Chindwin River in the South-East. Manipur Valley roughly marks the point of contact between the Naga tribes and the very much closely inter-related group of Kuki tribes.[5]

The origin and meaning of the term 'Naga' is not exactly known and highly debated among scholars but there are two distinct theories of origination. The first theory believes that the term derived its meaning from the Burmese word 'NAKA' which means ' people with perforated ears or pierced ears'. However, there is a proven truth in this argument because it is a widely prevalent social practice among the Nagas to pierce their ears, whether it is a male child or a female child, not long after their birth. It is an important practice which is considered an initiation to the socio-political arena of the society, especially for the boys around the age of eight and twelve years, supposedly on the verge of manhood.[6] According to V. Sumi and K. Timothy, the reason behind the nomenclature of the people living in this place is supposedly because of their distinct features. It was believed that they were "given this [name NAKA] while they were passing through the Myanmar territory during the migratory stages". The second theory connects the 'nomenclature to the people of Assam who were the first to come in contact with the Nagas. Since the Nagas does not have a tradition of written history, the earliest knowledge of these tribal people could only be found in the historical accounts of Ahoms or Assam. The word Naga in Assamese is 'Noga' which means naked. This apparently attributed to the physical appearance of the people.

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[4] Also quoted in Sanjib Baruah, *Durable disorder: Understanding the Politics of the NE* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp.99-100
[5] J. Hutton in Mills, J.P, *The Lhota Naga* (London: 1922) pp.XVI
[6] Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the Future* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1986) pp.3

The Nagas are mostly identified as traditional headhunters belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family and the first stage of migration from the North-West of China, although these are [conjectures] and not conclusive facts.[7] According to the Chinese accounts, the Nagas lived in the North-west China during the 3rd Millenium B.C and its ancestors were part of the Chiang Dynasty who had flown from the hostile environment of the Shang Dynasty to the north-eastern Tibet. From there they migrated to the upper Myanmar ' then moved to Irrawady valley, the Malay and the Indonesian Peninsula. From there they turn North ward and entered their present habitat through the Thwangthut area and some tracks of the Patkai range of the Arakan Yoma. The biggest Naga group took residence at 'Makhr[ai]' or 'Makhel'.[8] With this notion, it is naturally assumed that Nagas are a single homogenous entity or family with shared past and socio-cultural traditions. This is the basic make-up of the Naga ethnic identity and one of the reasons closely tied to the struggle for self-determination or autonomy. The Naga Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) recognizes the Naga Tribe as consisting of about three and half Million population with 38 or more sub-tribes namely:

1. Aimol 11. Khiamungam 21. Makhori 31. Poumai

2. Anal 12. Koireng 22. Mao 32. Rengma

3. Ao 13. Kom 23. Maram 33. Tangkhul

4. Angami 14. Konyak 24. Sangtam 34. Tarao

5. Chakhesang 15. Maring 25 . Sumi 35. Thangal

6. Chang 16. Mayon 26. Tangsa 36. Tikhir

7. Cheril 17. Monshang 27. Nocte 37. Yimchunger

8. Chiru 18. Lainung 28. Pangme 38. Zeliangrong (Zeme,

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[7] *Ibid.* pp. 5
[8] V. Sumi and K. Timothy, *Cry for Justice* (NSCN-IM: Ministry of information and publicity, GRPN, 1997) pp. 9

9. Chothe 19. Lamkang 29. Pochuri Liangmai, Rongmei

10. Kharam 20. Lotha 30. Phom and Puimei.

The political initiation of the Nagas dates back to early 1918 although some argue that is quite recent as the late 1920's. According M. Horam, the general dissatisfaction over the British colonial power led to the manifestation of some form of nationalism. This was possible because of the Nagas who went to France with the Labour Corps during the First World War and came back with new awareness of what the western World was fighting for and the change that was taking place. He says that the first ' Naga Club' was organized as early as 1918 by the few educated Nagas preparing themselves in the event of India's Independence. It was "the political future of the [Naga] Homeland" which was their chief concern, thereby the formation of the club.[9]

The ' Naga club' sealed its political future officially when they submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission on January 10th, 1929 when the Statutory Commission led by Sir. John Simon along with Mr. Clement Attlee visited Kohima. The memorandum made it clear that the Nagas cannot accept the inclusion of the Hills which they inhabit to the Reform Scheme of India without knowledge and the consent of the concern people. It read that "before the British Government conquered our country in the 1879-80, we were living in a state of intermittent warfare with the Assamese of the Assam valley to the north and west of our country and Manipur to the south. They never conquered us, nor were we ever subjected to their rule..." They also highlighted the lack of education and the fear of cultural undermining and suppressed representation of their voice from the 'plain districts of the Province'. "Our country is poor, it does not pay its administration. Therefore, if it is placed under the Reformed Scheme of India, we are afraid that new heavy taxes will have to be sold and in the long run we shall have no share in the land of our birth and life will not be worth living then".[10]

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[9] M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The Last Thirty Years* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1988) pp.37
[10] *Ibid.* pp. 38-39. It is also quoted in R. Upadhyay, Nagaland Insurgency: A confusion of War and Peace!, Paper no. 1256, *South Asia Analysis Group,* 17 January, 2005

The Nagas lived mostly in the secluded environment induced by themselves due to survival reasons and security of the village. There was no one outside contact apart from occasional trade with Burma and the Ahoms until the British conquered the north eastern region which is now known as India and the signing of the Yandabao Treaty on February the 24th 1826 with Burma that the war came to an end and there emerged a new socio-political scenario. With the treaty, the British took over the whole region and administered the Naga inhabited area too. There was a massive land grab for commercial purposes which led to the direct confrontation with the Nagas whose main source of food was gathered from jungles. It was accounted that "there were ten violent punitive expeditions against the Nagas between 1835 and 1851. After a period of relative quiet, there was an uprising by Angami Nagas in 1879, when they seized the British military base in Kohima, leading to the last major military encounter". [11]

1.2 THE INDO-NAGA CONFLICT

Since India's independence from the British rule, it has been more than a half century of ethno- political conflict for one of the world's largest democracy. India has been faced with insurgency and nationalism from within, a phenomenon afflicting all across the country and which is still an ongoing process. Amongst the nationalist struggles, the Naga Nationalist movement is one of the longest running struggles for independence from India. Sanjib Baruah, one of the foremost scholar and expert on the North-East India comments Naga Struggle as one of the world's least known longest running and bloody armed-conflicts that has cost thousands of lives. [12] After five decades of face-off between the Nagas and the Government of India, there are number of areas which need to be put into consideration in order to understand and resolve this kind of conflict. This chapter focuses on the kind of mechanism that pushes the movement and symbols, myths and memories used to reinforce and further the nationalist movement. A peak into the history of the Naga Nationalist Movement shows how symbols, myths of origin and memories of atrocities done to the people have considerably prolonged the lifespan of the movement

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[11]cited in Sanjib Baruah, *Durable disorder: Understanding the Politics of the NE* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp.104

[12] Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the politics of the North East* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp.98

and it is retrieved again and again by the leaders and remembered by the people. Although it cannot be in anyway justified of the things which were considerably violations of human rights by the Indian army posted in the areas over the years and it would also, be a crucial point to note that sometimes it has been provoked by the underground nationalist organization operating there.

1.3 SYMBOLIC IDENTIFICATION IN THE NAGA NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The identity of the Naga people are often stereotyped as backward traditional headhunting tribe to the outsider. In the recent years Nagas are now identified as rebels or people who are fighting for independence from India. Quite often people's reaction in this kind of situation tends to be a process of breaking down the obvious or stereotypical identification but when political repercussions are inevitable, they are sometimes used to strengthen the unity of the people. In this event, invention of tradition or 'invented traditions' becomes a crucial part of the nation building mechanism. Eric Hobsbawm writes on how traditions are used to appeal the masses. He defines " 'Invented tradition' as a mean set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past".[13] This is possibly true considering how modernity has given a push to the formation of various kinds of nationalism. In the case of Naga Nationalism despite the existence of different tribes the nationalist movement has pushed forward the idea of homogenised Nagas as one big family. This rhetoric could be found almost in all literature and pamphlets published by Naga nationalist movement consisting of two or three factions. According to Sumi and Timothy of the GPRN, "Nagas belong to a single homogeneous family and shared basic and cultural traits yet it is also true that over the centuries many factors had come into play to make one region, community, etc; a little different from the other geographical isolation, and head-hunting practices, external influence, internal

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[13]Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) pp. 1-2. It also referred in Anthony D. Smith (1999).

innovations and adaptation to their respective natural environments are some of the major factors which had brought about marginal variations among the various Naga Communities". The next paragraph clearly shows the deliberate appeal of how memories about the past goodness are used to support the delicate political structure of Naga Nationalism. They go on to say, "However, besides so many basic characteristics commonly shared by them, the Nagas have collectively inherited the sublime values of life, viz., honesty, self reliance, simplicity, hospitality and hard working". Also with the apparent underlying implication like, "other noteworthy features that need mentioning here are that of the institutions of 'socialism' and 'democracy' that exist in their purest forms among the Nagas" is meant to appeal to the public in order to forward their organization's activity. This is simply meant to legitimize and promote themselves as trustworthy, thereby creating new symbolic identities such as sincerity and integrity to validate the movement which relies heavily on public patronage. Although, this is true it does not necessarily mean that traditions are pure invention or be misled to think that traditions are mere invention of the leaders to further the Nationalist agenda. There are various indications of these characteristics on studies conducted by the western anthropologists like Verrier Elwin, Fiirer Hamendorf and J. Hutton. Fiirer Hamendorf describes this hard work and self reliance in the following paragraph,

Popular opinion was inclined to imagine the Nagas as a fierce and war-like, continuously occupied with head hunting, human sacrifice and other exciting customs. But this picture had very little in common with reality. The Naga is first and foremost agriculturalist. Nine tenths of his thoughts and his life are devoted to his fields, and the things that mean most to him are the state of his crops, weather at harvest time, and the number of rice baskets in his granaries. Those who see him only in his village can neither really know him, nor understand the complicated social organisation that attains its full expression in the daily work of the fields; and they will find it hard to realize enormous amount of work accomplished by men, women and children, at certain times of the year.[14]

Preserving and reviving one's culture and tradition cannot be castigated to this understanding either because 'culture is a historical process, the continuity of which is maintained through transmission by the process of learning from one generation to

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[14] Christoph Von Fiirer Hamendorf , *Return to the Naked Nagas*, (London: John Murray, 50 Albermarle Street, 1976) pp. 82

another.[15] However, there are various cultural variables from which new traditions were also created.

a) THE MYTH OF ORIGIN:

(i) Shared common ancestry

According to Anthony D. Smith there are six main features which makes an *ethnie* or ethnic community, they are:

1. a common name
2. a common ancestry or myth of a common ancestry
3. shared historical memories
4. one or more elements of common culture
5. a link with homeland which does not have to be necessarily a physical occupation and
6. a sense of solidarity among the people of particular group.

As in other nationalism the origin of the Nagas have also been a constant source of debate among researchers and the "idea of vagueness which surrounds the etymon of the word "naga" is shown clearly in a passage from W. A. Robinson book. According to him, " the origin of the word Naga is unknown, but it has been supposed by some to have been derived from the Sanskrit...and applied in derision to the people, from the paucity of their clothing but there seems little foundation for this etymological derivations the term has never been to be applied by the Bengalees to either Khasis or Garos, with whom they were far better acquinted than the Nagas; and besides, the Garos specially are habitually accustomed to a greater degree of nudity than any of the Naga tribes with whom we are acquainted".[16]

There are significantly four points of origin in Naga history though some argue as having at least seven traditions. According to Angeline Lotsiiro, there are seven traditions or

[15]V. Sumi and K. Timothy, *Cry for Justice* (NSCN-IM: Ministry of information and publicity, GRPN,1997) pp.12

[16] M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency : The Last Thirty Years* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1988) pp.4

points of origin; they are the Kezhakenoma Tradition, the Makhel / Mao Tradition, the Lotha Tradition, the Rengma Tradition, the Tangkhul Tradition, the Ao Tradition and the Maram Tradition. Other scholars like Horam and C.L. Imchen talks about about three to four points of origin. C. L Imchen recognizes at least four places of 'origin' with the existence of brine springs namely, Chungliyimti (Ao), Makhel (of several Naga Tribes), Changsang (Chang),Khimupu (Yimchunger) which were located in the confines of the 'place of origin'. According to him, this, in a way symbolized the 'mythical guise' of social groups of their clans which formed the basic foundation of 'social life pattern' before the advent of Christianity among the Nagas. "This mythical core extends rituals connected with man-land relations, economic activities and clan rights". The polity of the Nagas also comes under "the territorial units of patrilineages of a greater ramified clan structure of a tribe".[17] Anthony D. Smith talks particularly about this kind of relationship, how 'historic continuity' is 'derived from interplay between land and people, and the value attached to an 'ethnoscape'. He further comments that ethno-history is naturalized like nature is historicized and 'ethnoscapes' connects the people of a community from generation to generation 'especially in agrarian societies with relatively low levels of mobility'.[18]

Despite various traditions of the 'point of origin' of the Naga tribes, Makhrai or Makhel tradition is undoubtedly considered as one of the most significant tradition in the Naga History. This would probably create some tensions about the importance of other traditions, however if one is to follow the argument of the Naga Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN - IM) [19] it is the mother of all traditions. It is a known fact that there are other traditions besides the Makhel tradition however, catering to the need of having a shared origin, it can be argued for, as one possible reason why other traditions have been given relatively less importance. On the other hand this position may not be so far fetched in the light of historical relics being existent in the area. There are about ten to twelve

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[17] C. L. Imchen, Shared symbols and strategies for cross-cultural communication: The Nagas, *Indian Horizons*. Vol.48, No.3, Special Issue, 2001) pp. 52
[18] Monserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, *Understanding Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001) pp.24-25
[19] I am using this argument because so far NSCN-IM remains the only group amongst other existing factional nationalist groups to be recognized by the GOI, the greater percentage of the Naga population and the world in general.

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physical monuments which points to the place of Origin of the Nagas. According to the legend it is the birthplace of all mankind and other beings. One of the most popular folktale and legend told and retold is the story of the *Okhe*(tiger), *Ora*(spirit), *Omei* (Man). Another narrative goes about how a lady named *Dziili Mosiiro* conceived three sons by a spirit, which covered her one day in the form of a cloud. Through *Dziili Mosiiro*, the descendants of mankind were also born. They were namely, *Chiituwo* (the ancestor of the Manipuris), *Alapha* (ancestor of the outsider) and *Khephio* (ancestor of the Nagas). This kind of narrative along with factual events implies that Nagas were once free, and masters of themselves before the British penetration into the Nagas land. Makhrai is therefore, considered sacred and symbolically becomes very important in the meaning of the Naga Nationhood. It is known to most of the Naga tribes as the original place where all the Nagas once lived and a little further up north is Charangho or Shajouba, is supposedly to be the place where all the Naga tribes dispersed to different places for lack of space due to the flourishing populations of the sub-tribes. A particular 'a banyan tree and a wild pear tree' situated at these places plays a significant role in this tradition.

Ethnic election of some form is also seen in the course of the Naga Nationalist struggle. It is used by the tribal leaders, underground federal government and the faction groups alongside the myth of origin. The stronghold of Christianity as a religion has made the use of this form of argument much easier and appealing to people as argued by historians like Adrian Hastings and Seton-Watson. According to them, Christianity has brought about heritage of Old Testament and turned them into "the crucible of nations and nationalism".[20] A fine example of this argument can be found in the explanations why the quest for Naga nationalism is necessary, which has somehow turned out to be Christian in its interpretation. This particular passage clearly states the meaning and intention of Naga Nationhood; it reads "It is written in the Holy Bible that nothing happens without the knowledge of God, things happen because He wills them to be so". Furthermore, it is written that a Naga Nation will be "like the ancient twelve tribes of Israel reaching Canaan from Egypt after year[s] of traversing hills and plains, the headhunting tribes of

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[20] Ibid. pp. 15-16

the great Naga family reached their "Promised Land".[21] The actual interpretation of the content maybe completely far off from this interpretation despite the intended narrative of that particular period of time, however it is clear how this particular understanding have been manipulated to negotiate the validity of struggle by way of making people believe that it is a struggle of common solidarity by reviving the history and culture of Christianity.

(ii) Shared customs

Another feature of the symbolic identification of the Nagas used by Naga Nationalist movement is the aspect of shared customs. Makhrai tradition not only stands for shared common ancestry but it is also an important aspect of how a shared common customs and traditions are defined. Despite the far fetched legends and mythologies that the Nagas have always been associated with, believed in one common ancestry and customs. Every community has a mythical past or not necessarily so, from which they believe their descendants came from and over the years formed into a more progressive community which still exists today. The Nagas too believed that Makhrai was their place of origination and therefore, whether invented or not, claims to have a shared common customs which goes back to this very place. According to the legend "before the final discussion took place, the Nagas gathered at the foot of a big wild pear tree (Chitebu Kaji) which still stands as a symbol of unity and oneness of the Naga people. In that meeting at Shajouba village our ancestors made a pledge to maintain their identity as a great family and resolved to pay homage to that tree wherever they might be, so as to remember the great event".[22] Renan and Anthony D.Smith also point out these characteristics in the studies about early European nations and most recently, the East European nationalisms. Not only that the Naga leadership constantly uses this aspect of shared memories and ethno-history as a substantive meaning in defining what a Naga nation is. The recital of the vivid communal history helps the people who are struggling for a nation, to form a community and its political goals accordingly. These examples are

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[21] This is discussed and explained in the book published by V. Sumi and K.Timothy, *Cry for Justice* under Ministry of Publicity and Information, Govt. of the People's Republic of Nagalim (NSCN) pp.11
[22]V. Sumi and K.Timothy, *Cry for Justice* (NSCN-IM: Ministry of information and publicity, GRPN,1997) pp.10-11

many in the not so vast literature of the Naga Nationalist groups. One of the examples is its clarion call to the people for the restoration of past glories like culture, peaceful co-existence among the various tribes of the Nagas, the successful warrior tribesmen, justice dispensation and so on. It appeals to the people intimately for an understanding that "the greatness of the Naga is not based on his intellectual powers, but rather on his / [her] willingness to devote all his faculties to the service of the nation". Questioning of this history is deemed unpatriotic and the NSCN-IM clearly makes a point of this, in this passage from its published works, it says "Posterity will not remember those who pursue only their individual interest but if it will certainly praise those heroes who renounce their own happiness for the sake of the nation, therefore, to avow one's principles happily on every problem that concerns Naga nationhood, and never to make any compromises, is the only way of saving our people".[23] Of course, with the help of religion this freedom is a promise from God and is to be realized.

b) HEAD HUNTING

From the great civilization of the world to the smallest the head had symbolized power and respect in every human history and civilization. One of the examples is the use of a head in coins, here the head is used "as the symbol of authority and power which bear image of the Sovereign's head". Another example is the adornment of a crown when an heir to the throne is to be declared a King or Queen. "Such a symbolic adornment of the head, rather than any other part of the human body, has perpetuated the association of the head as a seat of power and authority".[24] The concept of head as a symbol of power and leadership is basic to all human beings. Temsula Ao, gives a important narrative from the Ao Naga local lore which took place in the Mokokchung town of Nagaland in the following words:

"In the newly opened Government school there in the 1940's. Among the rules prescribed by the British administrators, there was one which stipulated the every Naga should cut his hair in only traditional way (cut in a circular way which a skullcap). This was resented by the youngsters who wanted to sport the western style of hair-cut as a symbol of their stepping out the traditional out of the traditional life-style by

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[23] *Ibid.* pp.12-13

[24] Temsula Ao, Head-Hunting: Some Thoughts, *Indian Horizon*, Vol.48 No.3, Special Issue, 2001. pp.1-2
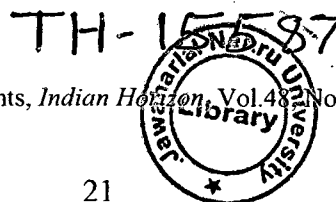
going to school instead of helping their fathers in the fields. They refused to revert to the old hairstyle and when hauled up before the authority and asked to give the reason for their behaviour, one boy replied, "Because I am master of my head".[25]

In a traditional Naga society, head is authority and power. From the early days of headhunting, during warfare to the latter day marked symbolic events of those bygone days which are still seen even today, head gives a powerful symbolic interpretation to a society. In the olden Naga tradition, Possession of a head commands respect and gives immense power to the individual among the peers in his village and also amongst his tribe. Not only possession of human head but also possession of an animal head during the traditional game hunting signifies a person, especially in a Mao Naga tribe, of his talent and manhood. Temsula Ao confirms this aspect in her observations of other tribal societies that "the symbolism associated with the head is extended to animal heads too and this has both a profane and sacred significance". A typical traditional Naga house, will contain evidences of this particular trend even today. A person's valour is often manifested by hanging the skin and head-bone remains of animals like deer, wild boar and even of hunted buffaloes during the important and annual festivals on the entrance of the house and also on the ceiling of the inner house. It not only shows the person's valour but it also shows person's status in that village.

The idea of headhunting starts early and from the family itself in a Naga society, an example can be taken from the Mao Naga family and Sangtam Naga[26] food habits. The head is considered the tastiest part of a fish or a chicken in the Mao Naga family, so when a chicken or fish is cooked for dinner, the head is reserved for the head of the family, that is the patriarch or the father unless he gives it to somebody else in the family. Also in a Naga custom, getting a pig's or any other domestic animal's head is considered a huge honour and it is given only to someone who has brought honour and greatness to the village. It is symbolic of honouring a great warrior or a leadership in today's scenario. Perhaps, this might sound weird and ridiculous for other people who are not familiar with these customs of the Nagas but all these aspects are important for socialization process of the tribe. Therefore, one will see even today that despite being known as highly

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[25] *Ibid.* pp.1
[26] *Ibid.* pp. 2

westernized to the other regions of India, this is carefully planned out and accordingly given out, in order to keep the progression of the tribe.

According to Janet Hoskins, head hunting is "an organized, coherent form of violence in which the severed head is given a specific ritual meaning and the act of head taking is consecrated and commemorated in some form".[27] Headhunting in most people mind conjures up frightening savage images belonging to the ancient uncivilized days and the modern day psychopaths. Even amongst the social scientists, the popular conception is "primitive warfare" which is sometimes derogatorily implied as fought "on a ladder of evolutionary stages leading to more complex formations, or as an expression of "man's aggressive nature" or the "inevitable" violence that occurs in stateless societies because of competition, over scarce sources".[28] Although this line of thought is not baseless or without facts, headhunting is more than just blood and gore among the Nagas. Head hunting among the Naga does not constitute cannibalism and never practiced. Headhuntings among the Nagas in those days were part of political consolidation and sometimes ritual exercises, although one has to keep in mind that human sacrifice was not a part of either. Temsula Ao gives a clear cut view of the Nagas' headhunting campaigns. She says that an 'overriding emphasis on headhunting' in those days, is a survival strategy of every village and Tribe.[29] In another study made by Jonathan Friedman on Nagas living in Burma and around the Indo-Burma border says that heads were also hunted to 'maintain or restore declining fertilty'.[30] C. L. Imchen, on the other hand argue that Headhunting practiced by the Nagas was for a different cause all together. According to him the "practice of headhunting was rather a stimulus to its growth and [it was to] ensure a regular circulation of wealth and increased demands for specific goods". He also argues that a Naga head hunter does not think a person belonging to other community rather than the Naga tribe was worthwhile or 'virile enough to kill' in order to make a paddy field fertile. "It appears that a non-naga head did

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[27]Janet Hoskins(ed.), *Head hunting and the Social Imagination in South-East Asia*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1996) pp. 2

[28] *Ibid*. pp.2-3

[29] Temsula Ao, Head-Hunting: Some Thoughts, *Indian Horizon*, Vol.48, No.3, Special Issue, 2001. pp. 5

[30] Janet Hoskins(ed.), *Head hunting and the Social Imagination in South-East Asia*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1996) pp.9

not contain the required elements of soul-matter to ritually make their paddy fields fertile".[31] The other reason besides political consolidation and rituals are also social recognition. John H. Hutton gives a clear account of this in his study of the Angami Naga tribe. He describes,

It is agreed by all Angamis as well as by other Nagas, that head taking was essential to marriage in so far as that a boy who had taken no head, and could not wear the warrior's dress at festivals, not only found it exceedingly difficult to get any girl with pretensions to good looks or to self respect to marry him, but was held up to ridicule by all the girls of his clan.[32]

T. C. Hodson also makes similar observations among the Nagas living in Manipur. He attributes this to good health and good hunting and also marriage.[33]

The idea of Headhunting among Nagas today, is no doubt of pure romanticism and memories of the bygone days but the symbolism of headhunting still have an aspect which gives rise to different meaning and narratives, as a result, it gets translated into political consciousness. It can be safely argued that this traditional warfare has long gone and what remains are the memories. It is even accounted in the history that by "the end of the nineteenth century time overtook the Nagas and other forces began to overhaul their entire way of life including this practices". [34] But the symbolic meaning attached to it, are still alive and recreated every time, whenever needed. If one visits a Naga village during certain festivals, one can always see the retrieval of these memories through songs, street plays and war games and how much importance is given to this aspect. In a Mao Naga tribe, during the month of January, the biggest festival of tribe 'Chiithuni' is celebrated with much fervour. This festival is celebrated for several days, within the days of the festival, several traditional games are played. Among them is a special war game called 'Lirii Kaphre', it is a game played by the men folk of certain age, old enough to be considered a young warrior. The players emulate the warriors and pit each other with their spears. The group which hits most players wins. But the songs of the great warriors

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[31] C. L. Imchen, Shared symbols and strategies for cross-cultural communication: The Nagas, *Indian Horizons*, Vol.48, No.3, Special Issue, 2001) pp. 49

[32] J. H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas,

[33] T. C. Hodson, The Naga Tribes of Manipur, (Delhi: Low Price Publications, (1911) (Reprinted) 1989) pp. 120-121

[34]Temsula Ao, Head-Hunting: Some Thoughts, *Indian Horizon*, Vol.48, No.3, Special Issue, 2001. pp. 17

are still sung in each and every village during the festivals and commemoration. M. Horam pointed out in his book that kinship and clans among the Nagas play a vital role in the social organization of the Nagas, even in the modern day village this social organization still stands strong. The mobilization of nationalist agenda and patriotism, therefore, starts from the village itself. Verrier Elwin clearly gives an account of this pattern in the past, he describes,

Naga Society presents a varied pattern of near dictatorship and extreme democracy. There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and Changs. The Konyaks have a very powerful Chiefs or Angs who are regarded as sacred and whose word is law; before the greatest of them no commoner may stand upright. The Aos, however, have bodies of elders who represent the main family groups in the village and the Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas and others are so democratic that Hutton remarks that in the case of the Angamis, it is difficult to comprehend, how in the view of their peculiar independence of character, their villages held together at all before the coming of the British government.[35]

Even though, the actual word of head hunting is not found specifically in any literatures and works by published by the Ministry of Information, GPRN, the symbolism of headhunting is continually referred to as glorious and brave Naga forefathers by the other organizations like the Naga Students Federation, Naga Hoho and local individual leaders addressing the community. It is evident in one of the messages during the address by his Excellency Isak Swu, Chairman of the NSCN-IM group to the Fourth Consultative Meeting held on 20-21 January 2005, Council Headquarters, Hebron:

Credit must go to the elders who awakened our spirit of Naga Nationalism in each and every one of us so that we also can hold Nagalim tight to our bosom and protect her freedom. Our elders in their time did not fail to take the right decision at the right time. It is they to whom we owe or future. Then why should we fail during out time? God Forbid! It is for this reason that we are here to consult you and help us make the correct decision. We are responsible to the people and to the people alone. [36]

[35]Quoted in Charles Chasie, Nagaland in Transition, *IIC Quarterly*, Monsoon-Winter, Vol.32, No.2&3, (2005) pp.254. Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland*, (1961)
[36] Address by his excellency, Isak Swu, Chairman, to the Naga Public at the Fourth Consultative Meeting held on 20-21 January 2005 at Council Head quarters, Hebron,(Ministry of Information and Publicity, GPRN) pp.2

c) THE ROLE OF RELIGION

The Nagas, before the advent of the British, were animists as the western anthropologists and historians labeled this form of religion. By animism in its broadest sense of the word means "the attribution of the living soul to inanimate objects and to the natural phenomenon, as well as the belief in the existence of soul or spirit as distinct and apart from the inert matter. The term animism comes from the word 'anima' which in literal meaning of the word means 'breath', 'life force' or 'soul'. From this perspective it means the phenomenon of animal life as produced by 'immaterial' anima.[37] They also believed in the supernatural being, although, the idea was vague in its conception. There was always an idea about the highest and the lowliest supernatural force and they acted according to it by way of performing rites and rituals. They also believed in the spirits of the ancestors and it was in this ancestor worship that all social beliefs and patterns were based and manifested.[38] After the Nagas came in contact with the British, subsequently the missionaries came into the country and the proselytization process was established. The first missionary who came to preach the Bible to the Naga people was Dr. E. W. Clark of the American Baptist Missionary Society in the spring of 1876 and the first mission centre was established at Molungyimchen in Mokokchung district by him with the help of Mr. Subongmeren, an Ao convert and Mr. Godhula, an Assamese Evangelist and others.[39]

The Naga society has always been close to the nature. One of the most important duties is performing rites and rituals to appease the higher spirits that they believe guided them and their land. Religion, therefore, is very important and it encompasses every aspect of everyday life. However, this form of worship was not understood and frowned upon by the British and American Baptist missionaries and it was considered animism that is belief in the inanimate objects. Although the very concept of animism was also much

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[37] Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the Future* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1986) pp.34-35

[38] M. Horam also discusses this point in his book *Nagas old ways and New Trends* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1988)

[39] Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the future* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. 1986) pp.51-52.

debated amongst the western anthropologist studying the culture at that time and it also came under attack for the derogatory tone it implied.[40] According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, animism of the Nagas or the Naga religion is a traditional religion where "special status is given to the sun and the moon. There is a conception of a supreme creator and there are many minor deities. Nature is seen to be alive with invisible forces, with which the priest and medicine men mediate. They also lead rites and festivals, bless the marriage bed and protect the craftsman at his work. Naga ideas of after life vary from tribe to tribe, but there is wide agreement that the soul does not perish at death".[41] This has led some predominant Hindu scholars to say that there was an interaction between the Naga religion and Hinduism, also probably Buddhism. However, this argument is considered baseless and Hindu nationalist propaganda by others. Whatever the case might be, Christianity became a reality for the Nagas, rather than any other religion even though there may or may not have interacted with other faiths.

At the beginning of the proselytisation of some Naga villages, precisely Ao villages, all of a sudden there was massive destruction and denying of rituals and age old practices which had been practiced amongst the Naga society as long as it can be remembered. From the writings of one of the foremost anthropologists of early Naga culture and norms, in Christopher Von Fiirer Haimendorf writings, we find a clear account of this denial of Naga culture and traditions. He writes, "one of the main obstacles to any participation of Christians in village feasts is the American Baptist Mission's rigid enforcement of teetotalism". Consuming rice-beer is a very important part of the Naga's food habits. He writes, "For what wine is to the Italian and whisky to the Scotsman, rice-beer is to the nagas. It refreshes him on hot days, encourages him to carry the heavy harvest baskets may hundreds of feet up the steep mountains to the village..."[42] he also points that "Christianity and Naga culture seemed to him opposite poles, and on the side of the missionaries there had indeed been a few attempts to bring two into harmony and build on that which was valuable in tribal life". [43] However, the same church which

[40] Sanghamitra Misra, the Nature of colonial intervention in the Naga Hills: 1840-80, *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 19, pp. 3273-3279

[41] Quoted in Kunal Ghosh and Vikas Kumar article, NSCN- IM and the roots of Naga Identity: Religion and language-1, *Mainstream*, April 10, 2004) pp. 13

[42] Christoph Von Fiirer Hamendorf , *Return to the Naked Nagas*, (London: John Murray, 50 Albermarle Street, 1976) pp.48.

[43] *Ibid*. pp.49

attempted to bring about total Christianization is now seeing to be working towards what is known as acculturation. Now Christianity among the Nagas has become a pervasive force that encompasses all aspects of social, economy and politics under its roof. The first impression that is promoted in the Nationalist struggle of the Nagas is Christian. In the NSCN Manifesto, the Preamble reads, " We, the people of Nagalim, solemnly acknowledge that the Sovereignty over the earth and the whole universe belongs to the Almighty God alone, and the authority of the people to be exercised in the territory is the sacred trust from God, who sustained our forefathers, the national workers and our people through the years of trials, and having committed to the trust of popular sovereignty as declared in the Manifesto of the **NSCN** on January 31, 1980 to constitute Nagalim into an Independent Sovereign Christian Socialist Democratic Republic, we hereby adopt and enact this amended **Yehzabo** of March 21, 1980 on this sixth day of the month of April in the year Nineteen Hundred and Ninety-six Anno Domino in the National Hoho held at the Gilgal Camp".[44] Further on, a message by Th. Muivah, the General Secretary of the Naga Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN -IM) on 50 years of Naga Nationalism re-affirms the struggle and the path of that struggle through Christ.

"God has stood by us, nay, he has hitherto won all the battles for us from then up to now. He has also softened, to a measure, the hearts of the opponents and made them admit the hard fact that the solution to the Indo-Naga issue is not in the military might but in the positive political approach".[45] "Therefore, the basis of Nagaland's existence and the reason for the Nagas' nationalism are to be construed principally in the light of the purpose behind His will for them and the national necessity to defend it. We do not question the mystery of God's being nor do we doubt the revelation of His amazing plan".[46]

Since the majority of the Nagas are Christian, the call of God is seen as a sign of righteousness and this has made it more appealing to the people. The scholars from mainland India are therefore very critical of Christianity, to them Christianity not only furthered the cause but through "Insurgency, the process of proselytisation picked up momentum and 'speedy' conversion became a reality".[47]

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[44] The NSCN Manifesto, The Preamble, www.nscn.org.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Quoted in Kunal Ghosh and Vikas Kumar article, NSCN- IM and the roots of Naga Identity: Religion and language-1, Mainstream, April 10, 2004) pp.12

Chapter 2

The Mizoram Movement

In the post-independent India, the peaceful end of thirty years of insurgency of the Mizoram Nationalist Movement, is touted as the most successful stories in the conflict ridden North East of India. The people now proudly call the state as the 'most peaceful state in the North East'.[1] Prior to this, like most of the states in the region, Mizoram too had a history of nationalist movement which continued for a span of thirty violent years. However, in 1987 they finally gained independence and was made a full fledged state of India. Before that, Mizoram or previously called the Lushai hills was a district of Assam and an Excluded Area.

Mizoram is a landlocked country and shares boundaries with Bangladesh (318 kms.) and Myanmar (404 kms.) in the Southern part. It also shares boundaries with the states namely, Assam (123 kms), Manipur (95 kms), Tripura (277 kms) from the country itself. "It is bounded on the North by the Cachar district of Assam, on the East and South-East by Burma and on the West by Tripura and Bangladesh".[2] The state is located at Latitude 21° 58′ and 24° 35′ N and at Longitude 92° 15′ and 93° 29 E with an area 21, 087 sq., kms, 277 kms in the North and South and 121 kms in the East and West.[3] According to the Census of India, 2001, the population of the state recorded is 888, 573. From among them, 839,310 are Scheduled Tribes (ST) constituting 94.5 percent of the population. "The state has registered a decadal growth of 28.4 percent of Scheduled Tribes population in the state during 1991-2001. Thus, a predominant tribal state, Mizoram has fourteen communities notified as STs". All of them have been enumerated in 2001 Census. The state also boasts of the second highest literacy rate with 89.3 percent of the population being able to read and write.[4]

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[1] Dr. Lianzela, Post Independence Economic Development of Mizoram, *Dialogue*, July-September 1999, Vol.1, No.1, pp. 73

[2] C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity*, (New Delhi: Indus Publishings, 1996) pp. 24

[3] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 15. it also taken from the official State website www.mizoram.nic.in

[4] Mizoram Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes, *Census of India*, 2001. pp. 1

2.1 <u>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LUSHAI HILLS</u>

The history of the Mizos or the *Highlanders,* is shrouded in mystery. Since they do not have a written history they also borrow from the history written by western anthropologists written after the advent of British into the Lushai hills and conclude that the Lushai tribes most likely immigrated from the area of Singlung[5] in China. Others believed that the Mizos came from 'Southern China, possibly Yunnan province, by gradual migration through Northern Myanmar'.[6] L. Pudaite points out that,

Except for those written after the advent of the British in the late 18th century, there is no recorded history of the Mizos. Some of the tribes living outside of Mizoram prefer to call themselves 'Zomis or simply Zos'; '*mi*' affixed to these terms means 'people or person/s'. The British variously referred to them as Lushais, Kukis (old or new Kukis, depending on the period of their contacts with the tribes) and Chins in Myanmar. All modern historians belonging to the various tribes, however, agree that all the tribal groups inhabiting the immediate neighborhood of the present state of Mizoram - in such areas as in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Tripura, Assam and Manipur – once belonged to the same proto-tribe. They often refer to themselves collectively as 'Zo Hnahthlak', people of Zo ancestry, origin or progeny.[7]

Although, the Lushais does not have a written tradition like most of the neighbouring tribes, they have an oral tradition that is passed along through generations is considered a reliable source. The account of their origin, administration and other socio-political aspects are result of this active oral tradition. "Dietary practices, customs, traditional values, legends, oral history, folklore and linguistic affinity are some of the bases on which these investigations are conducted".[8] According to B. B Goswami, "where the Mizo (formerly the Lushai) originally came from is a matter of conjectural history. But it is a fact that they entered from the direction of Burma in hordes ether voluntarily or being driven into the North-Eastern part of the territory". He further opines that "there is a common tradition that the tribes of Mizo territory and of Churachandpur area of Manipur have come out of a cave in the earth. The details regarding who came first or last, or how

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[5] Mizoram, History, *www. mizoram.nic.in*
[6] L. Pudaite in *Sub-Regional Relations in the Eastern South Asia: With Special Focus on India's North Eastern Region,* Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, pp. 157-158
[7] *Ibid.* pp.157
[8] *Ibid.* pp. 158

they came out of the cave, are the treasured oral tradition of the ethnic groups". [9] The term Mizo is also a source of debate but most anthropologists and scholars believe it is all compassing term for tribes living in Lushai Hills or the Mizo Hills. It is believed to refer to the diversity and existence of different tribes and sub-tribes [10] living in Mizoram which was previously called the Lushai Hills.

A little before the annexation of Mizoram by the British and before the predominance of the chieftains from the Sailo lineage of the Thangura clan, there was a tendency of assimilation of the smaller tribes into the larger fold of the Lushais or the Lushai tribe. The reasonable explanation for this trend was due to the need for an identity which they were not able to get because these tribes were less known to the authorities. According to J. Shakespear, "the term Lushai as we now understand it covers a great many clans". He further went on to say that "in most cases the dialects of the minor clan have been entirely forgotten". He also points that the government tried to distinguish the difference between clans which was, however, a failure due to the ignorance of the people and "a tendency to claim to be a true Lushai". [11] However, the anthropological term seems to be 'long headed people' [12] and 'decapitators' [13] which obviously referred to the headhunting practices of the people domiciled in these Hills. Goswami observes that the term Lushai was used to assert the identity and dominance of Sailo chieftainships of the Lushei tribe over other ethnic groups. He also added that the Mizo means a Highlander, a neutral word which was "therefore, acceptable to the people of the territory in its general application". C. Nunthara makes an important point in this area for a better understanding, he writes, "Thus Mizo is a Mizo, whether he be in Burma, Bangladesh

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[9] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 20-21.

[10] The term 'sub-tribe' is used loosely through out the chapter in order to differentiate which tribes fall under which particular group. For example the Ralte tribe and Hmar tribe was not a Lushai tribe in the beginning but after the birth of nationalist ambition in the 1940s, they came into the fold in the need of a political identity.

[11] Cited in B. B. Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 20-21. J. Shakespear, *Lushei Kuki and Clans*, (London: Mac Milan and Co., Ltd.) pp. xiii and 41-42.

[12] J. Shakespear, *Lushei Kuki and Clans*, (London: Mac Milan and Co., Ltd.) pp. xiv .also cited in B. B. Goswami, pp. 23

[13] T. H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South Eastern India*, (London: Wm. H. Allen, 1870). Also cited in B. B. Goswami, pp. 23

and Mizoram, through the sharing of common cultural identification which is symbolized by the term 'Mizo' and which is overtly expressed in language, dress, social customs and social interactions and which structurally binds them together as one separate ethnic identity".[14] It is also referred to those people who can speak fluent 'Lusei' language. Therefore, Nunthara explains how the term 'Mizo' encompasses the whole pan-Mizo tribe rhetoric. He writes

"Thus, our definition of the term may include all those who identify themselves as Mizos including all the related branches or subgroups of the Mizo tribes who are now scattered all over the neighbouring territories and who are rather fluent in the use of Lusei language".[15]

However, there is an obvious problem to this in terms of who constitute the Mizos and how they politically operate from the birth of political activity and the consequent independence till today. In order to understand this problem, first of all we need to understand the dynamics of the tribes under the all encompassing term 'Mizo'. Today, the tribes which are affiliated to it are the Chakmas, the Reangs, the Pawis, the Lakhers, the Hmars and the smaller tribes which were once thought different are now fully integrated into the Lushai tribe.[16] The Chakmas are originally from former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. They immigrated to the then Lushai Hills due to the displacement caused by the construction of Kaptai Dam after the independence although, it has to be noted that there was migration before that. Roy Burman gives a clear account of the heavy migration, he says "in 1960 a good number, however, migrated from Chittagong Hill Tracts being displaced as a result of the implementation of the Kaptai Dam......They, however, were pushed out of Mizo Hills by the Lushai and allied tribes". [17] Today there are 71, 283 Chakmas living in Mizoram, the highest number of people

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[14] C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity*, (New Delhi: Indus Publishings, 1996) pp. 19
[15] *Ibid.* pp. 33.
[16] It is often noted by the anthropologists like J. Shakespear and Lewin that minority tribes get assimilated into the larger ethnic group. They believed therefore, that the term Lushai was a blanket term was used for the encapsulated grouping.
[17] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 53. B. K. Roy-Burman, *Demographic and Socio-Economic Profiles of the Hill Areas of Noth-East*, (Census India: 1970) pp.87

next to the Lushai tribes.[18] According to C. Nunthara, the Chakmas are basically isolated from the Mizos and there's almost no communication despite living as neighbours. They live in the 'southernmost district of Chhimtuipui of Mizoram' and follow Buddhism as their religion. These could explain partly for the isolation from the Mizos because majority of the Mizos are Christians. He explains it in the following words,

They are generally not adaptive to the Mizo social norms. They have their own distinct culture and religious life totally different from those of the Mizos. They are the followers of Buddhism and their societal form takes a Buddhist sub-cultural form. As such, there are hardly any social contacts with the rest of the Mizos and they retain their separate social existence. The general mass of the Mizos are unaware of their social world and nothing is known about their social organization. A few of their leaders are able to communicate in English and in Mizo, but for the bulk of the Chakmas there is no medium of communication through their language. The Chakmas are represented by two members in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. Recently, they became the subject of political discussion due to the influx of refugees which has gradually increased their number in Mizoram.[19]

Goswami also points out that the Chakmas were educationally backward and economically poor. However, the Chakmas in Bangladesh are much more advanced than Chakmas in Mizoram. Another aspect of the Chakmas was that they did not fit into the tribal mould exactly as Baresh observed, "the concept of 'tribe' has at best only minimal significance whwn applied to the Chakma who, in special economic and technological respects, are "proto-peasant" and in other cultural characteristics, notably in ideology and religion, are tribal in terms of a Burmese model".

The Hmar are the old Kuki tribe spread all over Manipur, Mizoram and Cachar. They are said to be the 'original inhabitants of the Northern portion of the Mizo district'. Most of them are Christians and they were one of the most progressive tribe. They claimed they were distinctively different historically as well as culturally from the other tribes. Inside Mizoram, they somehow merged with the Mizos but outside of Mizoram they were politically very active and floated an ambition of having an autonomous Hmar district. In 1921 they formed a Hmar Literary Association which later spawned a nationalist political

[18] Mizoram Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes, Census of India, 2001. pp. 1
[19] C. Nunthara, Mizoram: Society and Polity, (New Delhi: Indus Publishings, 1996) pp. 30-31

party known as The Hmar National Union. According to the Census of India, 2001, the Hmar population in Mizoram was 2.2% of the total population. This is probably the number of people who entered themselves as Hmar. However, studies suggest that many people have returned into the Lushai tribe and therefore entered themselves as Mizos.

The Pawis and the Lakhers are the second and third highest population in Mizoram according to Census of India, 2001. The Pawis are closer to the Lushais than the Lakhers. B. B. Goswami describes that "the Pawi people have cultural similarities with the Lakher as well as the Mizo (Lushai)". [20] However, the Lakhers are claimed to be different and they belong to 'central Chin sub-group' like the Pawis. C. Nunthara notes that Census of India, 1961 shows the smaller percentages of the Pawis, Lakhers and the Hmars which he believed, "this is mainly due to the alarmingly large number of these sub-groups returnibg themselves as Mizo/Lushai group, while in fact the total population do the Pawis was estimated not less than those of the Chakmas".

2.2 POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN MIZORAM

a) The Chieftains

The Lushais have a typical form of administration similar to the other tribes in the region. They followed a hereditary Chieftainship. Before the British penetrated into the Lushai hills, it was ruled by the chieftains from the Sailo lineage of the Thangura Clan. The chiefs, in the words of P. Lalnithanga, "were practically the parents of the people in the villages. They looked after their subjects as a loving father would of his family". [21] He had privileges where he can ask the people of his village or territory to comply and they complied. According to Goswami, these privileges were given more importance after the British imposed them in recognizance of their tradition. However, anyone can leave the

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[20] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp.59
[21] P. Lalnithanga, *Political Developments in Mizoram*, (Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2006) pp. 4

village or territory if they are not satisfied with the chief.[22] Ironically we will also see later that the Chieftains became overbearing and that was one of the reasons why the Lushai Hills agreed to merge with newly independent India. The chiefs were the most important agency in the Lushais administration. They ruled a territory and administered in all aspects. In 1891, the British marched into the Lushai hills and took control and in 1898 the Lushai Hills of the Chittagong Hill Tracts were placed under the Assam province.[23] After the coming of British, the role of the chieftain began to be defined by them. P. Lalnithanga gives a clear account of this particular aspect in the following word,

"Since the chiefs were given boundary papers which defined the areas of land over which they had jurisdiction, for all practical purposes, the land chiefs were the owners of the land over which they exercised jurisdictions".[24]

After the independence of India, under the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India Mizoram became a district of Assam on the 25th April, 1952 and was put under an administrator called Superintendent directly governed by the Governor of Assam. This was so because the Mizo Hills was one of the Excluded areas under 'The Government of India (Excluded and partially Excluded Areas) Order, 1936' and "outside the purview of the Legislative Assembly of Assam". [25] During that time the Lushai Hills were divided into 18 parts called 18 circles. The Circles were looked after by Circle Interpreters or the CIs and through them the Superintendents control the chiefs and their territories. Out of the 18 Circles 11 Circles were placed in Aizawl and the rest of the 7 Circles were placed in Lunglei.

The birth of political activity came after the British penetrated into the Lushai Hills. The Chiefs power was almost like a dictator, powerful and binding. But the after coming of British they were defined systematically for administrative purposes. Due to the immense

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[22] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp.96

[23] M. L. Bose, *Historical and Constitutional Documents of North Eastern India (1824-1973)*, (Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979) pp. 37

[24] P. Lalnithanga (Retd.IAS), *Political Developments in Mizoram*, (Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2006) pp. 4

[25] *Ibid*. pp. 2-3

power and privileges the Chiefs had over their subjects, the commoners or subjects were asked to do work and pay tribute whenever the Chiefs desired. These obligations grew and it became unbearable for the subjects to comply until the tradition of Chieftainship was finally abolished in 1955. Although, to be fair to some chiefs like "Lalluaia Sailo, Chief of Reiek and whose son Lalkailuia was one of the first Mizo graduates who was appointed as Assistant Superintendent at Lunglei" another was "Lalsailova Sailo, Chief of Kelsih whose son Lalrinthanga Sailo was a graduate, became a captain in the Indian Army and later joined NEFA as a Assistant Political Officer" and also Khamliana, Chief of Lungleng who was an avid horticulturist and environmentalist and whose building in those days when money was scarce was the talk of the land" were revered for their achievements by the Mizos then and today. As way back as 1926, the angst of the people was felt towards the chiefs. An account of the public grievance against the unpopular chiefs to the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills, N. E. Perry, I. C. S was recorded, the grievance said that " they [chiefs] were too tyrannical in their rule, ruthless in dealing with their villagers and acting in a high handed manner over them".[26] It was against this backdrop of years of unsatisfaction that first Mizo political party came into existence led by a commoner named R. Vanlawma along with some few associates namely, Hrangaia, Lalbuaia and V.Rosiama. The party was first known as the 'Lushai Commoners Union', which was later changed into 'Mizo Union', was formed on the 25th of April, 1946. R. Vanlawma was one of the few educated Mizos, who was just a Matriculate but nevertheless brilliant, those days.

b) Famine, MNF and Insurgency

The first known initiation of the Mizos to Politics happened around 1925 when Telela of Ralte Tribe approached the Superintendent of the district for changes in the administration in order to have a voice in the Assam government under whom they were placed. However, the plea was plainly rejected by the Superintendent.

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[26] *Ibid.* pp. 5

In 1935, under the Government of India Act, 1935, the North Eastern region was divided into 'Excluded Area' and 'Partially Excluded Area'. Under this act, it was stated that, "the areas specified in Part 1 of the Schedule to this Order shall be the Excluded Areas, and the areas specified in Part 2 of that Schedule the Partially Excluded Areas, within the meaning of the Act".[27] Since the Lushai Hills was under part 1 and in one of the 'Excluded Areas' there was no direct representation in the legislature of Assam. To this implementation, it was not acceptable to the people. So, under the leadership of Telela and Chawngbawia, a group of young men went to Shillong to meet Rev. J. J. M. Nichols Roy, 'an important Khasi leader, to plead the case before him, of the problems which the people were facing. Unfortunately, the team was told of the problem that 'unless the Mizos came out of the Excluded Area administration' there was nothing to be done. Rev. Nichols Roy also advised them to mobilize and sensitize the people against the system of administration. Heeding the advice of Rev. Roy, the team went back and spoke to the people at Aizawl. On hearing this, the Superintendent issued an order to arrest the leaders. The leaders were arrested and kept at the Aizawl Police station for a night and later the next day, released them with a warning. This group of young men and their protest against the existing administrative process gave birth to the political imagination of the Mizos for the political realisation later and the first attempt of political assertion for their rights.[28]

It was after twenty years or so, of dormant political activity or political wilderness, once again the Hills were roused up by a group of young patriots namely, R. Vanlawma and his associates Hrangaia, Lalbuaia and V.Rosiama by forming the first political party of Mizoram called the 'Mizo Union' in 1946. The party was a success from the start and "became a mentor party of the tribesmen living not only in Mizoram but in adjoining areas such as in the hills of Cachar and Manipur".[29] From then on, the spokes on the political wheel of the Mizos were in constant turning. From the Nagas side, after the birth of the first political party in 1945 led by Charles Pawsey, some Naga leaders like Phizo

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[27] M. L. Bose, *Historical and Constitutional Documents of North Eastern India (1824-1973)*, (Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979) pp. 181-182

[28] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 128-129

[29] *Ibid.* pp.132

and Sakhrie visited the Lushai hills. During the visit, the Naga leaders invited the Mizo hills to join hands with in order to fight 'political independence'. However to this proposition, the Mizo Union was not convinced enough and also they were satisfied enough to abolish the chieftains. In 1947, on July the 20th, another political organization was formed called United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO). It was founded by Lalmawia who was an officer in Burma. Due to his background, the main idea was to join Burma. P. Lalnithanga gives a fair description of what was happening at that point of time in the newly revived political organization. He observes that the UMFO was thereby, created with a view to bring together the differences amongst the leaders on matters of "chiefs and the commoners, the Superintendent and the Mizo Union, their respective grounds and the side taken by them being clearly discernable and apparent, the new political party came into being. It was the general impression that it was leaning towards the chiefs' elders, in majority cases, rallied around it. For this reason, the UMFO party was known mostly as 'Zalen Pawl" meaning Privileged Party.[30] Just before India got the reins back from the British, the Mizos also floated the idea of joining Burma. The Mizos were inspired by struggle of the Nagas in the Naga Hills to keep their land from being adjoined to the new independent Indian Nation. Not only that, this idea was also motivated by the creation of Pakistan. With this in mind they issued a pamphlet on the 2nd of August, 1947 titled "Recasting of UMFO policy, joining of Burma". The pamphlet stated that,

"The Mizoram status is most crucial for us. If we hit right, it will be good for all time to come. If we do not, it will be a matter of regret for all time to come. If we choose right, it will become better and better for all time to come. If we choose it wrong, it will be worse and worse for the succeeding generations. Therefore, now that we still have little time to choose and during this period, let us all give a thought and endeavour to make the best choice".

The statement clearly called the Mizo people for re-thinking their place in the new Indian Nation on the threshold of India's independence. It will seal their political future with

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[30] P. Lalnithanga (Retd.IAS), *Political Developments in Mizoram,* (Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2006) pp. 60

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India which would escalate into thirty years of insurgency and eventually getting an independence and statehood.

On account of the strong demand of the Muslims, India had been divided into two; Hindustan will continue to bear the name India whereas the Muslim land would be called Pakistan.

Some Maharaja States tried to stand on their own legs. Even the Nagas tried to become independent. We ourselves also, without clinging to the old order, let us look at the situation carefully.

Choices are still left. "No choice is left now, the Viceroy's declaration on June 3, 1946 did not include Mizo to have a choice. India will not allow it and if we did forcibly, military might will be used". – You often heard about this and even in "Mizo" paper, you will read about this. Even the same writing could be interpreted differently. Most of us maintained that from the statements of the Viceroy and Prime Minister Attlee, we were most assuredly in a position to choose. The first Union Assembly held in September 1946 passed resolution which our leaders without any consultations continued to carry on.

Even the Maharajas and the Nagas with one accord maintained that they were striving for independence and whether or not these were being dealt with military might, let us wait and see. The attempt of the Nagas to stand on their own legs was greatly supported by the Muslim leader Mr. Jinnah.

On the question of joining Burma, there is a clear evidence of mistrust in the following paragraphs given the choice of joining the Indian nation or what if they refuse to join. At the same time it also tries to re-assure the people of whichever choice they make.

In India there was intense population congestion. Their cleverness, intelligence, selfishness and their capacity to make others feel contented at any time they like being what it was, in such situation, it would be well nigh impossible to safeguard our land and race for long.

However, if we join Burma, even if our land becomes congested, we would rather be able to enter their land. Instead of their becoming member in our council, we would rather be in a position to take part in their Council more.

We have no similari[ty] with the Indians whatsoever. With Burma, we have similarities and agreements more the Indians hold the hill people in contempt, but the Burmese were not at all in a position to hold us as such. This is all the more the reason why we should join Burma. [31]

However, the UMFO was not as popular as the Mizo Union, one of the main reasons was it was mainly constituted by the chiefs and supporters of the chief. It was said that Lalmawia and the chief of Falam, Zahrelian agreed to unite but the dream was short because in the first general election, the UMFO was badly defeated. So, in 1954, the UMFO changed their political ambition from seceding from India to planning a state comprising all the hill districts of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland and the then NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh). With this change they also changed the name to Eastern India Tribal Union, with the help of hills leaders from Garo hills and Khasi hills and the UMFO part was dissolved on the 2nd of October, 1957.[32]

Bamboo is found abundantly in Mizoram. It is said to have covered "around 57 percent of the area of the state, with bamboo forests, located in the areas ranging from height of 400m to 1500m above the mean sea level".[33] Despite the rich source of resource, disasters happens the year bamboo start flowering. The flowering of Bamboo gives way to a phenomenal increase of rats which eats away all the food, thus giving way to famine and human crisis. They have recognized two types of Bamboo flowering, one is called 'Mau' and the other one is known as 'Thing'. "The colonial botanists found that the 'Mau' variety was *Melocanna bamboo soidef* as classified by European Botany and the 'Thing' was scientifically called *Bambusa tulda*".[34] These flowers reproduce in every 30 and 50 years respectively. In the year 1958, a particular variety of bamboos called *Mau* started flowering which gave a sign that famine was imminent. This particular bamboo flowers every 50 years and since the bamboo is named as 'Mau' the famine caused by it is called 'Mautam' and the famine caused by 'Thing' is called 'Thimgtam'. Goswami

[31] *Ibid.* pp. 61-63
[32] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 137
[33] L. Pudaite, *Sub-Regional Relations in the Eastern South Asia: With Special Focus on India's North Eastern Region,* Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, pp. 156
[34] Sajal Nag, Tribals, Rats, Famine, State and Nation, *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 24, 2001 .pp. 1030

makes a critical observation on the 1959 famine, according to him "large numbers of rats were roasted everyday in the village and eaten by the Mizos. But the rats which were in astounding majority ate up the entire crop resulting in serious famine". According to the District Census Handbook, Mizo Hills the "relief given directly to the affected people by the government during the 1959-60 and 1960-61 amounted to Rs. 8, 960,000"[35] This particular record shows the immensity and seriousness of the famine. In spite of this relief many people were left unsatisfied, the Riangs and the Chakmas were dissatisfied because they thought they were discriminated because of their religion, others felt that the government could have done more.

Since the bamboos started flowering in 1958 and as result of previous experience, as a district of Assam, the district council wrote a letter to the Assam Government for the preparation of the coming famine, they wrote,

With the flowering of the Bamboo in the Mizo district, the rat population has phenomenally increased and it is feared that in the next year the whole district would be affected. As a precautionary measure against the imminence of famine, following the flowering of bamboos, the district council feels that the government be moved to sanction to the Mizo district council a sum of Rs. 15 lakh, to be expended on a test relief measure for the whole of Mizo district including the Pawi-Lakher region...

This request was however, rejected by the Assam government led by Bimola Prasad Chaliha on the reason that such prediction cannot be anticipated and it was unscientific.[36] The Mizos with earlier pre-occupation of the Indian people and the rejection in times of oncoming disaster triggered the anger of the people which manifested in the formation of Mizo National Front later, after the end of famine. On this aspect, Sajal Nag makes an important point, she says that "such rejection not only betrayed the assam government's total lack of understanding of the society and the environment of one of its constituent district, it also reflected the basic lack of empathy with its tribal populations". The Mizo Cultural Society was first founded, under the leadership John Manliana in 1958 but with the famine and the lack of help from the government, it was changed into Mizo National

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[35] cited in B. B. Goswami (1979) pp. 142

[36] Sajal Nag, Tribals, Rats, Famine, State and Nation, *Economic and Political Weekly,* March 24, 2001.pp. 1029.

Famine Front in 1959 with the aim to help 'carry out relief' among the famine victims. Later when the famine was over, MNFF became a political party under the leadership of Laldenga as the President, Lianzuala as the Gen. Secretary and Rohuna and Vanlawma as the Joint Secretary. Due to the zeal shown during the famine, for the people's welfare, the MNF became popular in front of the people.

c) Mizo Student Movement

In the conflict torn region of the North East India, one of the regular features of political activism is an active Student organization. According to Herbert Kitchelt, Social movements arise only when aggrieved groups cannot work through established channels to communicate new claims into the political process of authoritative decision making.[37] The student organization as social movement formed an integral part of the Community as well as Nationalist Movement even though, sometimes they are accused of being too consumed in the nitty-gritty of politics sometimes, and especially in regions like North East. The Mizo Student Movement also played a vital role in the Mizo Nationalist project. It was an important voice which negotiated the conflict into a peaceful resolution at the end of the Nationalist Movement in Mizoram with Government of India as well as mediated the difference of separate parties within the movement itself. Like the Gramscian intellectuals who are the pokes in the wheel of revolution, the students' organization in Mizoram took the responsibility of a civil society 'in support of peace settlement'. "This collective action aimed at political mobilization of the people sustained itself by raising hope and succeeded in winning concessions".[38]

At the beginning of the MNFF, the students and young men in good numbers were mobilized to help the famine stricken Mizos. As it is with every society, the struggle faced during these hard times turned the impressionable young men into anti-government. Soon after the Famine these young men were completely mobilized into anti-India mode.

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[37] cited in B. J. Deb's article in M. N. Karna, *Social Movements in North-East India*, (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1998) pp. 127

[38]B. J. Deb in M. N. Karna, *Social Movements in North-East India*, (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1998) pp. 131

Laldenga propagated the idea of Mizos being different to the youth with the promise of arms which was very appealing to them. Also, there were instances of symbolic identifications being used. According to B. B. Goswami, there were other reasons why the young men were ready to give their help to the MNF. One of the reasons was the idea of restoring the traditional dormitory *Zawlbuk*. It is not just restoring the dormitory but the idea behind it was much more appealing. In the olden days these dormitories were the institution where young men learn the art of war, where heroic deeds were given honour and praise. For every Mizo boy this was an ideal place to be and where he can show his honour. On the 15th August, 1947, an unofficial Mizo signal corps was formed to pass the information around the news and informations from village to village.

2.3 CHRISTIANITY AND THE MIZOS

a) Mizo Society and Christianity

Like the State of Nagaland, the Census of India, 2001 shows that most of the Scheduled Tribes are Christians except for the Chakmas who are of Bangladesh origin. They follow the Buddhist Religion but live quite isolated from the Mizos in all aspects.[39] In order to understand Mizoram, there is a need to investigate how deep the Christian values are embedded in their way of life and how this drives their everyday day lives. Before the arrival of Christianity in this rugged land, the Mizos followed a native religion which is referred to as 'animism'. This native religion follows a fairly simple understanding, they are broadly classified as the Good Spirit and Bad Spirit. B. B. Goswami gives a clear idea of this, according to him; the Good Spirit was the spirit that guides the people and the Bad Spirit causes evil and bad things to the people, however, it was supposed to have caused good things as well. There are various kinds of spirits in the Good Spirit category. For the guidance of the Tribe and the Village, three spirits are assigned; they are *Pathian*, *Khuanu* and *Khuavang* and for the Clan, a spirit called *Sakhua*. There is also a personification of an object and unexplained phenomenon. In the realm of Bad Spirit two

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[39] C. Nunthara gives a clear account of this aspect of the Chakmas living in Mizoram in his book, *Mizoram: Society and Polity.*

spirits are observed to be causing both good and evil, they are known as, *Khua* and *Khaltu*. There is also a malignant Spirit called *Huai*. It is believed that there are other bad spirits which causes diseases and other misfortunes but their names and conceptions and how this spirits works are not clear.[40] Today, there are hardly any people who practice the religion of their forefathers. Mona Zote makes a critical observation on the impact of Christianity in Mizoram. She says that,

"Religion saturates all imaginable space and every aspect of life. Five days of the weeks are spent going to evening church service. Prayer and sin and God pepper snatches of conversation overheard in the streets, shops and homes. Young people are assimilated early into the ways and habits of the Church.....Crusades and revivals happen on an annual basis, clustering thickly toward the year's end when Christmas looms around the corner"[41]

She also says that "Religion is living breath and flourishing industry, monopolizing minds" and personifies the 'ideal Geneva' of John Calvin, the founder of the Protestant Reformation denomination known as Calvinism, with "the state obedient to the church, the taverns closed, an unchallenged moral code universally applied". B. B. Goswami makes a similar observation in his book, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture,* he says that "the impact of the new religion has been so much that it has shaken the Mizo society to the extent that it has lost many original cultural contents viz., *Zawlbuk*(dormitory), sacrifices, festivals etc.".

Christianity first came in the form of British campaign and the first missionaries to the then Lushai Hills, now Mizoram, were two Baptist missionaries from the Arthington Aborigines Mission. They came to the Hills in 1894 and in the next four years, all they could achieve was a native dictionary in a written form.[42] According to the Goswami, the North Lushai Hills belonged to the province of Welsh Presbyterian Church and the London Baptist church took in charge of the South Lushai Hills. But Christianity as a major religion came after 1910 with the boom of conversions. In fact, as with every

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[40]B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 40-41
[41] Mona Zote, Heaven in Hell: a paradox, *IIC Quarterly*, Winter, Vol. 32, No. 2&3, 2005, pp. 207
[42] *Ibid.* pp. 203

society change was hardly accepted but slowly the trend was picked up eventually and now the majority of the people are already converted to Christianity. The census of India, 2001 showed that 90.5% of the ST category is Christians which shows the huge leap of conversions since the census taken in 1960s, where it was 87%. Mona Zote cites J. M. Lloyd account of the history of the Church and gives us the situation of those days back when people were practiced more of native religion or 'animism' and Christianity was at the nascent stage. She quotes J. M Lloyd,

In 1921 the third government census was undertaken. In answering this each person was expected to note down his religious faith. The figures for Mizoram caused some astonishment when they were examined...because of the enormous increase they showed in the number of Christians among the Mizos. (The Statistician) asked that they should be checked once more in case of fraud.[43]

Ethnic election of is also found in the Mizo society as well. The idea of 'Chosen people' indoctrinated by the early missionaries was one of the reasons for the inflated rise of the conversions. Today the state sends out missionaries to different parts of the country and also to some other countries. Other manifestation of this ideological bent of mind is seen in the recent rise of Jewish Menashe Question which follows the idea that Mizos are the descendants of the lost tribe of Isreal. It has been said some of the Mizos had already migrated or to be more appropriate gone back to Israel, if this claim is to be believed. Whether, this claim of origin is true or not is a question of another investigation but the main rhetoric here, is that the influence of Christianity of the Mizo society is not only a matter of religious but the line of demarcation between the politics and religion has also been crossed and gone deeper than thought possible. This serious crisis of Identity is seen in the midst of strong background of Christianity and westernization and almost lost evidence of the traditions their forefathers practiced. Mona Zote commenting on the question of Jewish Menashe, calls this crisis as the indication of 'internal dislocation' and the backlash of religious obsession.[44]

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[43] *Ibid.* pp. 203-204
[44] *Ibid.* pp. 204

b) Mizo Nationalist Movement and the Church

As we have seen in the earlier discussion how the Christianity had supplanted the traditional values of the forefathers in Mizoram. It is also important to note how the church has played its role in the beginning of the political activism in the state, as seen from the various literatures written on the history of Mizoram. These writings indicate how the church has played a vital role of not only 'saving souls' but of 'saving physical lives' through building of schools and educating the people, wherever they were situated. The spread of education contributed much towards what was to come in the form of Nationalist movement and insurgency. Education compelled people to think beyond their borders and share in the worldviews, although they might be biased due to their Christian background. Patricia Mukhim solidifies this argument and the reality of the north-easterners when she says, "No matter how much he [or she] tries, a North-Easterner will always feel he [or she] is different in his world view from a fellow Indian. Perhaps Christianity and its western cultural influence has had a marked influence on the tribal psyche".[45]

The spread of Christianity also has certain disadvantages for the tribals societies. It had broken down the efficiency of the tribal administration by infusion of western thoughts ideas which saw the death of all things traditional and heathen in the missionaries' eyes. In Mizoram, the rapid Christianization rung the death knell for the important traditional institutions like *Zawlbuk* (traditional dormitories where young men learn the art of socialization, how to be a warrior etc. It used to be a place of education on traditions and customs). It is through all these various 'organizing activities of the church' that the Mizos 'began to understand the advantages of forming groups for focused goals'.[46]

The establishment of YMA or Young Men Association in 1935 was important phase of political assertion among the youths and students in Mizoram. By this time the Church had become very active in the Hills, here, what has to be kept in mind is that when YMA

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[45] Patricia Mukhim, Where is this North East?, *IIC Quarterly*, Winter, Vol. 32, No. 2&3, 2005, pp.165
[46] L. Pudaite in *Sub-Regional Relations in the Eastern South Asia: With Special Focus on India's North Eastern Region,* Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, pp. 160

was founded, "it was genuine desire of the Church, to keep the Mizo Youths engrossed in religious activities".[47] The formation of the Lushei Students Association after some time was once again formed with an idea to take away the youth and students from going against the church and the administration. However, with the exposure of western education and western views on politics, it was an inevitable outcome that the passionate young men could not keep themselves aloof from the happenings around them and the world.[48] It would be interesting to note that religious fervour is found more during the period of internal crisis. B. B. Goswami makes an important observation in this aspect of the nationalist movement in Mizoram. He says that "with the outbreak of the disturbances, the people's attachment with the church has also increased". He also mentions the existence of Ethnic election during the peak of the Mizoram's insurgency. He noted that, "Since the outbreak of the Mizo unrest, the bliblical story of the lost tribe of Israel got prominence, along with the belief of the return of Christ". Just as we have seen the use of symbolism based on religion and how the role of church was vital in the propagation of such ideas to the people, we also find that the church played an equally strong role in the peacemaking process in the end of the Mizoram insurgency. There were several rounds of peace talks led by the church and her representatives just before the Mizoram accord was signed.

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[47] P. Lalnithanga (Retd.IAS), *Political Developments in Mizoram,* (Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2006) pp pp. 130.
[48] B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture,* (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp. 130

Chapter 3

A Comparative Analysis of the case studies (Naga Nationalist Movement and Mizo Nationalist Movement)

In politics we come across certain ontological confusion which occurs, despite the active scholarship and extensive literature. The study of nations and nationalism has so far followed this trend, for some nationalism is referred to love for one's state or country yet on the other hand, others refers to the love for one's people, meaning *them* and *us*. Walker Connor defines love or 'emotional attachment for one's state or country and its political institution as patriotism'. While nationalism to him, is love or emotional attachment to one's people- one ethno national group as nationalism. Although he makes a clear distinction of what is patriotism and nationalism, he agrees that the two loyalties can reinforce each other.[1] To this John Breuilly, argues that it is quite unnecessary and 'of little analytic value'. He argues that Nationalism should focus on politics[2] and upon this argument, he claims that

1. There exists a nation - a special group which is set apart from all other human beings.
2. Political identity and loyalty are first and foremost, with and to the nation.
3. The nation should have political autonomy, normally in the form of sovereign state.[3]

He also relates the framework of nationalism to modernization like Ernest Gellner. In Gellner we see that the need for 'industrial homogenisation' gave rise to nationalism that "in the modern world the role of culture in human life was transformed by that cluster of economic and scientific changes which transformed the world since seventeenth century".

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[1] Walker Connor in Michael W. Hughey, *New Tribalisms: The Resurgence of Race and Ethnicity*, (Houndmills, Basingtoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and London: Macmillan Press, 1998) pp.41

[2] Breuilly talks about three areas of debate in Nationalism, i.e., doctrine, politics and sentiments to which he adheres to nationalism as political.

[3] John Breuilly in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, (London: Verso, 1996) pp.* he distinguishes this from the 'core doctrine' of Anthony D. Smith.

The widespread prevalence of ethnic nationalist movements all over the world suggests that the political underpinnings are not the only acting stimulus for nationalism unlike the instrumentalist point of view. The role of language, culture, traditions and most importantly myths and memories are to be taken into serious considerstion. In fact, so less of academic pursuit has been to study this underlying possibilities and that's the one of the objective of ethno symbolic approach. The questions that need to be raised in the wake of widespread ethno-nationalism or conflict of this kind is not just why's and how to's but how can we explain the continuity and resilience of its power.[4] Along with this point of view, cultural nationalism, a pioneering work credited to historian John Hutchinson, takes into account the 'recurrent significance of cultural forms of nationalism' and the importance of it, is not to be overlooked. Whilst on the other hand, it does not ignore the importance of 'political nationalism that has its aim autonomous state institutions'.[5]

The wave of ethnic nationalism supposedly started right after end of the Second World War It is often referred to the end of imperialism and start of the oppressed and smaller nations standing up for themselves. According to Joane Nagel, "ethnic nationalism occurs within an international context, and that the extent and outcome of ethnic nationalist movements depend on the stance of powerful international actors as well as the position taken by the symbolic institution of the world system (eg. United Nations). Where ethnic movements are supported by the world system forces, they will endure and sometimes succeed. Where such movements are not externally supported and legitimated, they will languish and fall".[6] Thus ethnic nationalism is attributed to ideology and politics which according to her are both properties of the World System.

Here, Nagel speaks of three waves of ethnic nationalism, the first wave starts right after the end of the Second World War in the European colonies of Africa and Asia, for

[4] Smith, LSE Centennial Lecture: the Resurgence of Nationalism? Myth and Memory in the Renewal of Nations, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.47, No.4 (Dec. 1996), pp.575-598
[5] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of Nations and Nationalism*, (London: Routledge, 1998) pp. 177
[6] Jaone Nagel in Michael W. Hughey, *New Tribalisms: The Resurgence of Race and Ethnicity*, (Houndmills, Basingtoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and London: Macmillan Press, 1998) pp. 345

example, the Ghanian and Nigerian nationalism in African and Indian nationalism and Sri Lankan nationalism in Asia. The second wave of ethnic nationalism started after the constitution of the nationalist movements in the first wave. It also led to the phenomena of sub-nationalism which continued right till the 1980's. This includes the partition of India and making of the Pakistan nation, the secession of East Pakistan into a Bangladesh nation and multi-movements in various parts of the world like, Somalia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka etc. However, ethnic nationalism in the second wave was not confined to the once occupied colonies of Europe. It spread throughout the developed and developing worlds, from Britain, Spain, Canada, Northern Ireland and the United States. The final and most recent wave of ethnic nationalism occurred in the late 80's till now. This period saw the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the resurgence of Ethno-Nationalism among the ethnic communities in the former USSR.

The Naga nationalist movement is one of the first movements to come out of the North East. It is also one of the longest struggles[7] and still continuing, active movement in the region, although, the dynamics have changed a little since the time of conception. On the other hand the Mizo nationalist struggle came a little later to the Nagas but it has been more than twenty years since the Movement ended peacefully and the region supposedly is the most successful story in the history of Indian ethnic nationalism. The dilemma that comes with this success is the question of Naga nationalism that after half a century, the so called 'Naga Problem' is still far from over. Even though over the years there seems to be quite a change with the ceasefire coming into force in 1997 and still in process. There has been various rounds of dialogues held between the leaders of the NSCN-IM faction of the Nagas and the Government of India, there seems to be little progress. The comparative analysis of the case studies which is to be done between the two movements, the Naga nationalist Movement and the Mizo nationalist Movement, now a regional party after the attainment of Statehood in 1987, will specifically look into how ethnic symbolism promote the nationalist sentiments of the people and give resilience for the durability of the nationalist movement. The analysis will be divided into three parts. First

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[7] cited in Sanjib Baruah, *Durable disorder: Understanding the Politics of the NE* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp.104

of all, it will look into the birth of the political movement in both the Movements and the political activity during the peak of the Movements followed by the symbolic identifications like myths of origin, memories of the persecution or military harassment, the Folklore and finally, the role of Church in politics and in the movements.

Political activism

When we look at both of the movements, similarities in the historical backgrounds as well as in the formulations of the movement can be found. Despite those similarities the burning question remains that is, what made the Naga nationalism so strong and resilient that even after more than 50 years of struggle, is that the reason why future remained unpredictable? Is it the use of ethnic myths and memories alone that is giving the push? Or are demands of Mizo National Movement different than the Naga National Movement? C. Nunthara partially explains this question, he is of the view that, "Separatism has to be examined at the higher level of abstraction" and it is important to based the thinking in the natives' mode, that is, thinking the dominant group as one form. He observes critically that in the understanding of Mizo or Naga Separatism, one to think that "there is only one Indian cultural form to the Mizos and that is basically based on Hindu Culture. To them, to be Indian, thus, naturally means to subjugate themselves to the Hindu culture".[8]

Myth of Origin:

Contrary to the modernist view, the rhetoric of myth and culture are part and parcel of ethno nationalism. They act like some sort of stimulus that drives the movement, the "meanings and visions are encapsulated in distinctive ethnic myths which, like all myth, bring together in a single potent elements of historical fact and legendary elaboration to create an overriding commitment and bond for the community. Of course, such myths often change their symbolic forms and content over time in relation to different

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[8] C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity*, (New Delhi: Indus Publishings, 1996) pp. 224.

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perceptions of significant others outside the community and varying degrees of conflict or competition with those outsiders".[9] There is the simple fact that nationalist movements of any kind always have a background that is entrenched deeply in the ethnic identity with its 'shared ideals and meanings, which guide action and determine the direction of social change'.[10] Therefore, it is clear from this perspective that collective identity is fundamental in the making of individual identity, the idea of 'belonging' to one particular nation or a community is a powerful tool which is always played upon the psyche of the mass during the course of nationalist movements whether its by the political elite wanting to gain power or the community which has been ignored as a minority and wanting to be taken seriously or whatever the case maybe.

There are certain components of the *ethnies* which the ethno symbolic approach and the ethno symbolists derive from the *ethnies* and incorporate it into its structure. These are found in what Anthony D. Smith discusses them as

a) *la longue dure'e:* the idea that the origin and the formation of nations are historical entities and we should not "tie their existence and formation to a particular period of a history or to the processes of modernization".[11]

b) National past and present: this is 'a long term relationship between national past, present and future, which can be termed under three headings'. They are recurrence, continuity and re-appropriation.

c) The Ethnic basis of a nation; the making of a nation is embedded in the ethnic components "Most nations, modern and pre-modern, were based on ethnic ties and sentiments and on popular ethnic traditions, which have provided the cultural sources for later nation-formation".[12]

d) The cultural components of the *ethnies:* The pre-existing components and long term continuities of ethnic communities and nations are cultural and symbolic rather than demographic.

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[9] Cited from Kreisberg (1982) in Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp.12

[10] *Ibid.* pp.12

[11] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1999). It was also cited in Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, (2004).pp.1

[12] *Ibid.*

e) Ethnic myths and symbols; Myths of ethnic origin and election, and symbols of territory and community are key components of ethnicity.[13]

f) Ethno-history; this denotes the ethnic members' memories and understanding of their communal past or pasts, rather than more objective and dispassionate analysis by professional historians.

g) Routes to nationhood; It refers to the various processes leading to the construction of modern nations.

h) The longevity of nationalism; It concerns the power and durability of nations and nationalism encompassing "nationalism as a modern ideological movement, but also the expression of aspirations by various social groups to create, defend or maintain nations – their autonomy, unity and identity by drawing on the cultural resources of pre-existing ethnic communities and categories".

Taking all this into consideration in the backdrop of this argument, we can safely say that ethnic symbols are strong entities which can drive Nationalist Movement for as long as possible. The previous chapters which dealt with the two movement clearly shows that where there is no compromise on this aspect, there cannot be successful nation building in both groups. The dominant group can be unyielding and try to force the minority group but if the minority does let go any of its beliefs, their foundation cannot be shaken.

Nationalism might be relatively modern given the debates of origin as we have seen, the mythscapes, symbolic connotations and traditions based on this variables are deeply embedded in the ethnic psyche. It is a probability that the *ethnie* or the ethnic community always tries to find continuity between the modern nation and old and ancient entity. There are, of course one or two 'pre-existing ethnic communities' which has been there almost all the time. The most popular and known example would be the Armenians and the Jews, it was true of this due to the scriptural religion. This is not to say that the particular communities are nationalist communities themselves. The ethnic communities have always one or the other memories and traditions, some sort of a covenant both oral and written, though the factual origin cannot be always realised in the quest, but for them

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[13]Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, History and National Destiny, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10(1/2), (2004).pp.1-8

"The ideal of a covenant as the source of their ethnic election has given these communities of shared memory and origin myths a durability and self-renewing capacity which forms one of the bedrocks of their contemporary political struggles".[14]

The myth of origin plays a vital role in strengthening of the movement in the North East. This example is best seen in the Mizo Nationalist Movement and the Naga Nationalist movement. Despite the claim by Naga tribes as a homogenized entity, there are about 38 different sub-tribes[15] which the NSCN-IM group recognizes as the tribes or 'sub-tribes' of Naga. These claims however take into consideration of the traditions of origin and the oral tradition which is handed down over generation to generation. It is necessary to take note of the fact that what is not written down in a book should not be considered a myth either. If this is the case the very object of this study is invalidated and the studies of various tribal communities are as good as non- existent. Therefore, the comparative study of the two Movements will be analyzed along the narratives of the Oral Tradition of the two communities. The Mizo Tribes or the Nagas as well as most of the tribal communities have oral traditions which are handed down through ages from generation to generation. It is possible that some of the traditional customs might have been acculturated with the influence from outside but most of it remains what it is since those days through active Folklore recitations and songs. It is an interesting observation that even though, the Nagas and the Mizo are known to be very progressive in terms of other tribal communities throughout India, due to the westernization and the early exposure of the Western culture through Christian Evangelisation.

Among the Mizos, the ethnic composition has a number of different tribes namely, Hmar, Lakher and Pawi (POI) and Chakmas, who are immigrants from Bangladesh and the Kuki tribes from Manipur like the Riangs and Tripuris from the neighbouring state Tripura[16] who has nothing in common with each other. It would be very crucial to note that

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[14] Cited from Akenson, 1992 in Smith, LSE Centennial Lecture: the resurgence of Nationalism? Myth and Memory in the Renewal of nations, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.47, No.4 (Dec. 1996), pp.575-598

[15] as pointed out in the earlier chapters, the word 'sub-tribe' is loosely used throughout the chapters.

[16]B. B Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of Culture*, (Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, 1979) pp.53-67. Taken from the Census of India, 1961

Mizoram does not mean that the people who reside there belong to single homogenized tribe or like the Nagas claim that they have a common ancestry (although the nomenclature of the tribes differs from each other). The ethnic composition of Mizoram is a complex and variegated concept. Unlike the Nagas, they do not consider themselves as a homogenized entity. What brought them together is the fear of cultural assimilation of the various tribes and also the disenchantment and the feeling of alienation with the 'mainland Indians'. Today, there are around 15 tribes of different origin that call the state of Mizoram their home.[17] It is noteworthy that these 15 tribes are made up of tiny portion of a Naga tribe and Kuki tribes from Manipur apart from other immigrants from the neighbouring states and country.

Role of Religion

The idea of 'chosenness' plays a great role in the durability of nationalist movements and nationalism. The coming of Christianity to Nagaland and Mizoram can be compared to certain epiphany like situation of the medieval England. It has been clearly written in various literature of the two North Eastern states that the influence of Christianity brought the 'peoples' of the two states together to form a native homeland which they have been fighting for more than 50 years. M. Horam gives a description of how Nagas were spread throughout the North East India and in some parts of Burma, now called Myanmar. The numerous sub-tribes that make up the tribes were more or less distanced from each other due to security and survival in those days. It was after the advent of Christianity led by the American Missionaries who brought education that Nagas came together.[18] The Mizos or the Lushais, as they were called in the earliest days, were similarly head hunters from the hills situated in the "North Eastern corner of India between Burma, Bangladesh, Cachar and Manipur of the Indian states"[19] however, there are basic differences in the practice of a head hunter between these two ethnic communities. The socialization processes of these two communities are also found to be

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[17] Mizoram Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes, *Census of India*, 2001. pp. 1

[18] M. Horam, *Naga Insurgency: The Last Thirty Years,* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publictions, 1988) pp.*
[19] John Vanlal Hluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram*, (Aizawl: Mizoram History Association, 1985) pp.1

similar. Like the Nagas their first contact with the outside World was through the Christian missionaries from the British administration. The spread of Christianity is so large and whole in the North East especially these two states that the people from these areas are identified in such ways. The identification of such kind has positive and negative effects, John Vanlal Hluna writes that positively Christianity has "contributed to the development of strong self-confident and self-sufficient Christian communities. Negatively, the Christian involvement in the rebellion or revolution has reinforced the suspicion of the Indian public in general that Christian at least in the region is anti-national in the larger sense of the Indian Nationalism".[20] Likewise, Nagaland too, has a strong affiliation with the church and over the years the church has constantly shaped the socio-political process of the people in this area sometimes good and sometimes bad. It follows the rhetoric of what prominent Sociologist T. N. Madan describes as Christian dutifulness. He writes, "during the reformation period when Christianity community are believed to be faithful and trusting in God's saving grace and therefore, recommended political dutifulness to the faithful".[21] Therefore, here we see how it becomes a valid reason why church can interfere in the affairs of the state in the course of state failure.

Not only that, we also see similar trends in the African American ethnicity, often nationalism can use religion as a tool to mobilise people. C. Eric Lincoln explains these inter-relationships perfectly in his study of Black Nationalism, he says, "because black ethnicity and black identity are often expressed through black religion, black religion is often mistaken for Black Nationalism. They may, and often do, travel together but the goals and interests of this two aspects of the black experience are not the same".[22]

The role of the church in the states of Nagaland and Mizoram are strong entities even in the realm of politics. They are the voice of the people who do not have a voice when they are outside of it. This is one of the reasons why its hand is always in each and every pie of the society. According to V. K. Nuh "when the state fails in its role, it must be

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[20] *Ibid.* pp.19
[21] T. N Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997) pp.
[22] Cited from C. Eric Lincoln (1999) pp.91-92 in Patricia Hill Collins article for Stephen May, Tariq Modood and Judith Squires (eds.).*Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 102-103

challenged by the church. It means that obedience to God's law is priority over obedience to the law of man. This is the reason why the church gets involved in politics".[23]

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[23] Rev. Dr. V, K. Nuh, a theological reflection on Naga Society, Research wing, cnbc, Kohima, 1996.

CONCLUSIONS

The idea of a Naga 'nation' is carried on solid grounds and steeped in culture, religion and history which will still go a long way, therefore, symbolic identifications are needed to be investigated in.order to understand and come to a peaceful resolution. It is this reality that demarcates the Naga Nationalist struggle from other regions and movements like the Mizo Nationalist movement which came to be resolved in the 1980's. There is a continued renewal of supposedly ignored or forgotten traditions of the Nagas at present. This has led to more appealing feature of the nation building project. Some Indian scholars have argued that all this kind of renaissance is driven by the American Baptist missions or the church in general is misleadingly false. Even though there is no denying that they also have hand in it but that is an obvious proposition as almost 99% percent of the Nagas are Christians and if this is the case there is no need to look further than themselves.

The NSCN as a distinctive nationalist group also plays on the element of self reliance and individual's freedom/independence of the Naga people. Various writings and speeches made by the top leaders of the organization can contribute to this particular claim (see the PREAMBLE of the NSCN Manifesto). As far as Mizoram is concerned, today there is no immediate evidence of repeating insurgency or secessionist movement but that remains to be a matter of future events which we all hope, should not happen. But, despite the absence of all these aspects in Mizoram to this day, the feeling towards the 'mainland Indians' has not quite changed. There is continued feeling of alienation among the young generation of Mizos like the rest of the North Easterners. Sanjib Baruah makes a fair case of these 'alienation' in his article, *A New Politics of Race: India and its North-East*. He argues that while the scientific community has left behind the 'idea of race as a biological category' there seems to be a rise in the aspect of politics based on the question of race due to the blinkered portrayal of the North-Easterners by Bollywood and the media houses which he calls the 'visual regime'. He says that with the already existing relation description of the India's North-East "as a cultural gap, an economic gap, a psychological gap and emotional gap. The shared visual regime now carries the danger of this fault-line

becoming racialised. This foreboding problem is quite natural and accurate in the backdrop of the continuous rise of intolerance of being different in India today.

The role of Church in the North East, especially the two states is quite permissive. As Mona Zote observes, it permeates and saturates into each and every corner of the society. The line of demarcation between the church and the state is quite blurred. 'Kersti Assmann talks about four stages of Christianity in the North East. She also calls it the 'Christianization' of the North East. The question of Nation-building and Nationalism goes hand in hand with the role of the church in the North-East especially the Christian states of Nagaland and Mizoram. Whether it is the MNF Movement during insurgency in Mizoram or the Naga Nationalist Movement, which started just before the independence of India which has continued till today and there is no sign of abating down so far.

For C. Nunthara the tendency of conflict lies in the maintenance of boundaries, he says that "in the absence of structural linkages between the centre and the periphery, smaller groups are desperately trying to preserve their social boundary by emphasizing ingroup values. In this situation, any process of integration develops itself into negative orientation on the part of the subordinate groups because of the fear of loosing their social entity as we find in Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and other parts of north-east India.

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