COLONIAL WRITINGS AND PRACTICES: NORTHEAST INDIA, 1824-1947

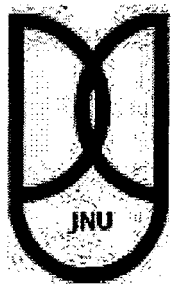
Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SODOLAKPOU PANMEI



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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**Colonial Writings and Practices: Northeast India, 1824-1947**", submitted by Sodolakpou Panmei in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is to the best of our knowledge an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university.

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DECLARATION

This dissertation entitled **"Colonial Writings and Practices: Northeast India, 1824-1947"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university.

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY DEARLY DEPARTED FATHER,

(L) KETHIUWANG PANMEI.

Contents

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List of Acronyms

ABFMS	American Baptist Foreign Mission Society
ABFMSR	American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies Records
AGG	Agent to the Governor-General
BE	External Branch
BP	Political Branch
Capt.	Captain
CoA	Chief Commissioner of Assam
Col.	Colonel
Cons.	Consultations
DC	Deputy Commissioner
EAD	External Affairs Department
FD	Foreign Department
FPD	Foreign and Political Department
FW	Fort William
GF	Geographic File
GoB	Government of Bengal
GoI	Government of India
ICS	Indian Civil Service
JAI	The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland
Lt.	Lieutenant
MBFP	Miles Bronson Family Papers
MC	Missionary Correspondence
NAI	National Archives of India
NEF	North-East Frontier of India
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
No.	Number
Nos.	Numbers
PA	Political Agent
PD	Political Department
RAI	Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland
Rev.	Reverend
Sec.	Secretary

Introduction

Following the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26), Northeast India came within the purview of the expanding British influence. In coming into contact with a relatively hitherto unknown but new territories, the British undertook several practices, precisely for rendering the unknown into a form they could understood, ranging from knowledge gathering and surveys of the landscapes to the locating, categorizing and 'civilizing' of the native population. The North-East Frontier,[1] as it was known in the colonial period, thus, became a region where the British attempted a suitable strategy of control in their dealings with the diverse, independent communities inhabiting it. This study will look at some of these practices which were carried out in the hill tracts adjacent to the Assam plains, best embodied in the writings generated by British officials and Christian missionaries during the colonial period. As such, by design the study is intended as a thematic analysis of some aspects of colonial writings which were namely the survey literature, the discourse of 'tribe' and that of the 'civilizing mission'. This is done so based on the premise that an analysis of colonial writings would be instructive and much purposeful to shed light on colonial endeavour of knowledge-production of its subjects; and at the same time to reveal the important role played by language – its derogatory or rhetorical utilization – for the legitimacy and the establishment of colonial rule in Northeast India. Colonial writings and practices, as the title suggest, then, is a study of some of the 'forms of knowledge'[2] that the British produced in more than a century of their rule in Northeast India.

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[1] The term 'North-East Frontier', as used in the colonial period, is not to be confused with the present day 'Northeast India', a blanket term applied collectively to the seven states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. During the colonial times the jargon was deployed, in the words of one colonial official Alexander Mackenzie, "sometimes to denote a boundary line, and sometimes more generally to describe a tract." Thus, the frontier region, as the official points out, "embraces the whole of the hill ranges north, east, and south of the Assam Valley, as well as the western slopes of the great mountain system lying between Bengal and the independent Burma, with its outlying spurs and ridges." See Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal,* Calcutta: Home Department Press, 1884, p. 1.

[2] The phrase is from Bernard Cohn's influential study of the body of knowledge, what he calls the 'investigative modalities', that the British adopted which was instrumental in sustaining colonial rule, issue commands, maintain law and order and generate other forms of information about the people the British were ruling. See Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India,* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Though the title suggests that it was a study of colonial writings and practices on Northeast India, more particular emphasis will be placed on British activities in one specific geographical locale, the Naga Hills,[3] and the people referred to, in colonial accounts, as the 'Naga tribes'. The rather controversial nature of the term 'Nagas' has obliged me to chose the title as I have chosen accordingly.[4] Moreover, as the people designated as the Nagas are scattered across the Northeast state of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh – including even parts of Burma[5] – in the post-colonial independent state of India, I have deem it appropriate for the sake of convenience to select the title so. Hence, it must not be mistakenly perceived that this study will cover each and every group, communities of Northeast India.

In addition it may be clarified at the outset that I do not set out to provide an exhaustive, detailed account of each and every aspect of writings produced by colonial writers during the colonial period. I have deliberately selected writings generated during surveys and focussed on the discourse of 'tribe' and the 'civilizing mission' as it is some common themes, repertory of colonial writings. This is simply the need to cut down a voluminous archive[6] to manageable proportion as well as to

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[3] The Naga Hills formed what is now the present day Nagaland. In the colonial era, it was a district under the Assam province. Made a separate hill district in 1866, it became a self-governing state only in 1960.

[4] The term 'Nagas' is deployed in the modern day to refer collectively to a conglomeration of many 'hill tribes' that supposedly shared a 'unique' culture. This 'imagined' notion of a collectivity was the core reason for the hill peoples' aspirations for self-determination and nationhood in contemporary political discourse and events. The term 'Nagas' is not a linguistic category although colonial linguists have pointed out that the various dialects fall into at least two distinct groups of the Tibeto-Burmese language. The various communities clubbed together under the domain term 'Nagas' spoke as many as thirty three different dialects hardly communicable or intelligible even among themselves. However, there is a pidgin language called 'Nagamese', a corrupt language derived from a combination of Assamese and indigenous dialect, which was used as a sort of a common language. That apart, the origin of the term, ironically, was marred in controversy and perplexity which can be traced back to the colonial period. Some British officials such as Captain John Butler, collating together the various theories of the origin of the term 'Nagas', reported it as being a derivative of the "Bengali word 'nangta', meaning 'naked'... Another theory suggests the Kachari word 'Naga', a 'young man' and hence a 'warrior', whilst a third theory would derive it from 'nag', a snake." (See John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam: During a Residence of Fourteen Years,* London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1855, p. 309.) Apart from this explanation, there are several different theories regarding the term's origins and even British officials as well as scholars, both metropolitan and indigenous, differ with each other over this issue. However, almost all agreed upon the issue that the appellation was an entirely unknown term to the hill people often used by the people of the plains to refer to the hill people. For a detailed compilation of the various theories regarding the terminology's origin, see M. Alemchiba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland,* Kohima: Naga Institute of Culture, 1970, pp. 21-28.

[5] The study will continue to use Burma, the older terminology of the state bordering Northeast India, which is now known as Myanmar.

[6] Curiously, for a community inhabiting a peripheral region of the British Empire, the Nagas featured quite prominently in colonial writings. Having a strong fascination from colonial writers, the proportion of the writings on the Nagas – diaries, books, articles, monographs, official reports and so

give a certain order and uniformity to the sources. For without doing so, there will be certainly no limits to the sources that the study had to grapple with.

Another issue that needs clarification was the problem of determining a point of departure, a beginning, a chronology and a periodization for the study. There has been an inherent tendency to do modern Northeast India's history with the advent of the British: it was as if the entry of the British signal the opening of the curtain and the historical actors started acting out their roles onstage. But while acknowledging this aspect, or rather failing, I have also again chose as a starting point for the study the coming of the British following the first Anglo-Burmese debacle. The reason was precisely due to the fact that a non-literate community without any source of written words started figuring, quite prominently, in the texts and discourse of the colonial agents. And as history is a 'discipline of evidence', and as someone who is most comfortable managing the written word as facts, I have begun the study with the colonial entry to the region. The dependence on colonial sources does not mean that one is unaware of the biases and erasures that are present in every historical document. Which is why this study will pay sufficient attention to the ambivalence, silences and perceptions (often one-sided ones) that is associated with official and non-official records.

For a timeline or a chronology, I have found it convenient to take up Andrew West's periodization of British rule in the Naga Hills. West divided the late nineteenth century as the 'Military phase', the chief feature of which is the numerous British military expeditions to the Naga Hills; and the beginning of the twentieth century as the 'Administrative phase', where the British established some forms of administration in the Naga Hills with its district headquarters at Kohima.[7] With some slight modifications, I take the closing two decades of the nineteenth century as a transitional phase from the military to the administrative phase thereby not seeing the two phase as watertight compartments. However, there is no best periodization regarding colonial rule in the hills. Apparently, British intervention in the Naga Hills

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on – was enormous as compared to other hill communities of Northeast India. Apart from the voluminous writings there are over also 5,000 odd Naga artifacts collected, over 7,000 black-and-white photographs taken and about six hours of moving films made on the Nagas. See Alan Macfarlane, "The Cambridge Experimental Videodisc Project", *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Feb., 1990, pp. 9-12.

[7] There followed a 'Transitional phase' which heralded the establishment of Naga ethnography in British academic anthropology. This was the period from the late 1920s onwards when some former British administrators of the Naga Hills became academicians in British Universities. See Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", *History and Anthropology,* Vol. 8, No. 1-4, 1994, pp. 55-88.

was inconsistent throughout the whole of the nineteenth century, marked by inclusive as well as exclusive strategies of control.[8] The reason for adopting West's periodization was simply for the sake of generalization. But importantly it allows one to examine important changes in the colonial administrative machinery and its shifting preoccupation as well as notice shifts in its dealings with another important agent of colonialism, the American missionaries. To put it differently a comparative study of the colonial situation can be undertaken in this study by adhering to that timeline.

A Brief Historiographical Review and Scope of the Study

Beginning with the works of British officials such as Edward Gait,[9] colonial Northeast India has attracted several historical accounts which narrated and chronicled the British advent and activities in the region. As a region marked by conflicts between the British and the 'hill tribes', colonial policies ranging from the introduction of the 'Non-Regulated' system to 'conciliation' or peace mission with the tribal chiefs; and from 'punitive military expeditions' and the 'Forward Policy', to the policy of 'Non-Intervention' has been well accounted, for example, in the works of H.K. Barpujari.[10] Likewise, Piketo Sema has given a detailed aspect of British

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[8] Since their first encounter with the Nagas in 1832, the British had sought to control the hill community through various methods. Going by the nature of British intervention in the hills, four stages are identifiable. The first phase was the years from the first contact to 1951 which was marked by military expeditions – combined with 'peace conciliations' with Naga chiefs – dispatch into the hills to repress Naga raids into the Assam plains and to stop inter-village warfare. The second stage covered the years from 1951-66, where the British completely refrain from intervening in the affairs of the hills. The third stage could be the years from 1866-80, where the British renewed their efforts to control the Nagas, a period marked by the triangulation surveys of the hills and a quest for the most suitable strategic outposts in the midst of the Naga country. The fourth stage began from the year 1880 onwards with Kohima chosen as the district headquarters and the Nagas subjected to some forms of British administration.

[9] Representative of the tradition of imperialist historiography, Gait's work is a comprehensive narrative of the various ancient dynasties of Assam, the Ahom rule and finally, the British colonization of Assam. He presents pre-colonial Northeast India as a land of chaotic disorder while subscribing to the notion of the British 'civilizing mission'. Thus, he gave an account of the various activities of the British in this region ranging from the set-up of an administration to the establishment of rule of law; from the establishment of communications, roadways, and railways to the introduction of a private enterprise. All these measures were to create a modern economy, urban professions and civic consciousness. Not surprisingly, a chapter was devoted to the growth, development, and benefits of the tea industry in conferring employment to more than 600,000 labourers, the literate class and local cultivators. He credited the tea planters as instrumental in the construction of several roads and numerous railway lines. See Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta: Thacker Spink and Co. Private Ltd., 1905.

[10] Relying extensively on colonial records, H.K. Barpujari furnishes a narrative of British colonization and administration of Assam and the adjoining hill communities.He also describes, in two volumes, the factors and forces at work in shaping (as well as shifting) British policy towards the diverse border

administration with specific reference to the Naga Hills.[11] And Andrew West has shown a peculiar ethnographic tradition which the administrators serving in the Naga Hills took up as a hobby in their spare time.[12]

Similarly, the coming of the Christian missions and its evangelical activities are well documented in a study on the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (henceforth ABFMS) by H.K. Barpujari.[13] In addition, Milton Sangma's two volumes highlighted the various philanthropic projects of the ABFMS too.[14] Frederick Downs,

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'tribes'. He informs us that the frequent 'raids' and 'incursions' on the Assam plains made the British anxious to protect its mercantile interests and control the native raiders. Thus, as Barpujari tells us, the British adopted different strategies designed to keep the native tribes under control. It included creation of policies such as the Non-Regulated system where the administration of civil and criminal justice, revenue collection and other activities of the government were entrusted with the Civil Commissioner. In addition, it further examined the evolution and development of *Assam Sebundis* or Assam Light Infantry battalion where some native 'tribals' were enrolled to protect the frontier and for better mobility of troops in accessing the rough terrain while on punitive military expeditions against other marauding tribes. All this measures led to the establishment of the latter's paramountcy over the hill communities. Telling the story from the viewpoint of the British, the study, thus, examines the 'problems' posed by the 'hill tribes' in the path of the establishment of an imperial order. See H.K. Barpujari, *Problems of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier, 1843-72, Vol. I*, Gauhati: Lawyer's Book Stall, 1970; and ———, *Problems of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier, 1843-72, Vol. II*, Gauhati: United Publishers, 1976.

[11] See Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland, 1881-1947,* New Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1992 (reprint). The British relationship and their dealings with the different 'hill tribes' of Northeast India are also well narrated in the work of B.C. Chakravorty's *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam since 1858,* Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1964.

[12] Andrew West argued that it was the marginality of the hills that foster a peculiar "British officers' ethnographic tradition" – a dominant set of ethnographic ideas and practices shared by the administrators of the Naga Hills. Under what conditions were the colonial ethnography (of the Nagas) produced, who were the writers, or what made the Nagas attractive enough to be written about were some of the issues highlighted by West. Focusing chiefly on colonial writings, he shows how the British produces a form of writings that is compatible with the changing frontier condition. The key feature of the article, or rather his key contribution, was the periodization of colonial rule in the Naga Hills into a military phase (the late nineteenth century) followed by an administrative phase (the early twentieth century). While the earlier phase stresses on writings that has information about the geography of the country, and the whereabouts of the inhabitants – thereby to map the local people to a specific defined identifiable territory – the administrative phase require a more detailed ethnographic information and knowledge about the cultural practices of the Nagas. He made an important contribution to the historiography of the region which is the contextualization of the writings, its publication, and the intended audiences. This is an important aspect of his study as any knowledge production of any society is also conditioned, and invariably informed, very much by the historical context. See Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", *History and Anthropology,* Vol. 8, Nos. 1-4, 1994, pp. 55-88.

[13] H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India, 1836-1900 A.D.: A Documentary Study*, Guwahati/Delhi: Spectrum Publications, 1986. This work documented archival materials of the missions, pieces of Baptist missionary magazines, excerpts of private papers, official documents of the Government of India pertaining to missionary's activities, and contemporary and semi-contemporary works on the subject.

[14] Briefly, Sangma narrates the origin of the Baptist church and its spread to all parts of the world and, in particular, its development in America, resulting in the formation of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1814, which subsequently sponsored the Baptist mission in Northeast India. Sangma points out that the coming of the Baptist Mission is unintentional as they occupied a place called Sadiya, in Assam, just as a stop-over on their way to Northern Burma and China. The mission has decided to enter Assam on the 'official invitation' of one Francis Jenkins, in the early part of 1835,

in his early works, also narrated the accidental advent of the ABFMS which finally led to the growth of the Council of Baptist Churches of North East India (CBCNEI).[15] The later works of Downs briefly explore the relationship between mission and government and to a large extent depart from the mission-centric accounts that characterize his earlier writings.[16] In a similar vein, Lal Dena also has explored the mutual relationship existing between the mission and the British local government in Manipur and Mizoram and subtly stated it as one "based on the temporary process of conditional reciprocity."[17] In the region's history of Christianity, David Zou's work on the cultural implications and the imaginings of the missionaries also deserve mention.[18] Thus, there has been a rich account of the missions' activities but not an

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to work among the Shan tribe of upper Burma. Moreover, it has been the long cherished vision of the board in America to introduce Christianity among the Shans tribe, and through them to enter China by inland routes, as her seaports were closed to foreigner. However, finding the inaccessibility of the landscapes, they switched over their mission to the swarming Assamese millions of the Brahmaputra valley. But their project among the Assamese not being successful, they turn their attention to the adjoining hills. As it turns out, their successful experiment with the Garos of Meghalaya led to the extension of the mission activities to Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh. See Milton Sangma, *History of the American Baptist Mission in North-East India, Vol. I,* New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987. The second volume deals, in greater detail, the process of evangelization. In particular, it presents an account of the Baptist missions' various philanthropic projects – opening of schools, translations and publications of Bible and religious tracts into local languages, introduction of hospitals and so on. This volume deals with the manner in which these activities are carried out by the mission in Garo hills, Nagaland and Manipur in chronological order of their occupation. See Milton Sangma, *History of the American Baptist Mission in North-East India, Vol. II,* New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1992.

[15] Downs points out that the first American Baptist Mission stations in Northeast India were strategic outpost for the evangelization of the Shan tribes of Northern Burma and Southern China and not for converting the people of that region to Christianity. Drawing chiefly on missionaries' reports, the work is a mission-centred account which describes the various missions sent out to the different parts of the region – Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and so on. The first chapter gives an account of the advent of the ABFMS in a politically disturbing context owing to the Burmese war. It also presents an account of the problems which marred the progress of the conversion process which comes in the form of illness, the financial depression and Civil War in America, and the 1857 uprising. The remaining chapters deals with how the various missions succeeded in developing churches all over the region thereby leading to the formation of the CBCNEI. See F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period, 1836-1950,* Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1971.

[16] F.S. Downs described the relationship between mission and government as one of "cooperation in certain limited areas of mutual coincidence of interest." See Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in Northeast India: Historical Perspectives,* Delhi/Guwahati: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Christian Literature Centre, 1983, p. 51.

[17] Lal Dena, *Christians Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India with particular reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills, 1894-1947,* Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988, p. 117. Lal Dena's work is a comprehensively rich narrative of the missionary movement in Manipur and Mizoram. The paternalism shown by British officials towards the missionaries, and the collusion between these two are briefly highlighted in his works. He also explored just briefly the strain relations, differences that arose between the two as a result of conflicting position over certain aspects of the indigenous people's practices such as 'slavery' in the Lushai Hills.

[18] As Christian evangelists were intimately involved in the colonial process, Zou has tried to locate the missions within the domains of the larger colonial structure. While demonstrating the shifts in missionaries' discourse, he also shows the ambivalent position of the evangelical discourse vis-à-vis

appropriate explanation as to why it was that the hills responded more positively to the Christian missions in comparison with the lowlands. In this regard, R.M. Eaton's article on the Naga tribe's conversion to Christianity go beyond simple generalizations such as the Nagas' practice of 'animism' or the lack of an established religion such as Hinduism and Islam in the hills.[19] Rather than investing the missions with historical agency alone, Eaton demonstrated how it was a process of appropriation or what he calls 'creative adaptation' on the part of the Nagas. Thus, how the region was colonized, administered and how the various strategies of the colonial state led to the 'pacification' of the native inhabitants have been well accounted for in the present scholarship. From an assessment of administrative policies, the historical field has moved on to the study of the administrators, their

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the dominant discourse of the colonial state. Though the missionary did share a close, mutual relationship with the colonial state, yet it also critiqued the dominant discourse of the state on many contentious issues, especially in issues such as the question of the morality of the opium trade; or the alleged existence of the slavery system (*bawi*) among some hill tribes of Northeast India. While this being the case, the anthropological perspective is critical of the missionary practices and utterances for the latter's aggressive attitude towards native culture and tradition. For this aspect, he gives the example of one anthropologist Furer-Haimendorf utter dislike for the 'artificial costume' – clothes such as blouses which are imported from the plains – introduced by the missionary that replaced the traditional dress among the Ao Nagas. He has, thus, exposed the surface conflicts arising from divergent interests as well as from underlying ambiguities and contradictions of colonial projects. See David Vumlallian Zou, "Colonial Discourse and Evangelical Imagining on Northeast India", *Religion and Society*, Vol. 48, No. 2, June, 2003, pp. 57-93.

[19] As Eaton tells us, till the early twentieth century the Nagas represent, quite clearly, a previously insulated society, which became dramatically drawn into a wider world. Not only this makes many Nagas aware of a macrocosm lying beyond their local communities, but it also led to a crisis in the traditional cosmology or microcosm of the Nagas. The result was that many of them began to grapple with the altered socio-cultural and political landscape. The unprecedented repercussion incised on the tribal mind by certain events – the incorporation of the hill tribes by the colonial administration, the two World Wars and the consequent exposure to modern warfare and western technologies, and so on – led to the explosion of the Nagas' localized universe. It was on the collapse of this tribal cosmology and traditional cognitive structures that the Christian missionaries – described as 'intellectual engineers' – capitalizes by trying to fit their own system into the shattered tribal cosmology. The missionaries which had the most success of conversion rate were the ones who presented Christianity in terms of continuity, rather than conflict, with the Nagas religious system, and those who allowed the Nagas to identify the Christian conception of God within the Nagas indigenous religious systems. Backing his study with statistical data, Eaton has subtly demonstrated how the Nagas' conversion to Christianity was a process of appropriation or what he calls 'creative adaptation' on the part of the Nagas. In so doing, he gives a perspective of those undergoing conversions. It is a novel historical explanation as it manage to show that it was not the missionaries' effort alone that led to conversion among the Nagas. At the same time, it is a modest effort to move away from monolithic notions of colonialism as an abstract process or as a blanket explanation for explaining the socio-cultural transformations in Northeast India. See R.M. Eaton, "Conversion to Christianity Among the Nagas, 1876-1971", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1984, pp. 1-42. See also R.M. Eaton, "Comparative History as World History: Religious Conversion in Modern India", in R.M. Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 45-75.

activities, and their mutual, yet tensed relationship with the missionaries as evident in the works of Zou, Lal Dena and West.[20]

To this field of historical enquiry, the study intends to contextualize British endeavour of knowledge gathering and its classificatory practices of people and places besides adding to it the shifts and tensions in the relationship between the state and Christian mission. A central theme which will persistently emerge in this study was the intimate connection between colonial knowledge and rule and the various strategies of control adopted by the British. As obvious, and as pointed out above, this study is largely indebted to Bernard Cohn's concept of the 'investigative modalities',[21] which the British deployed to gather knowledge about the people they were ruling. Like elsewhere across the globe, in Northeast India the British collected knowledge to fix the native population such as the Nagas to a specific territory as embodied in the creation of the Naga Hills. Central to this whole process of territorial fixing and demarcation was the role of classification and construction of groups along racial, religious, and socio-cultural lines. Ironically, in the existing scholarship on Northeast India, there has been a minimal attempt to examine the historical context and the intricate network of colonial practices which led to the construction or the constitution of certain groups or identities or 'tribes'. Instead, there is a tendency in most existing works to operate with an unquestioned assumption, treating and accepting colonial categories such as the 'Nagas', one of the diverse 'hill tribes', as true remnants of the past. This study attempts to contests this notion and reconstructs how certain identities or more specifically 'tribes' came into being under colonial rule by taking a case study of the Nagas. It is the study contention that the category 'tribe' was, in part, constructed by the British to legitimize their rule in the frontier so as to subject the 'tribe' to exclusive forms of control. And the application of the term over the Nagas, I suggest, was to catalogue and signify difference among colonial subjects as the Assam plains and its adjoining hills were slated for different forms of colonial

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[20] West has pointed out that the missionaries were resented by the British Officers' group due to the former's efforts at changing the Nagas and the abolition of certain Nagas customs such as feasts of merit. The reason behind it, he tells us, is that the missionaries "were clearly not part of the officers' group, not least because they were of the wrong class, not Anglican and possibly not English". See Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", p. 69.

[21] Altogether Bernard Cohn listed a total of six 'investigative modalities' that was crucial for the knowledge gathering project of the British. They are the 'Historiographic Modality', the 'Observational/Travel Modality', the 'Survey Modality', the 'Enumerative Modality', the 'Museological Modality' and the 'Surveillance Modality'. See Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, pp. 5-11.

rule. The exclusive forms of control inevitably foster a localized, peculiar ethnographic practice that was appropriate with the specific condition of the hills. This specific ethnography proved to be significant for understanding the natives as well as for the maintenance of colonial administration with the result that descriptive ethnography, monographs and other works were produced that served as guidelines for colonial officials. It appeared, then, that ethnography proved to be a useful instrument of control for the local government. Nevertheless, it has been advocated by some that it is an erroneous impression to view anthropology as 'primarily an aid' to colonial rule.[22] Engaging with this issue, the study will situate the operation of this peculiar ethnographic practice that had evolved in the Naga Hills, in particular, among British administrators who double up as anthropologists. But whether, or not, it is a mistake to view anthropology as a tool of colonial rule, the study tend to suggest that there was an undeniable complicity between localized ethnographic practice and colonial governance.

Further the study will show that the category 'tribe' was, all throughout the colonial period, an ambivalent term with changes in its connotations and images over time. It will examine how the term 'tribe' figure in early official reports; and trace its subtle changes in the decennial-census reports and administrative ethnography. In like manner, I will illustrate how the Nagas as a 'tribe' underwent significant transformation in its image as a fierce 'savage' in the military phase to one of a 'childlike' figure needing the protection of the colonial government in the administrative phase. The study suggests that these shifts seem to be partly because of the changes in the local and metropole context – both informed and influenced by important changes in the local administration and the growth of anthropology as an academic discipline. To another extent, it was also because of the tussle between the missionaries and British officials over the course of how the 'civilizing' of the natives should proceed or how the 'civilizing mission' was to be carried out. The Christian missionaries, no doubt, interpret or understood the 'civilizing mission' primarily as the effort to convert the Nagas to Christianity. This, however, was not to the liking of, and critiqued upon by, British officials, particularly of the administrative phase. But criticism flew from both quarters. The study intends to examine this confrontation and

[22] Talal Asad has advocated that it is a 'mistake' to view anthropology as an instrument of colonial administration or as 'the simple reflection of colonial ideology'. See Talal Asad, "Introduction", in Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London: Ithaca Press, 1975 (originally published 1973), p.18.

at the same time see the contour of the state-mission relationship. As an agent that was quiet substantial for the 'pacification' of the native tribes, the missionary were to a certain extent aided and assisted by the colonial government. The state in turn appreciated the mission's activities in softening and controlling the native tribes. This relationship, which was both mutual and sometimes sour, has been explored briefly by Lal Dena and F.S. Downs. But what was not dealt with in greater detail in the existing scholarship regarding state-mission relation was the examination of changes in the pattern of the relationship over time. This study will chronologically look at the changes in the relationship between mission and government by comparing nineteenth-century state officials' attitude towards the Christian mission with that of the twentieth-century. Examining the proceedings between mission and the state and noting its strained, yet mutual relationship may turn out to be an instructive exercise in revealing what some scholars have called the 'tensions of empire'.[23]

But while focusing on the faultlines between the two colonial agents, the missionaries and the administrator, the study will also try to see the similarities[24] in them despite their tendency for contradicting and critiquing each other. As pointed out before, it was often the missionary who are at the receiving end of the administrator-ethnographer's critique for their ethnocentrism and like attitudes and held accountable for the 'denationalization' or destruction of natives' culture. But, the missionary sometimes also came out in defence of themselves against their criticizer. The study will thread through this debate as an attempt to point out the similarity between them despite their professed differences. In doing so, I will focus specifically on the proceedings between the missionaries and the administrator-ethnographers of the twentieth-century.

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[23] Frederick Cooper, and Ann L. Stoler, "Introduction: Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Nov., 1989, pp. 609-621. By 'tensions of empire', Cooper and Stoler meant the anxiety, tensions and 'conflicting conceptions of morality and progress' among the agents of colonization. As they inform us, the contesting agendas and competing strategies for the maintenance of control among the colonizers was at the core of "formal debates as well as subterranean discourses among high and low-level officials, missionaries, and subordinate agents of corporations ... and other interstitial groups." (p. 609.)

[24] This is partly informed by Sjaak van der Geest formulation of the 'similarities' and 'dissimilarities' between anthropologist and missionaries. In an article on the ambiguous relationships between missionaries and anthropologist, he stated that the former has often been viewed as 'anthropologists' polar opposites' – ethnocentric preachers and people who changes, destructs culture and indigenous knowledge, and erodes rites and practices. But, at another level he informed us that anthropologists are no better than the missionaries as they spread the teachings of their discipline and studied and interpret natives' religion in terms of their own faith. See Sjaak van der Geest, "Anthropologists and Missionaries: Brothers under the Skin", *Man*, New Series, Vol. 25, No. 4, Dec., 1990, pp. 588-601.

Note on Sources

During a period of nearly a century and a half of colonial rule in Northeast India, a massive amount of writings were generated in the form of journals, official documents, memoirs, books, and information on diverse topics. For this research purpose, colonial writings will be classified into the following:

I. Government or Official Records: This writings include the military and survey reports, gazetteers, administrative reports, and other archival materials. This writings have information on British activities such as topographical explorations, demarcation of boundaries as well as a descriptive ethnography of the people the colonial officials encounter while on official duty. This strand of writings can be further divided into the following:

- **Unpublished Government Records**: This includes, for example, the various official correspondences, files, political proceedings and consultations of the Foreign Department available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi.

- **Government Publications**: The *Assam Administration Reports, Census of India Reports, Imperial and District Gazetteers,* etc. published by the colonial government on quite a regular basis are some of the examples of this modality. Reports furnished by surveyors and explorers which were sometimes published by the state also qualify for this modality.

II. Private Writings – Books, Notes, Diaries, and Travelogues: The private or unofficial writings – memoirs, notes, historical works, journals, travel writings and diaries – of colonial officials and Europeans falls under this category. Some of this strand of writings such as that of Major John Butler, for instance, adopts an adventure plot which seems to conform to popular genre of travel writings.[25] Others wrote 'history', detailing the proceedings and engagements of the colonial state with the diverse 'hill tribes' of the region.[26]

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[25]John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam during a Residence of Fourteen Years*, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1855.

[26] Notable examples include the following works: Sir Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal,* (Calcutta: Home Department Press, 1884.); Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam*, (Shillong: Assam

III. Christian Missionaries' Accounts: Another significant body of colonial writings would be the missionary literature in the form of field reports, Christian literature, private letters, autobiographies, and discussion papers of missionary conferences. The study will use, in particular, the correspondence reports (preserved in microfilms) of missionaries such as Reverend Miles Bronson and other ABFMS's missionaries accessible at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

IV. Ethnographic Writings: To this genre can be assigned the ethnographical monographs on the diverse Naga tribes by British administrators that had lived and served among them.[27] In addition to it, there are several scattered descriptive ethnography of the different tribes by administrators, professional anthropologists as well as by British military personnel which were often printed in journals such as *The Journal of the (Royal) Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Man* and *Folklore.* The decennial *Census of India Reports* also accommodates ethnographically appendages furnished by the Political Agent or the local British officials of the respective 'tribes' and communities.

While dealing with the sources, a problem that emerges, which need to be spell out before proceeding on, was the inconsistency of place, community or river names. Colonial terminologies lack uniformity particularly till about the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The spellings became, more or less, uniform only with the onset of the decade-wise census. Hence, references to the Naga communities, for instance, vary from one colonial official to another. A generous multiple of spellings and appellations were given such that while one official used the term 'Nagahs', another deployed 'Naagaas' and another still 'Nagaas' and so on. The same also happened with places and rivers name – the Naga Hills referred to as 'Nagah Hills' or Manipur as 'Muneepore' or 'Munipore' and so on or the river Brahmaputra as 'Burhampooteer' among other appellations. The list could go on for other places and terms. Therefore, to avoid confusion, I will use throughout this study, unless it is a straight quotation from the sources, the present-day appellations with the exceptional retention of the place names of Burma, Calcutta and the Naga Hills.

Government Press, 1942.): and L.W. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burmah and North-Eastern Frontier*, (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1914.)

[27] The monographs compiled on the diverse Naga tribes were: T.C. Hodson's *Naga Tribes of Manipur,* Delhi, 1974, (originally published 1911), J.H. Hutton's *Angami Nagas* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921.) and *Sema Nagas* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921.); and J.P. Mills' *Lhotha Nagas* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1922) and *Ao Nagas* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1926.). These officials also consistently published numerous short ethnographies in the journals, *Man* and *Folklore.*

Plan of the Study

Chapter 1 will look at British effort of gathering and generating knowledge on Northeast India. It will outline the context in which the British undertook the exploratory project. The limited knowledge of the hill tracts – which was realized by the British during the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) – necessitated and speeded the quest for knowledge acquisition and exploration of newly acquired lands. Covering the early years of the advent of the British in Northeast India – mostly the nineteenth century – this chapter will explore British attempts of territorializing, locating spaces and people and the interactions between the surveyors and surveyed. The study will focus chiefly on writings generated during survey operations – narrative accounts which colonial surveyors deployed in their reports to render the territory under exploration knowable. This chapter will further look at some of the problems and constraints encountered by the British in their pursuit for knowledge to outline the limits of a frontier regime. It will also highlighted British officials' perception of the frontier and their activities respectively, i.e., how they viewed themselves and their touring practices among the inhabitants of the hill tracts.

Chapter 2 suggest that the category 'tribe' or more specifically the 'Naga tribe' was, in part, a construct of colonial ethnography which got codified in the survey and census reports, administrative monographs and other strands of colonial writings. It will examine how colonial officials posted in the region initially deployed the term 'tribe' in the official reports that they wrote, as well as in some of the works that they produced on their frontier experiences. I argue that it was the frontier characteristic which marked the beginning of British rule that made colonial officials to conveniently refer to the inchoate, diverse communities inhabiting the hill tracts as, and label it with the term, 'hill tribes'. It was partially a result of putting the knowledge of newly acquired territories and the people inhabiting them in an ordered form. This chapter will, then, trace the gradual systematization, most evidently embodied in the census reports and supposedly ethnographic works, of the knowledge on 'tribes'. Central to the constitution of the 'Naga tribe' – and the nomenclature 'Nagas' – was the crucial role of administrative ethnography and the prevalent racial theory in the nineteenth century, as well as knowledge of the term received from the plain people. Threading through some of these aspects, the study will also seek out the assumption that characterized British officials in their interactions with the Naga

people, with more particular focus on the administrator-ethnographers group of the early the twentieth century.

Chapter 3 will explore the relationship between the state and the mission so as to expose the inner contradictions of colonial rule or the 'tensions of empire'. It will do so by arguing that the relationship shared, in particular, by the state and the ABFMS was mutual yet ambivalent, riddled with contradictions and that it underwent shifts. The study will show that there was a gradual shift in colonial officials' dealings with the missionaries in the Military phase (the late nineteenth-century) in comparison with the Administrative phase (the beginning of the twentieth-century). Again, while they were allies and partners in certain aspects, they were bitter rivals in others. The study will, accordingly, draw out some of the issues over which British officials and missionaries disagreed upon. The opposing viewpoints and the diatribe that they throw at each other naturally brings out their perception of themselves and where they stand in relation with the natives – that is, whether as 'protector' of native's culture or as 'civilizer' changing the natives from their 'heathen' ways.

Chapter 1

Exploring a Frontier: The British in Northeast India, 1824-1900

The noted anthropologist-historian Bernard S. Cohn has attempted and shown a classification of the body of knowledge – what he terms the 'investigative modalities'– that is instrumental in sustaining colonial rule, issue commands, maintain law and order and generate other forms of information about the people the British were ruling.[1] One of the 'forms of knowledge' is the 'survey modality'[2] which the British deployed extensively in coming into contact with Northeast India right after the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26. Accordingly, this chapter is a study of colonial surveys and knowledge-acquisition practices at the periphery of British India, the North-East Frontier, with more emphasis on explorations conducted in the Naga Hills. Highlighting the intimate connection between knowledge and colonial rule, the study will examine British effort of generating a vast amount of knowledge on the unknown territory and its inhabitants which led to the compilation of information in textual forms such as survey reports, tour journals and geographical narratives. Implicit in this colonial endeavour for information were strategies of control ranging from boundary demarcation to the identifying, locating, classifying and bounding of the natives within a specific territory.

The first section outlines the context in which the British undertook the exploration of Northeast India. The context was the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) and its conclusion that necessitated and speeded the knowledge-acquisition and exploration of newly acquired territories. The second section examines British attempts of territorializing spaces and people. The third section focuses on writings generated during survey operations: narrative accounts which colonial surveyors deployed as a mode to 'know' the territory under exploration. While highlighting the interactions between the surveyors and surveyed, the fourth section look at some of the problems encountered by the British in their quest for information. The following

[1] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India,* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 5-11.

[2] In the context of colonial India, Cohn suggests that the word 'survey' means a "form of exploration of the natural and social landscape" or "any systematic and official investigation of the natural and social features of the Indian empire." See *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

sections draws attention to British officials' conception of the frontier and their activities respectively, i.e., how they perceived of themselves and their touring practices among the inhabitants of the hill tracts of Northeast India.

1.1 Context

Till the early nineteenth century, the British had very minimal knowledge of Northeast India (especially the hilly terrain) with the exception of the Assam plains. Unlike the Indian plains which have an intricate information systems, the British in the frontier region, as C.A. Bayly has pointed out, were confronted by a virtual 'information famine' which slowed their plans of conquest and sometimes put the whole structure of their power in danger.[3] As the British found themselves enmeshed in border clashes with the Burmese kingdom consolidating its power in the Assam plains and parts of the foothills, they realized how incomplete was their existing knowledge on the geography of the region and its inhabitants. In fact, the 'imperfect' knowledge of, and the obstacle in the free flow of information, in Northeast India were a repetitive expression, and a common anxiety, of the reports of officers posted on this frontier hill tracts.[4] But, following the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) and the consequent defeat of the Burmese force, the British came into greater contact with Northeast India which led to the quest for the acquirement of geographical knowledge of this frontier region.

It was during the Burmese war that Lieutenant R. Wilcox conducted one of the foremost surveys of some parts of Northeast India stretching from the years 1825 to 1828, the experience of which he duly reported in the form of a memoir. In a narrative form, Wilcox's memoir described the routes taken, the rivers he traced, the landscapes that he passed through and the people inhabiting those spaces. The narrative structure of the account seemed to be conforming to popular literary genre of travel and exploration accounts of the British Empire. But importantly, what Wilcox had

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[3] C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. In his chapter 3, Bayly gave a detailed account of the difficulties and dearth of information that the British encountered in their military debacle with the Nepali Kingdom (1814-16) and the Burmese (1824-26). See pp. 97-128.

[4] For example, an early British military explorer of some parts of Northeast India, one Lieutenant R. Wilcox proposed to report, in his memoir, "a detailed account of the progress of our geographical discoveries on the North-East Frontier from the time when our [the British] armies advancing in that direction opened to us countries which we had then a *very imperfect knowledge*." Emphasis mine. See R. Wilcox, "Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the Neighbouring Countries, executed in 1825-6-7-8", in *Hill Tracts between Assam and Burma: Selection of Papers*, Delhi: Vivek Publishing Company, 1978 (originally published 1873), p. 1. (henceforth *Selection of Papers*.)

accomplished was knowledge of previously unexplored and unknown territories of the North-East Frontier. Thus began a trend, a quest for a descriptive account of the topography of the land under survey, and a detailing of the routes and rivers in particular.

Some few years later post Wilcox's survey, Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant R.B. Pemberton, in 1832, were deputed with the task of conducting a route survey from Assam into Manipur via the Naga Hills.[5] They were instructed by the Governor General to determine the best strategic military outpost, the routes and the topography of the land so as to be best prepared in the event of another conflagration with the Burmese.[6] The British, no doubt, took the threat of a possible Burmese invasion very seriously and accordingly adopted measures to counter this vulnerability. This realization made colonial officials such as Captain Jenkins opined that the North East Frontier was a key strategic territory not only for the protection of Assam and Cachar but also the province of Bengal as a whole.[7] In fact, even 'rumours' of a road constructed through the Naga Hills to Assam by the Burmese were taken seriously and some officers were deputed to ascertain whether there was

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[5] In executing the route survey, Captain Jenkins and Lieutenants Pemberton and G. Gordon, became the first Europeans to advance to the Naga Hills, blazing a path through the forest between the hills and the low banks of Assam and Northern Cachar. They were aided and accompanied by the Raja of Manipur, Gambhir Singh, with 400 Manipuri sepoys. National Archives of India, New Delhi, Foreign Department, Branch - Political (henceforth NAI, FDBP), Consultation No. 70, dated the 5th March 1832.

[6] NAI, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, Cons. No. 1/2, dated the 22nd July 183, Minute by the Governor General, W.C. Bentinck, dated Simla, the 20th June 1831. Issuing some 'general instructions' to these Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton, the Governor-General stated that it was the "essential duty of these officers to survey and describe the best route from Sylhet [now in present day Bangladesh] through Cachar [in Assam] into Munnipore [the present day Manipur] with reference to the march of troops, cavalry and artillery." He also made this remark: "It were superfluous to point out as objects of inquiry, the distance of Eastward from Sylhet to which water conveyance is available, the best line for the formation of a road, the fittest season for travelling it, the most eligible places for establishing posts or depots, the means of transport, and the resources of the country as to population, cattle and grain. The means and expense, as to labour and materials, of constructing a road and keeping it passable, will deserve attention." The instructions of the Governor General were just one in many of the measures that the British adopted to prevent a repeat of the Burmese War which had proven to be of dire consequence to them. As such, the mood prevalent among the British at that period was the strong protection of the frontier. As the Governor-General aptly noted: "Were Munnipore [sic] not interposed between us and Ava [the capital of Burma], we should be peculiarly vulnerable on the Sylhet and Cachar frontiers; but unless a permanent communication be opened, so as to enable us to co-operate with, or support the forces of that state, consisting of about 3,000 well armed men available for any operations, the protection of our frontier in that direction will be imperfect."

[7] In a correspondence addressed to W.H. Macnaghten, the Secretary to the Government of India in the Political Department, Fort William, (henceforth Sec. to the GoI, PD, FW), Captain Jenkins warned the Government not to enter into any war "without, as a matter of precaution, doubling at least the present means of defence along the whole frontier". Further, he stated that without proper protection, "not only Assam and Cachar might be invaded and laid waste but that all northern and eastern Bengal might be exposed to the devastation of the Burmese." NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 90, dated the 11th February 1835.

any truth in any of this allegation.[8] Thus, for a succession of colonial frontier officials, and particularly the Agent to the Governor General,[9] the hills were perceived constantly as a strategic boundary, a boundary to be delimited for the defence of the Assam plains and its emerging tea plantation industry.

That knowledge of routes and passes as well as the creation and connectivity of strategic defence post were of utmost importance for the protection of the frontier was the chief concern of the British in this early period. Captain Jenkins, in a letter to his higher-ups in Fort William, expressed this apprehension subtly when he stated:

> Under whatever circumstances a war with the Burmese may recur, it must be desirable that all our advanced posts should be connected together by practicable roads and that all known passes between our possessions and theirs should be equally available to us as to them.[10]

At this stage, therefore, the most crucial task of colonial surveyors was the acquisition of knowledge and connectivity of routes for flexibility in the movements of British troops. Officials such as Captain Pemberton spent a major part of his career conducting exploration surveys and collecting information on the mountain chain system, the passes through the mountains, and routes and lines of communication for military and commercial purposes. Accordingly, he furnished a report which has a section on military and commercial routes between the British and Burmese territories as it afforded the opportunities for efficiently making advances to the latter's territory in case of an eruption of another confrontation.[11] Further, Pemberton supplemented

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[8] The report about the alleged Burmese activities came in from Captain S.F. Hannay, Commanding Officer, Assam Light Infantry, Jaikwah, to Captain H. Vetch, Political Agent, Dibrugarh. NAI, Foreign Department, Branch - Secret, Cons. Nos. 109-11, dated the 29th June 1840.

[9] The Agent to Governor-General of the North East Frontier (hereafter AGG, NEF) played a very significant role in the colonial machinery. Directly responsible to the Secretary to Government of India in the Political Department, Fort William, the officer maintains steady and consistent correspondences about the latest happening of the region. This officer was also the intermediary link between the British field officers – such as the military personnel, surveyors and the administrators – and Fort William. Thus, the AGG was required to possess the most intimate knowledge of, and superbly handled, frontier affairs. In Northeast India, Captain Jenkins proved to be the ablest officials to shoulder this responsibility and he was accordingly appointed, in April 1834, as Agent to the Governor General, NEF, as well as the Commissioner of Assam.

[10] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 90, dated the 11th February 1835.

[11] Capt. R.B. Pemberton described the mountain chains of what he calls the eastern frontier under the head Assam, Manipur and Arracan giving information about every known passes and lines of communication. The approximate distance of the routes were also presented by him in a format easily understandable. Here is an extract: "By the first line, or that through Assam, from, Calcutta to Ava, the travelling distance is about 1433; by the second through Muneepoor, 1052 miles; by the third through Arracan, 835 miles, and by the fourth via Rangoon, 1446 miles." See R.B. Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*, Guwahati: Government of Assam in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, 1966 (originally published in 1835), p. 153.

his report with route maps embracing all the most important lines of communication between British India and the Burmese capital Ava, and the best routes which united the frontier valleys of Assam and Manipur.[12] Likewise, officials such as Lieutenant T. Brodie toured the Naga Hills extensively gathering information about the passes and its suitability for traversing.[13] Knowledge of routes was, then, the main concerns of the British although there were other aspects that they attempted to know.[14] As such, route surveys characterized this period chiefly. As Ian J. Barker has pointed out, but though for a different context, "route surveys were particularly useful when new territories or little known districts were being explored."[15]

Along with the details on the routes through the mountain chains, the British were also anxious to know the rivers systems and its tributaries for mobility on water as well. Early explorers such as Lieutenant Wilcox and Captain Bedford, for instance, was deputed with the task to 'unravel the mystery' of the source of the river Brahmaputra.[16] Similarly, at a much later time Captain Butler and Dr. Brown, Political Agent Manipur, were also ordered to, and they made the 'discovery' that, the Dikhu river flows into the Brahmaputra and that another river called the Lanier was

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[12] Altogether a total of ten maps were prepared by Captain Pemberton along with his report. NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 53, dated the 1st February 1836, Correspondence from Captain R. Boileau Pemberton, On Special Political Duty, to W.H. Macnaghten, Sec. to the GoI, Calcutta, dated the 20th January 1836.

[13] In touring some parts of the Naga Hills, Brodie reported the principal duars or passes that he travelled which were the Konghon Terroo Bhutan Namsang, Jaboka-Banfera-Kooloom Moolthoom Borehath & Jeypore-Bhutan. He also mentioned the hitherto un-travelled passes such as the Namsang Jaboka, Banfera & Kooloom Moothoom. The conditions of the roads were also reported by him, and its width which were some 20 or 30 feet wide. NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 19-20, dated the 23rd December 1843, Correspondence from T. Brodie, Officiating Magistrate, Sibsagar, to F. Jenkins, Commissioner, Guwahati, dated the 9th April 1842.

[14] For example, there were efforts by individuals such as J.M. Masters, Superintendent of the Assam Company, to collect knowledge about the botany of some portion of the Naga Hills. Masters enumerated about 500 different species of botanical specimens he came across *en route* in the short span of a month's time while accompanying Mr. Bedford, Sub Assistant, and Captain T. Brodie, on a tour of the Naga Hills. NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 125, dated the 19th October 1844, Correspondence from J.W. Masters, to Captain T. Brodie, Principal Asst. Commissioner of Assam, dated Sibsagar, the 29th March 1844.

[15] Ian J. Barrow stated that route surveys were most appropriate for exploration of new territories hitherto unknown as "they were descriptive and picturesque, and were ideal for identifying safe journeys and locating towns, fords, and impasses. They were useful for showing what could be expected, in terms of physical and political dangers, if a journey were to be undertaken." See Ian J. Barrow, *Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in India, c. 1756*-1905, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 68, 70.

[16] In this quest for determining the source of the Brahmaputra, Wilcox was asked to proceed "up its stream as far as the influence of the neighbouring force [the Burmese], or the safeguard of a detached escort, might permit." See R. Wilcox, "Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the Neighbouring Countries, executed in 1825-6-7-8", p.2.

an affluent of the Irrawaddy river.[17] The whole effort in tracing the sources of the river was to facilitate the movement of troops and possible commercial activities. Moreover, tracing a river must have its advantage, as Paul Carter pointed out, though in the context of exploration activities in Australia, in lending direction to the landscape under exploration.[18]

Besides realizing the strategic location afforded by the frontier hill tracts from Burmese aggression, the British were also struck by the necessity to precisely know the exact location of the diverse hill tribes as the latter often prove to be a threat to the developing order symbolized by the plains with its tea plantations. A cursory glimpse at the official reports in the nineteenth-century indicated a certain concern with knowing the whereabouts of the hill tribes, and their village names as evident, for instance, in the report furnished by Mr. B. Wood and Captain F. Brodie.[19] Again, in reference to the eastern Nagas such as the 'Borduaria', 'Namsangias' [in present day Arunachal Pradesh] the Lieutenant-Governor of Assam stated that "while we [the British] leave them unknown in their obscure hills and jungles, there is no security whatever against the raids which continually occur; once we know them, we find them very amenable to authority."[20] Indeed, another official Captain J.F. Michell reported that "an accurate knowledge of the geographical position of the Abors and other hill tribes is necessary to a complete understanding of our military position on this frontier".[21] As such, Michell furnished a comprehensive report of the

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[17] Receiving a report from Captain Butler and Dr. Brown, C.U. Aitchison acknowledged that "the principal result of the explorations has been to establish the fact that the Dikhoo River flows into the Brahmapootra, while the Lanier after flowing north-east makes a sudden bend to the east, bursts through a narrow defile in the Saramethi range and is thus an affluent of the Irrawaddy." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 98, dated December 1874, Correspondence from C.U. Aitchison, Esq., C.S.I., Sec. to the GoI, FD, to Colonel R.A. Keatinge, C.S.I., Chief Commissioner of Assam, (henceforth CoA), dated the 5th December 1874.

[18] Paul Carter informs us that rivers "presented to the traveller who followed them a series of resemblances that might be used to characterize the country." Relieving the traveller "the burden of his responsibility", rivers also "promised a self-evident mobility." Further, tracing the sources of the river in the mountain to their final issue in the sea, Carter contends, "had its counterpart in the mental impetus to associate." Thus, to the explorer, "rivers were desired, not merely to assuage physical need, but as geographical objects satisfying intellectual thirst." See Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, London: Faber and Faber, p. 54.

[19] For example, Mr. B. Wood, Sub Assistant Commissioner, Golaghat, listed the Naga villages located between the Dikhu and Dhunsiri rivers. Likewise, Captain F. Brodie compiled a list of villages of several Naga chiefs as well as a Table of Distances. See Appendix I and II.

[20] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 73, dated January, 1874, Correspondence from Sec. to GoI, FD, to Alexander Mackenzie, Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, (henceforth GoB), dated Simla, the 17th October 1873.

[21] John F. Michell, *The North-East Frontier of India: A Topographical, Political and Military Report*, Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1973 (reprint), pp. iv. [This work was originally published as *Report*

geographical position and topographical history of the diverse hill tribes, a chronicle of British military and political engagements with the tribes and, of course, routes into the territories inhabited by them.[22] However, though he compiled an impressive systematized work much needed for military purpose, Michell still lamented the dearth of information about this frontier region. He reported:

> There is no part of our vast Indian frontier about which we have so little military or geographical information as the north-east ... no portion of it so difficult to reinforce in case of certain emergencies arising, and ... yet, in this remote corner of our empire, there is more English capital invested in land than in any like extent of our Indian dominions.[23]

We can see from the text, a clear juxtaposition of the strategic military position of the frontier along with the need to protect their commercial interests – the tea industry. In fact, in 1876 the Chief Commissioner of Assam, in a resolution, appraised the survey report of Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe as furnishing 'geographical knowledge' necessary for the protection of the tea districts of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar in Assam from the hill Naga tribes.[24]

Thus, it can be seen that while, on the one hand, there is a need to know the frontier for the strategic and military purposes, there is, on the other hand, an imperative need among colonial officials to protect the infantile tea plantation thereby ensuring security to their commercial interests. Both the strategic or military interest and commercial benefits are implicit in topographical survey. Geographical

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(Topographical, Political and Military) on the North-East Frontier of India, Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1883].

[22] The report was a result of information gleaned from sources which includes reports of the Intelligence Branch, correspondences to former Quartermasters-General, Survey reports, Administration reports, maps and notes, as well as published and unpublished records of travellers. The report was divided into three sections for each tribe titled Topographical, Political and Military. While the topographical section described the river systems and tributaries, mountain chains, names, numbers and position of the tribes, the political section outlined the relationship between the British and the numerous tribes from the earliest contact to the time the report was compiled. The Military section was further divided into two parts: the first part detailed the conflicts and military expeditions against the tribes and the second part listed the known routes into the territories occupied by the tribes. The report covered a great aspect of the topography and the people and, as Michell himself stated, was a referential work for military uses and purposes. See *Ibid.*,

[23] *Ibid.*, p. iv.

[24] Extolling the effort and the survey reports of Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe as providing 'full of most interesting matter', the Chief Commissioner stated: "... the geographical knowledge that has been acquired during these operations will be of the greatest practical utility in the dealings with the Nagas, which are necessary to secure the peace of the Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts – districts in which, in addition to our usual responsibilities towards the native inhabitants of the country, we have to protect tea-gardens inhabited by thousands of imported labourers, who are less able even than others to protect themselves, and in which gardens there are buildings and machinery of great value." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 147, dated January 1877, Resolution by the CoA, dated Shillong, the 17th July, 1876.

information, then, was collected primarily for the stability of the empire, and the frontier designed to assure British India the greatest possible strategic protection. The will to 'know' the country reveals the confluence of knowledge and power too. To govern territories, it is imperative that the British knows them thoroughly well. Geographical knowledge are thus, very important for the exercise of colonial power. The surveyors provide the state with an abundance of knowledge on which the state was able to exploit for demarcating and controlling Northeast India.

1.2 Boundary Demarcation and Confrontation

The surveys, besides being an important scheme for better connectivity of the hills with mainland India, was also a significant project for demarcating boundaries and mapping the diverse tribes within a specific territory. The concept of 'territoriality',[25] as described by Robert Sack, has certain resonance with British endeavour for control and possession of territory in Northeast India. Central to the colonial project of controlling tribes like the Nagas was the creation of the Naga Hills as a territory, a district of Assam in 1866.[26] The origin of the Naga Hills as a territory, however, can be traced back to as early as 1842 when a boundary line was formally laid down between the princely state of Manipur and the Angami Nagas inhabited area during the expeditions of one Lieutenant H. Bigge.[27] The determination of this line was to delineate and isolate the relatively powerful Angami Nagas and reduced

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[25] Robert Sack has defined 'Territoriality' as the "the attempt by a group or an individual to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area." It is the phenomenon of "excluding or including people within particular geographic boundaries, and about controlling what people do and their access to natural resources within those boundaries". Cited in Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Lee Peluso, "Territorialization and State Power in Thailand", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Jun., 1995, pp. 387-88.

[26] The formation of the Naga Hills District in 1866 signalled a phase of active British intervention in the affairs of the Nagas. Lt. Gregory was deputed by the Government of India to be in charge as the first Deputy Commissioner of the district with its headquarters at Kohima. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 39, dated June 1866.

[27] Undertaking a tour in 1841, Lt. Bigge used geographical landmarks, especially the rivers and mountains, to fix the 'best boundary' between Manipur and the Angami country. The boundary commenced "from the upper part of the Jeerie River, the western frontier of Manipur, the line of boundary formed (1) by the Dootighur Mountain, or that range of hills in which the Mookroo River takes its rise, east on to the Barak River; (2) by the Barak River up to which it is joined by the Tayphani River, which flows along the eastern line of the Popolongmai Hill; (3) by the Tayphani River up its source on the Burrial range of Mountains; and (4) by the summit or water-pent of the Burrial range on to the source of the Mow River flowing north from that point towards Assam ..." NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 71-74, dated the 24th January, 1842.

the influence of this tribe on the neighbouring Manipur Naga tribes.[28] For this, the Mao River was delineated as the boundary between Manipur and the Naga Hills.[29]

Though a boundary was fixed between Manipur and the Naga Hills, it wasn't till the 1870s that the boundary demarcation was completed. The boundary delimitation was carried out at this time along with the trigonometric surveys of the hill. Though the older forms of the route surveys continued well into the twentieth survey, triangulation of the Naga Hills was done at a late period as compared with other parts of India.[30] While Captain J. Butler and Colonel Mowbray Thomson were appointed as boundary commissioners to fix the Naga Hills-Manipur boundary, Major Godwin-Austen and Mr. J. Ogle were specially deputed by the Surveyor-General to carry out the triangulation of the hill tracts.[31] These men carried out an impressive survey of large tracts of Naga territory.[32] In this survey, the line of boundary demarcated extends from Khunho, a mountain at the head of the Zullo River, to a point called the Telizo peak, and five villages of the Sopvoma or Mao Naga groups were included in the possession of Manipur.[33] The survey was to further extend in an eastward direction beyond the Telizo peak but the Manipur force accompanying the survey party refused to go any further than a particular point called Kezakenomah. It

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[28] Colonial motive was to isolate the Angami Nagas, "the perpetrators of all acts of the aggression which have been committed...both in Cachar [the eastern Assam plains] and Manipur." See Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal,* p. 107.

[29] Captain G. Gordon, Political Agent at Manipur, with minor objection to Bigge's proposal, recommended the boundary line "from the source of the Mow river along the crest of the main dividing or Burrail range, until it reaches the sources of the stream which flows along the eastern base of the Baposlongmuee hill." With no Angamis to the south portion of the Burrail range, the Mao River effectively divided the Angamis from the Mao Nagas to the south east, who are tributary to Manipur. NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 107, dated the 13th September 1841, Correspondence from Gordon to J.H. Maddock, Esq., Sec. to the GoI, PD, FW, dated Manipur Agency, the 22nd August 1841.

[30] The Great Trigonometrical Survey of India had started in 1802 under William Lambton at St. George's mount, Madras. Moreover, with the appointment of a single surveyor general of India in 1814, triangulation of other parts of India was carried out such as the project undertook by George Everest from Southern India to Dehradun in 1823. For a detail discussion of the Great Trigonometrical Survey, see Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 199-214.

[31] Captain J. Butler was the then Officiating Political Agent of the Naga Hills, while Colonel Mowbray Thomson was the Political Agent of Manipur. Major Godwin-Austen, the Deputy Superintendent of Survey, in Charge No. 6, Topographical Survey Party, was specially deputed to do the triangulation task. Assisting the Major was Mr. J. Ogle, Esq., Surveyor, No. 6, Topographical Survey.

[32] The total area surveyed was 3,500 square miles including the 30 square miles of boundary survey between the Manipur state and the Naga territory. A total area of 3,850 square miles was triangulated and 24 trigonometric station set up by the surveyors. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 71, dated January, 1874, "Report on Survey Operations during field season 1872-73, in the Naga Hills and Manipur", p. 7.

[33] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 69, dated January, 1874, Correspondence from Sec. to the GOI, FD, to Alexander Mackenzie, Officiating Secretary to the GoB, dated Calcutta, the 27th August, 1873. It may be pointed out here that in colonial classification, as well in the present day, the Mao communities were also considered as one of the Naga tribes.

was found out that the Manipur force under the command of one Major Roma Sing was acting under the strict orders of the Maharajah of Manipur, Chunder Kirtee Sing, not to proceed further or accept any boundary limits without the inclusion of Kohima within the Manipuri state.[34] Thus, for a period stretching from the 20th January to the 16th March 1873 the survey was rendered completely redundant. The confrontations which arose between the British and the Manipur state regarding boundary fixations was partly because of both the party contending for Kohima, the present day capital of Nagaland. On the one hand, the king of Manipur claimed Kohima as under his authority thereby disallowing the survey party to go further east of the Mao River.[35] On the other hand, the British were eyeing places such as Kohima and Wokha as a possible future headquarters from where they could better control the hill people.[36] In fact, the British were contemplating a removal of the head-quarters of the Naga Hills district from the then station, located at Samaguting in present day Assam, to other convenient, higher spot where they could bring, in particular, the Angami Nagas under control.[37]

Acknowledging the obstacles posed by the Manipur state in the survey operation the Secretary to the Government of India accordingly gave specific instructions to the Political Agents of Manipur and Naga Hills to avoid referring to the boundary demarcation as being between British territory and Manipur.[38] The British,

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[34] Captain Butler reported that the Manipur Force intended to knock down every boundary pillar that had been put up beyond the point mentioned, Telizo peak. The opposition shown by the native force also included withdrawing the coolies of the Political Agent of Manipur, a strategy which completely rendered immobility to the colonial officials, and also refusing to render any assistance with the survey party. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 70, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Captain J. Butler, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills, to the AGG, NEF, and CoA, dated the 6th June 1873.

[35] In a letter (dated the 20th February 1873) to Colonel Mowbray Thomson, Political Agent of Manipur, the Maharajah of Manipur, Chunder Kirtee Sing, stated that his territory stretched "from Mao River as far as Kohimah, and from thence to the east as far as the Burmese frontier ... [and] on the west the Mao River from Kohimah to the Burrial range, and from thence to the source of the Juree river". NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 70, Enclosures No. 3, dated January 1874.

[36] In fact, Kohima was consequently made the head-quarter of the Naga Hills District in March 1878 while Wokha made a sub-station. The reasons for choosing Kohima was because of its "strong strategic advantage, ... a very healthy elevation, ... facilities for an ample water supply, ... its situation in the heart of the Angami country and on the road to Manipur, ... favo[u]rable both for controlling these tribes and for encouraging the development of trade and civilized intercourse." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. Nos. 7-51, K.W. No. 6, Office Note, dated October 1878.

[37] *Ibid.*,

[38] Here is an excerpt of the instructions: "The Political Agents of the Naga Hills and Munnipoor should avoid alluding to the boundary demarcation as being between British territory and Munnipoor. The boundary is that of the *Naga* territory, and whether that territory shall eventually be declared to be British or not depends quite on other considerations than those which affect the policy of excluding Munnipoor interference from the Naga country." Original emphasis. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 72, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Sec. to the GoI, FD, FW, to Alexander Mackenzie, Officiating Secretary to the GOB, dated Simla, the 17th October 1873.

however, speculated that the arrangement regarding the five Mao Naga villages made over to Manipur may have been a 'mistake' but added, in the same breath, that they "cannot remedy the matter now".[39] Apparently, it was thought by colonial officials such as Butler, for instance, that the Mao groups were one of the tribes of the Nagas.[40] Indeed, the intention of the British might have been one of inclusion of the areas inhabited by the Mao Nagas within British rule or the Naga Hills.[41] But the opposition presented by the Manipur state made the British realized that the survey could not proceed apace without the assistance of the former. In frontier zones, thus, there were often limits to colonial rule. As such, besides instructing the Political Agents to seek the co-operation of the Manipur state in the surveys, the Secretary to the Government of India stated:

> The question of excluding Munnipoor [sic] from the Sopoomah [the Mao Nagas] group of villages already made over to the Durbar [Manipur court] should not be re-opened, at any rate so long as the Munnipoor Durbar co-operate with the survey party and abstain from any injudicious action.[42]

Thus, the inclusion of the Mao Nagas with the Manipur state was partly a result of compromise made by the British in favour for assistance rendered to the surveys.

While dealing with the confrontation posed by the princely state of Manipur, British surveyors had to also contend with the problem of assigning the Nagas to a demarcated territory. For instance, Captain Butler who fixed the Manipur-Naga Hills boundary line had earlier tried to demarcate the boundary based on village boundaries. But to his surprise he found that the agricultural fields of the Angami

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[39] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 69, dated January 1874 Correspondence from Sec. to the GoI, FD, FW, to Alexander Mackenzie, Officiating Secretary to the GOB, dated Calcutta, the 27th August, 1873.

[40] Indeed, British officials such as J. Butler remarked that though the Mao Nagas were in Manipur territory and beyond British influence, they are very similar to the Angami Nagas, both in dress and culture. Butler stated that the Angamis and the Maos are so similar that one Mao Chieftains, whom he addressed as 'my old friend Aja', was made to stand for an Angami Naga in the works of E.T. Dalton's *Ethnology of Bengal*. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 74, dated January 1874, see John Butler, "Brief Memorandum on the Naga Country", p. 10.

[41] For example, Godwin-Austen reported that the Mao Naga group of villages, when intimated that they were to be under Manipur rule, expressed "a very dangerous amount of dissatisfaction ... [as they] considered themselves, like Kohima and other villages to the north ... to be subservient to the Indian Government". Further, he reported that the claims of Manipur on the Mao Naga villages was a result of 'marauding expeditions' by the former on the latter, and that the claims were 'very carefully extracted and put forward, while much having a contrary tendency has escaped notice.' NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 71, dated January 1874, "Report on Survey Operations During Field Season 1872-73, in the Naga Hills and Manipur," pp. 2-3.

[42] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 72, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Sec. to the GoI, FD, FW, to Alexander Mackenzie, Officiating Secretary to the GOB, dated Simla, the 17th October 1873.

villages of Kidimah, Viswemah and Khuzamah (which were under British territory) protruded out into the uncultivated lands claimed by the Mao Nagas and *vice versa.*[43] Besides this, he found these villages in the 'habit of buying and selling landed property among themselves' to quite an extent that made it impractical to fix the boundary as originally planned as it would meant re-fixing it endlessly.[44] As a result, Butler adhered to the existing boundary arrangement where the Mao River separated the Mao Nagas of the Manipur protectorate from the Angami Nagas of British territory.

Colonial surveyors such as Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe[45] also noted, during a survey operation of the Naga Hills in 1875-76, the impossibility of fixing the Nagas to a specified territory as the latter were found to be leading a fluid, mobile existence. As such Woodthorpe opined that 'a first boundary' between the Naga Hills and Myanmar has to be decided by 'geographical limits' and not 'tribal limits'.[46] The reasons for this opinion are best reflected in his words:

> The distinctions between the different tribes are so slight (except as between the Angamis, Eastern and Western, and all other tribes), and their villages are so mixed up together, that I doubt very much if tribal limits could ever be successfully adopted without going very far east. The Eastern Angamis extend across the watershed for some distance, but, in common with all other Nagas, they are not restricted by any geographical considerations, and are frequently building new villages and deserting old ones, so that a tribal boundary would be a variable quantity...[47]

Butler also attested that the "various tribes all dovetail into each other in a most remarkable manner, and it is impossible to assign to them any hard-and-fast limits, or

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[43] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 70, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Captain J. Butler to the AGG, NEF, and CoA, letter No. 112 ½, dated Samaguting, the 6th June 1873, p. 3.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[45] Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe, R.E., Assistant Superintendent, Topographical Survey, was deputed by the Surveyor-General along with Captain Butler to conduct a survey operation in the Naga Hills during the winter season of 1875-76. Woodthorpe was made in charge of the survey expedition with Mr. Ogle as his Assistant. Besides the triangulation of the Naga Hills, Woodthorpe recommended the suitability of Wokha as a district head-quarter station as well as proposed 'a first boundary' between the Naga Hills and Burma. Incidentally, it was also during this expedition that Captain Butler was speared to death by the Nagas of Pangti village in the Wokha country. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. Nos. 146-51, K.W., Office Note, dated January 1877.
[46] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 148, dated January 1877, Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe's Report on the Survey operations in the Naga Hills, 1875-76, forwarded to Captain W.F. Badgley, in charge No. 6, Topographical Survey, dated Shillong, the 15th June, 1876, p. 19.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

to say that beyond certain limits a tribe does not extend".[48] Thus, this mobile lifestyle posed a problem to the British in their quest for mapping diverse categories within a demarcated territory. As such, what the British attempted was a boundary demarcation based on geographical limits. Following this, the system of classification developed by the British were, as Andrew West's suggested, a set of divisions of people which corresponded to a territorial classification, as opposed to, for example, sets of divisions by clan.[49] Hence, the native notion of space which was not accustomed to any imaginary territorial limits often stood out in direct opposition to British endeavour for expressing identity in a form that the latter could understand.

1.3 Narrating the Surveys

British officials employed in the surveys of the Naga Hills, as elsewhere, had to maintain a steady correspondence with the Surveyor-General or with the higher authorities of the colonial state. In reporting the details of survey operations, the surveyors employed narratives to describe geographical features and other aspects in their account – what Matthew Edney referred to as 'Geographical narratives'.[50] The use of narratives by surveyors was to render their activities, knowledge and 'discovery' of new geographical landscape in a form the higher authorities could understand. And as the survey reports often became official documents, the surveyors took care to structure their report which was easily understood and at the same time interesting. This section will examine the reports furnished by British explorers such as Captain J. Butler, Major H.H. Godwin-Austen and Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe to see the manner in which the act of observation and narration of the landscape and those inhabiting it was carried out.

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[48] Butler further stated: "... not only do we find men from two or even three tribes living in the same village ... but in many cases villages belonging to the same tribe are separated from each other by those of several other tribes." Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[49] Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", *History and Anthropology,* Vol. 8, Nos. 1-4, 1994, pp. 64-65.

[50] "Geographical narratives", Matthew Edney informs us, "are distinguished from the more common travel and exploration accounts because they reject self-reference." He further states that "geographical observation was turned outward from, not in toward, the British self. It was the textual equivalent of the purely mechanistic vision that creates an unassailable distance between the observer and observed". The focus of geographical observation, then, was not on the new and the novel but the everyday and the common so as to categorize all aspects of a region. Thus, a geographical observer should present a comprehensive outline of each region including all occurrences of even the most ordinary features. The geographical narrative is therefore, characterized by the empiricist rhetoric of observation. See Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, p. 66.

As pointed out earlier, Captain Butler, the then Political Agent of the Naga Hills, accompanied both the survey operations of Major Godwin-Austen and Lieutenant Woodthorpe in the winter season of 1872-73 and 1875-76 respectively. A reading of the survey reports furnished by these officials revealed quite a lot of similarities with only a slight difference in the form of the reports. For instance, while Godwin-Austen[51] broke up his report into several parts with a heading each thereby presenting it in a more systematic form, Captain Butler's[52] and Lieutenant Woodthorpe's[53] reports were a straight narrative of their proceedings in a chronological manner. Nevertheless, the contents of the reports were more or less the same. The survey reports often started with a brief outline of the routes to be taken and places to be visited for setting up trigonometric stations.[54] It then proceeded to give an account of the survey proceedings, operations and occurrences of even minute interests on almost a daily basis. It has also accounts of armed encounters with the natives, punishments meted out to the 'offending village', coercion of food grains for the survey party, and so on.

In the reports, the surveyors also often expressed satisfaction in conducting an expedition, and in adding new geographical knowledge to the existing archive. For example, Captain J. Butler, in surveying the land mass between the Doyang River and the Lanier, stated that the party has "succeeded in filling up a good bit of the great gap of *terra incognita* that has so long been a blot upon the map of our North-Eastern

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[51] Though Godwin Austen began his report with a chronological account of his advent into the Hills, he presented a more systematic account with a title in this order: Individual exertions of Assistant Mr. M.J. Ogle, Surveyor, 4th grade; Area surveyed and Triangulation; Health of party; Physical aspect of the country, Geology, &c.; Nomenclature of the different ranges &c.; Old glacial action; Physical aspect, Scenery &c., Natural history; Climate; Races and Tribes; Stone monuments; On the line of boundary, &c.; and finally Assistance of Political Agents. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 71, dated January 1874, Report on Survey Operations during Field Season 1872-73, in the Naga Hills and Manipur.

[52] NAI, FDBP-A, Consultation No. 70, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Captain J. Butler, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills, to Colonel H. Hopkinson, the AGG, NEF, and CoA, letter No. 112 ½, dated Samaguting, the 6th June 1873.

[53] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 148, dated January 1877, Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe's Report on the Survey operations in the Naga Hills, 1875-76, forwarded to Captain W.F. Badgley, in charge No. 6, Topographical Survey, dated Shillong, the 15th June, 1876.

[54] For example, here is a brief excerpt of Captain Butler's report: '...we eventually decided that it would be best for Major Austen and Mr. Ogle (the Assistant Surveyor) to proceed together to Kohimah, from whence the latter could go on to take up a trigonometrical station at "Nidzukhru" (a well marked mountain range close to the village of Chicamah), whilst the former went on in the opposite direction to take up similar station at Japvo (one of the highest peaks on the Burrial mountains due west of, and a day's journey from Kigwemah) and in the meantime I could go on to meet the Political Agent of Munipur at Paplongmai (as had already been previously arranged between us) and could then proceed to the settlement of the boundary, arranging so as to all meet again at Kidimah.' NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 70, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Captain J. Butler, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills, to Colonel H. Hopkinson, the AGG, NEF, and CoA, letter No. 112 ½, dated Samaguting, the 6th June 1873, p. 3.

Frontier."[55] In exploring new territories and acquiring new knowledge, Captain Butler along with others of his generation signaled a group who became disillusioned with the route surveys that has so far characterized survey expedition since the 1830s.[56] The disillusionment may be partly because of the route survey error-prone nature and partly because of a pursuit for a better knowledge of the people inhabiting those spaces which were being surveyed. As Godwin-Austen stated: "A rapid march through the country will only secure a mere route, with its increasing error the further it is carried, and the same complete knowledge of the tribes is not obtained on a route survey".[57] As such, for an account claiming to present a report on survey operations, the survey reports also has accounts of the natives' ethnography. In fact, it may not be out of place to regard these surveyors as the pioneers of a tradition of Nagas' descriptive ethnography. Woodthorpe, for instance, gave a description of the people of the Naga villages which he encountered on his journey along with their material culture, house structures, 'curious customs' and other aspects.[58]

Again, a principal feature of the survey reports was its focus and description of the peculiar or the spectacular in the practices of the people that the surveyors encountered. For instance, Woodthorpe reported that a "striking feature in the landscape is a curious erection seen near most villages, which is visible a very long

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[55] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 177, dated April 1874, Extracts from demi-official letters from Captain J. Butler, on special duty.

[56] In his survey report, Butler stated: "...if we simply restrict ourselves to making a survey of the main watershed only, it must eventually become nothing more than a mere route survey, which could give little or no information of the surrounding country on either side, and which would hence become, comparatively speaking, almost valueless." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 70, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Captain J. Butler, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills, to Colonel H. Hopkinson, the AGG, NEF, and CoA, letter No. 112 ½, dated Samaguting, the 6th June 1873, p. 15.

[57] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 70, Enclosures No. 6, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Major H.H. Godwin Austen, Deputy Superintendent of Survey, in Charge No. 6 Topographical Survey Party, to Captain J. Butler, Political Agent, Naga Hills, Samaguting, dated Shillong, the 26th May 1873.

[58] Passing through the villages of Yajim and Chihu on the 13th February 1876, Woodthorpe described the structure of the houses, the skull-trophies decorated with horns placed above the verandah of the house, and the method of disposal of the dead. He also mentioned a 'Y-shaped posts' carved with human figures and methna heads which signified that the owner of the house had been a giver of a big feast. Again an entry on the 23rd March 1876 has description of the men of another Naga village called Yangmun as 'fine, well-built, and in many cases handsome.' He also described the dress and accoutrements, the hairstyle, the tattooing that was prevalent among this tribe, and again the mode of the disposal of the dead. Elsewhere, in the village of Kamahu which he passed through on the 10th February, he mentioned a 'curious customs' which was that of "decorating the skulls of enemies taken in battle with a pair of horns, either buffalo or mithna, and, failing these, with wooden imitations of them." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 148, dated January 1877, Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe's Report on the Survey operations in the Naga Hills, 1875-76, forwarded to Captain W.F. Badgley, in charge No. 6, Topographical Survey, dated Shillong, the 15th June, 1876, pp. 15 & 6.

way off."[59] Sometimes this peculiarity was used by the surveyors to differentiate one community from another. A case in point can be seen in Godwin Austen's description of the Tangkhul Nagas as 'a very distinct race' because of the "large helmet they wear ... and differen[ce] in their appearance, especially the way of cutting the hair."[60] At another point he reported that "the great distinguishing social custom of the Tangkal [sic] ... is the wearing of a small ring bone, ivory or wood, into which the foreskin is drawn."[61]

Thus, the surveyors took the opportunity provided by the surveys to study the inhabitants of the lands hitherto unknown. Godwin-Austen, during the survey, studied intensively the stone monolithic monuments erected by the Angami Nagas which he observed during the course of his survey expedition and even dedicated a whole section separately on it.[62] He followed up his study and published an account of the Naga tribes in European Anthropological Journals – a direct result of his experience and contact with the natives while undertaking surveys.[63] This was also true of R.G. Woodthorpe who published some articles in the same journal that Godwin Austen had published.[64] Thus, the Naga Hills presented to the surveyors, in the words of Woodthorpe, a "very interesting field of research".[65]

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[59] The brief text of Woodthorpe's description of the 'erection' is reproduced here: "It is made of splint pieces of wood with the white face turned outwards, placed close together vertically and fastened to large curves of cane or bamboo, suspended between three trees; the whole length varies from 40 to 50 feet, and the average width is about 6 feet, widening to about 12 feet at the centre point. We could not arrive at the meaning of these erections; but they were always put up facing towards a village with which their builders were at war ..." See *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[60] Differentiating the Tangkhul Nagas on the basis of their peculiar hairstyle, Godwin Austen reported: "The men ... trim the hair down to about 1 ½ to 2 inches all over the head, and by shaving all round over the ears, leave it somewhat like an inverted basin-shape cut. Many wear large circular earrings of brass wire, and a circular neck piece of cane stained red and ornamented with cowries; from the fastening at the back hang long cotton tassels; these are sometimes of human hair." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 71, dated January 1874, Report on Survey Operations during Field Season 1872-73, in the Naga Hills and Manipur, p. 15.

[61] At another point, while comparing the Angami Nagas and the Tangkhul Nagas Godwin Austen remarked that some of the differences between them can hardly be "describe in writing, for the eye alone can detect the slightest differences in cut of hair, manner of putting on their dress, and particularly expression."See *Ibid.*, pp.15-16.

[62] A separate section entitled Stone Monuments was present in Godwin Austen's report. See *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[63] H. H. Godwin-Austen, "On the Rude Stone Monuments of Certain Naga Tribes, with Some Remarks on Their Customs, etc.", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 4, 1875, pp. 144-147.

[64] See R. G. Woodthorpe, "Notes on the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the So-Called Naga Hills, on Our North-East Frontier of India. Part I", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 11, 1882, pp. 56-73.; and "Notes on the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the So-Called Naga Hills, on Our North-East Frontier of India. Part II", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 11, 1882, pp.196-214. The first work dealt with the Angami Nagas which he classified as the 'kilted' type. It has a detailed account of the ornaments, armlets, leggings, dress,

Another aspect of the surveyor's report was its insistence and focus on the 'picturesque'. An excellent example was Godwin-Austen's description of the landscape from the peak of Japoo, the highest point on the Burrial range. Though a bit lengthy the full text of Godwin-Austen's account is reproduced here for its vivid illustration of the surveyors' panoptic view of landscapes. He wrote:

> The view from Japoo [a mountain peak] was superb, – one of the finest I have ever seen. On the north, over the valley of the Brahmaputer covered with a pall of white, sea-like fog, out of which, at over 100 miles distant, rose the snowy peaks of the Western Bhutan Himalaya; east over the gradually ascending main range, beautifully broken in to well marked peaks, all over 11,000, the main ridges trending to the north, and ending in the low intricate hills upon the plain of Assam near Nazirah; to the south a low depression in the mass of the hills allowed a portion of the valley of Manipur to be seen, with the higher hills beyond in the Kamhow Kuki country; on the south-east the peak of Japoo falls almost perpendicularly into the valley below 4,000 feet, and the eye follows this lateral valley to its junction with the Zullo, the large Naga villages showing clear on all the commanding points of the many spurs thrown off from the Burrial.[66]

Besides a description of the picturesque mountain range and its sceneries, Godwin-Austen also gave an account of the weather conditions, the zoology,[67] and even brief notes on the geology of the region. Thus, it can be seen that imperial surveyors endeavoured to account each and every aspect while *en route* a survey of the hill tracts. In other words, a 'total knowledge' of the country under exploration was attempted and accounted for. The land under survey then became a knowledge entity, a region hitherto unknown to be rendered known. But in this narration of the surveys, a question that needs to be addressed is whether such narrations are based on the surveyors' sole, personal observation or from those being surveyed which the next section will address.

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weapons, agricultural implements and so on. The second works described ethnographic details of the Naga tribes such as the Rengmahs, the Semas, and the Lothas which he deemed as the 'Non-kilted types'.

[65] R. G. Woodthorpe's "Notes on the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the So-Called Naga Hills, on Our North-East Frontier of India. Part I", p. 56.

[66] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 71, dated January 1874, Report on Survey Operations During Field Season 1872-73, in the Naga Hills and Manipur, p. 2. Godwin-Austen, at another point, also reported: "No part of the Burrial is more beautiful than that between Kigwema and Sopoomah, looking up the lateral glacial gorges, with their frowning steep sides running up to the crest of the Burrial, which is, for the greater part, a wall of grey rock and precipice. Dense forest covers the slopes, but from their steepness many parts are bare, breaking the usual monotony of this dark colo[u]red mountain." (p. 11.)

[67] During the survey, Godwin-Austen mentioned that he collected around 280 specimens of the avifauna present in the hills. See *Ibid.*, p. 13.

1.4 Surveyors and Surveyed

In the exploration of Northeast India, the British had to contend with the problem of the multiplicity of local languages and dialects which they had no mastery over. Treading into this unknown territory, they were forced to depend on the local people for assistants, coolies, guides, and informants. For surveyors throughout Northeast India, few Assamese plain-dwellers – often referred to, in colonial vocabulary, as 'Dobashas' or 'Two-Tongues' or simply 'Interpreters' – were the most influential native informants. However, guides were sought from hill people as the British moved about from village to village. But, this turned out to be a disadvantage as the hill guides often deserted during the course of the survey.[68]

But, as the British unavoidably drew upon assistance from the very communities which they sought to rule and control, it led to a certain dilemma over the question of whether the latter could be trusted.[69] While they required knowledge of various aspects, particularly of topographical features, at the same time they are suspicious of the information they got from native accounts. Surveyors often asserted that neither should they trust the local people and their knowledge nor collect information without actually surveying the unexplored landscapes. For instances, Wilcox stated that it would be "infinitely better that we [the British] should travel and gain from actual observation the information we sought, as it could be but imperfectly acquired from those who did not understand our purposes."[70] Wilcox's insistence on the authenticity of personal observations was because of his perception that the natives

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[68] For instance, Woodthorpe reported two instance of desertion by Nagas who were employed as guides during his survey expedition of the Naga Hills in 1875-76. One of the guide was from the village of Sanigaon and the other from Tablung village. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 148, dated January 1877, Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe's Report on the Survey operations in the Naga Hills, 1875-76, forwarded to Captain W.F. Badgley, in charge No. 6, Topographical Survey, dated Shillong, the 15th June, 1876, p. 2 & 8.

[69] The anxiety over the question of trusting native agencies is also noted by C.A. Bayly. As Bayly stated, it was the reason why "the world of the news-collector, the spy and the exotic informant exercised such a strong fascination for the British mind in the East." However, it may be noted that there was no 'qualified' Brahman informants in the Northeast unlike as in the North Indian plains that Bayly has studied. See C.A. Bayly, "Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Feb., 1993, p. 4.

[70] The information that Lieutenant Wilcox sought was about the Dihong River on his arrival at the Abor (now known as Adi) country in present day Arunachal Pradesh. Narrating his experience of the difficulty in gleaning information from the natives, Wilcox reported that the latter were not only ignorant of his inquiry about the Dihong River, but also were totally apathetic to his question, telling him that they were not travellers with a "curiosity about remote countries." See R. Wilcox, "Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the Neighbouring Countries", p. 56.

concealed knowledge.[71] Likewise, R.B. Pemberton also asserted that geographical information and description should be "founded, not on the vague reports of half civilized savages, but on the personal investigations of men whose scientific attainments enabled them to fix with precision the geographical site of every locality they visited."[72] The knowledge of the native was, thus, displaced beneath the rhetoric of the surveyor's personal, dependable and accurate observation and their insistence on scientific and empirical observation. As such, the natives appeared only as guides, coolies, or as stereotypes or ignorant people in survey literature.

Yet the natives were crucial for the surveyor's mobility and for carrying out the survey of the difficult hill terrain.[73] Surely, they must have endowed the surveyor with certain knowledge which the latter, in turn, appropriated, recast as the result of their empirical observation, and incorporated into the existing imperial geographical archive.[74] A case of appropriation and displacement of native knowledge can be seen, for instance, in the surveyors use (or re-ordering) of native names for spaces. Captain Butler, for instance, provisionally referred to a particular mountain range as X but later on adopted the local terminology 'Saramethi'.[75]

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[71] Wilcox, in one of his interview with the natives, had an initial success with one Taling Gam, an Abor Chiefs, when he induced the latter with rum to tell him geographical information bounded north of their country i.e., Tibet. The Chief had initially agreed in high spirits, probably owing to the effects of the rum, to not only provide answers to Wilcox's queries. However, because of the interference of some Assamese of a particular village called Sonari 'who anticipated some unknown evil' from his communication with the hill tribes, the 'friendly Chieftain' positively refused to accompany him or allowed any of his people to guide Wilcox. Conceding defeat at not coughing out information from the chief, Wilcox remarked that his "suspicions of their [native's] concealing ... knowledge were correct." See *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[72] R. Boileau Pemberton, "Abstract of the Journal of a Route travelled by Captain S.F. Hannay, of the 40th Regiment, Native Infantry, in 1835-36, from the Capital of Ava to the Amber Mines of the Hukong Valley on the south-east frontier of Assam", in *Selection of Papers*, p.83.

[73] For example, Captain Vetch was detained at a village called Ningroo from the 25th to the 30th June 1842, because the Nagas who were to 'act as coolies' did not arrived. See correspondence from Captain H. Vetch, Political Agent, Upper Assam, to Major Jenkins, AGG, NEF, dated the 8th June 1842, in *Selection of Papers*, p. 280.

[74] Matthew Edney has pointed out that "British representations of their empire were appropriative in character ... [and that] they commodified the knowledge and aesthetic aspects of the landscape for their own consumption." See Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, pp. 41 &76.

[75] During the Naga Hills survey of 1872-73, a total of twelve mountain peaks were fixed by triangulation including a peak, as Captain Butler reported, called 'Saramethi' by the 'Zami Nagas'. As the said peak was hitherto unknown to the British, Captain Butler provisionally called it X which was the highest mountain range south of the Brahmaputra River. However, at a later date, the provisional name X was done away with and the name as called by the natives were used in colonial references. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 70, dated January 1874, Correspondence from Captain J. Butler, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills, to Colonel H. Hopkinson, the AGG, NEF, and CoA, letter No. 112 ½, dated Samaguting, the 6th June 1873, p. 14. This mountain range, in the present-day, was now spelled 'Saramati'.

In the course of survey operations, the British had to also contend with the anxiety caused by the advent of survey party among the local inhabitants. For instance, G.T. Bayfield reported that a certain community suddenly became 'became alarmed and pretended to know nothing' when he proceeded take an altitude of the Pole-star.[76] In some locale, the concealment of information was because of the natives' fear of the Burmese.[77] Apparently, British effort to gather information about the geography near the great valley of the Irrawaddy river was often, in the words of an early surveyor, "defeated by the jealous vigilance of the Burmese authorities."[78]

Moreover, survey explorations were attended with some risk of hostile collision with the local people which tended to make surveys as difficult as well as perilous.[79] An official Major Badgley, for instance, highlighted the xenophobic aspects of some of the tribes which make information gathering in the course of his expeditions difficult.[80] The survey party of Woodthorpe was also constantly hounded by a conglomeration of nine to ten Sema Naga villages looking for a chance to massacre them.[81] In fact, survey parties were often attacked by the hill people and

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[76] G.T. Bayfield hopes of getting 'some interesting information' from among the Thennie Shans was dashed as the latter became alarmed over some of the former's activities. See G.T. Bayfield, "Narrative of a Journey from Ava to the frontiers of Assam and back, performed between December 1836 and May 1837, under the orders of Lieutenant-Colonel Burney, Resident at Ava", in *Selection of Papers*, p. 161.

[77] When Wilcox survey party descend on a particular village, the native chief became apprehensive that the Burmese might suspect the chief of inviting Wilcox survey party. See R. Wilcox, "Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the Neighbouring Countries", p. 79.

[78] R. Boileau Pemberton, "Abstract of the Journal of a Route travelled by Captain S.F. Hannay", p.83.

[79] For example, G.T. Bayfield had a dangerous encounter with an angry tribal local chief of one village Mogoung over the use of the latter's boat for survey duties. He recounted:"The chief ... passion was unbounded and apparently uncontrollable, for as he spoke he drew himself up to me in so threatening and insolent a manner, that I was compelled to put forth my hand and push him away. This, however, was an act for which I was near paying dearly, for himself (sic) and one of his followers instantly drew their swords and flourished them in so ominous a manner, cutting up the grass and earth within a cubit of my feet, that for a minute, being totally unarmed, I consider myself to be in some jeopardy." See G.T. Bayfield, "Narrative of a Journey from Ava to the frontiers of Assam and back", p. 232.

[80] While conducting a survey, partly revenue and partly topographical, of Cachar and Sylhet, a tract where various tea grants and estates abound, Major Badgley came across the tribes of Tripuras, Manipuris and Sylhettias. The former two pass as 'pleasant people' in Badgley observations. "The Sylhettias", on the other hand, he asserts, "are strong, cowardly, and morose, and quite uncompromising in their hatred of Europeans, whom they molest in every possible ways." See "Indian Surveys for the Year 1878-1879", *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, New Monthly Series, Vol. 2, No. 7, Jul., 1880, p. 423.

[81] For about a stretch of five days – from the 20th to the 24th February 1876 – the survey party of Lieutenant Woodthorpe was constantly harassed by the Nagas making the survey work to proceed smoothly. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 148, dated January 1877, Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe's Report on the Survey operations in the Naga Hills, 1875-76, forwarded to Captain W.F. Badgley, in charge No. 6, Topographical Survey, dated Shillong, the 15th June, 1876, pp. 9-11.

some surveyors such as Captain Butler and Lieutenant W.A. Holcombe[82] paid with their life while conducting surveys.

Labour and material limitations, the close vigilance of the Burmese to deprive the British of information and other constraints that cropped up during surveys all tended to make surveys in Northeast India a hurried affair and a tentative one.[83] The hostile reactions which the British encountered and the natives' concealment of information were often highlighted in survey accounts. Such incidents must have indicated to the surveyor that the survey was a trip through a dangerous place but at the same time, a space that promised an adventure and knowledge of new aspects. The frontier, then, as the next section will argue, were conceived as a fitting place to be surveyed and known.

1.5 Envisioning the Frontier

The British often found the development of a required degree of order on the North East Frontier an arduous task throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century. Partly this was because of the region's peripherality. As noted before, the prevalent ambience along this frontier was one of vulnerability both in a military and commercial sense. Before the frontier was the developing order as epitomize by the Assam plains, while beyond it an overwhelming disorder as embodied by the hitherto unknown hill tracts inhabited by the 'savage' hill tribes. Those officials who constantly ventured into the frontier were constraint to mark out the limits of British

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[82] The survey party under Lieutenant W.A. Holcombe, Assistant Commissioner, Lukhimpoor, was almost completely massacred by the village of Ninu in the Naga Hills on the 2nd February 1875. Some few months before his death, this officer had explored parts of the Naga Hills south of the Lakhipur District in Assam, between the Buri Dihing River and the Patkai range of hills. The primary object of that expedition was to 'supply information to enable the Government of Bengal to make precise proposals regarding the locality' of the Inner Line Regulation of 1873. Besides, the exploration of the country, he was deputed to collect information regarding trade routes to Burma as well as established friendly relations with the Naga tribes. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 660, dated March 1875, Correspondence from H. Luttman-Johnson, Esq., Secretary to the CoA, to C.U. Aitchison, Esq., C.S.I., Sec. to GoI, FD, Letter no. 272, dated Shillong 12th January, 1875.

[83] The weather and climate condition of the North East Frontier also posed an obstacle to the surveying activities. Several surveyors often reported that their exploration of the hill tracts were a hurried affair owing to the excessive rainfall – also the precise reason why surveys were often conducted during the winter season where there wasn't too much rainy days. For instance, Captain F. Brodie reported: "Our tour was necessarily a very hurried one. I could have wished to remain longer in almost every place, but we started in rain, and had a good deal of it in the hills, and I was fearful of being driven down before I had completed the tour; and in fact, continued and heavy rain set in immediately we left the hills." NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 123, dated the 19th October 1844, Correspondence from Captain F. Brodie, Principal Assistant Commissioner, Sibsagur, to Major F. Jenkins, Commissioner, Guwahati, dated the 6th August 1844.

territory in relation to the disorder which exist beyond their control. As such, a succession of British officials had to conceptualize the frontier frequently.

A frontier thesis postulated by Paul Carter has certain reverberation with the North East Frontier. According to him, the 'frontier' was "usually conceived of as a line, a line continually pushed forward (or back) by heroic frontiersmen, the pioneers. Inside the line is culture, beyond it, nature."[84] He also pointed out that "savages are, by definition, what are found beyond the pale of civilization".[85] More importantly, "the frontier signifies the decisive exclusion of all that is not culturally familiar: and it excludes it even when it incorporates it."[86] This notion of the frontier may be applicable, to some extent, in the context of Northeast India. A report on the Nagas by one G.M. Godden seemed to be the best representative of colonial notion of the frontier that characterized the whole of the nineteenth century. He wrote:

> The wild hill tracts which till recent years formed the North-Eastern frontier of the Indian Empire are still to some extent an *unknown land.* A *dividing barrier* between the plains of Assam on the one hand, and of upper Burma on the other, this Naga Hills were long known as the abode of fierce and intractable tribes, living in a state of incessant intertribal warfare, and asserting their presence on our border by savage raids; but punitive expeditions and official intercourse left us with a very incomplete knowledge of the people. Fearless with the courage of savage ignorance, they repeatedly resisted and killed officers engaged in frontier work, and entrenched in a remote hill country they eluded detailed scientific observation. A further difficulty lay in the multiplicity of languages spoken among them.[87]

What became evident from this text was the notion of the 'frontier' as the separation of the known from the unknown, and as a space where knowledge can be acquired about its inhabitants who are living in a state of isolation and savage existence. Conducting surveys meant, therefore, traversing the landscape beyond civilization and collecting information on lands not yet explored. For instance, R.G. Woodthorpe, gazing across the horizon from one point of the Saramethi range, reported (while at the same time noting the constraints associated with the explorations of new lands) that his party "longed to explored (sic) the mysteries

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[84] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. 158.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[87] Gertrude M. Godden, "Naga and Other Frontier Tribes of North-East India", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 26, 1897, pp. 161-162. Emphasis mine.

beyond".[88] The frontier thus, became an allegory for knowledge, a space beckoning the explorers on.

However, it must be noted that the North East Frontier was not a distinct boundary line demarcating an unknown area from the known. It was not an international boundary line that separated one state from another such as, for example, the Durand Line of 1893 that divided India from Afghanistan. At best, the North East Frontier can be described as a buffer zone sandwiched between the state of Myanmar and British India. The British had sole jurisdiction over this area through the 'Inner Line Regulation' of 1873.[89] The chief purpose was to effectively keep out any outside influence such as the quite territorially ambitious state of Manipur. As such, the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1878, in the context of the Naga Hills district, stated:

> [I]t ... is a geographical expression, not an administrative fact. We keep the Manipuris out of it, but we only *administer* in it those villages which have voluntarily come under our control, and this only to the extent of protecting from raids, and receiving taxes."[90]

Thus, the frontier was designed to either include or exclude certain groups within British territory. But, at the same time the British had the ultimate authority, though a hollow one, over territories beyond their rule.

1.6 Explorers as 'Civilizer'

But how did the surveyors think of themselves and their activities when they are exploring such a chaotic frontier where the price could be costly, even paying up with their lives. The explorers were obviously a propagator of Western superiority.

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[88] R.G. Woodthorpe had endeavoured to reach the Chindwin River in Burma from the frontiers of Assam. He noted the obstacles experienced in the exploration of new territory in the following words: "...but the season for safe travelling was nearly past, our supplies had run very short, the country was inhospitable, and we were beyond interpretation, even our interpreters and guides from our last camp, a few miles off, being unable to understand the dialects of the villages we had then reached." See R. G. Woodthorpe, "Explorations on the Chindwin River, Upper Burma", *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, New Monthly Series, Vol. 11, No. 4, April, 1889, p. 199.

[89] According to the Inner Line Regulation of 1873, no 'British subjects or any class of British subjects, or any persons' were prohibited to go beyond a certain frontier line that was drawn along the foothills of the Northern, Eastern, and South-Eastern borders of the Brahmaputra valley inhabited by the tribes, without a pass or license issued by the Deputy Commissioner of the colonial state. See "The Inner Line Regulation of 1873, (Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation No.V), dated the 27th August, 1873", in Manilal Bose, *Historical and Constitutional Documents of North-Eastern India, (1824-1973)*, Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979, pp. 162-164.

[90] Sir S.C. Bayley, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, made this statement in regard to the policy to be adopted in the future with respect to Naga Hill tribes. Till that time, the colonial state had accepted the submission of approximately sixteen villages that, in turn, paid an annual revenue of Rs. 1,032. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. Nos. 70-71, K. W. No. 3, dated October 1878.

For instance, early surveyors such as G.T. Bayfield travelled through Ava in Burma to the frontiers of Assam in 1836-7 to "collect statistical and useful information on all subjects."[91] Wherever he goes, he took measurements and observations, and sought to amaze the locals the superiority of western equipment.[92] Wilcox also reported about the curiosity of the natives about any mechanical device while at the same time highlighting the ignorance of the natives regarding its scientific use or properties.[93] Another official, Mr. E.R. Grange frightened an Angami Naga chief by telling that he could see anything that was happening in the latter's village through his telescope.[94] Thus, the British sought to demonstrate the superiority of western science and technology while exploring the frontier.

There is also no gainsay in asserting that the surveyor regarded themselves as carrying out the 'civilizing mission' of the colonial state while on survey expeditions. A case in point was Jenkins' observations made in his 'Journal of a Tour' throughout the Naga Hills in 1838. Jenkins reported: "With the means we [the British] possess of instructing and humanizing the Nagas there seems to be every reason to hope that these unfortunate races may soon rise in the scale of civilization ..."[95]

As such, the evolution of the concept of the 'civilizing mission' in Northeast India has to be located within the context of the strategic location of the Naga Hills and the economic resources it possessed and promised. The surveyor also acted as a pioneer, a suppresser of natives' barbaric practices. For instance, Jenkins asserted that the British "should suppress those continued desolating wars between the tribes,

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[91] G.T. Bayfield, "Narrative of a Journey from Ava to the frontiers of Assam and back", p. 134.

[92] One evening at a particular village, he produced a musical box and an accordion "which excited great interest, the machinery of the box being perfectly incomprehensible to them [natives]." At another location he reported that the natives were initially frightened, which later on gave way to curiosity, over some equipment of his. Bayfield informed us that his "greyhound, percussion gun, musical box, pocket compass, and watch, were wonders of which they [the natives] had never before dreamed." See *Ibid.*, pp. 140 & 170.

[93] For instance, he wrote: "I also gave them a pair of magnetic bars, which had excited their attention, not more by their property of giving direction to needles, than that of assisting in the detection of iron ores, which exhibited to them by driving off the sulphur from some pyrites, the nature of which they had been ignorant till then." See R. Wilcox, "Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the Neighbouring Countries", p. 78.

[94] Mr. Grange, Sub Assistant Commissioner of Nowgong District, further terrified the native chief by shooting at a pumpkin thereby demonstrating the superiority of his weapon. NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 56 & K.W., dated the 10th July 1839, B.R. Grange's Diary.

[95] The strategic location of the Naga Hill tracts was emphasized upon by Jenkins: "The occupation of these tracts will also enable us to connect lower Assam with Sadiya by a good practicable road that is now very much wanted, and to open roads for our troops towards the most vulnerable portions of our frontier, the passes to Ava and the Singphos country." NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 53, dated the 16th May 1838, Correspondence from Captain Francis Jenkins, AGG, NEF, to H.J. Prinsep, Sec. to the GoI, Secret Department, FW.

which alike prevented the increase and the civilization of the population."[96] Thus, the intertribal wars among the hill people were used as a marker to denote savagery among them, with the suppression of it seen as ushering in civilization. In later years, when raids and inter-tribal warfare were, to some extent, effectively suppressed by the colonial state, routine official duties such as touring among the hill tribes became associated with the notion of the moral task of the British 'civilizing mission'. For instance, C.A. Elliot, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1881, wrote:

> The brightest chapters of the history of our rule in India are those which record the civilizing influences exercised over Bhils, Santhals, and other tribes as wild and as difficult to manage as the Nagas, by officers who have distinguished themselves by their justice, their sympathy, and their kindly interest in the people under them. Such sympathies and interests can best only be cultivated on tour ...[97]

Thus, the discharge of official duties like touring was conveniently looked upon as having a benefiting effect on the native people.

Conclusion:

To conclude, colonial surveys and explorations were, therefore, important practices for rendering the unknown territory of the North-East Frontier into a known one. As an unknown territory the frontier, then, became in British imagination a privileged site to be surveyed, known and possessed. To put it differently, the frontier presented to the surveyors a field of knowledge. And knowledge was acquired – through the act of observation, writing and reporting by individuals employed in the service of the colonial state – and produced in the form of tour journals, survey reports, notes and official correspondences thereby leading to the formation of an extensive colonial archive on Northeast India's geography and its inhabitants. The knowledge collected was accordingly utilized by the state for demarcating boundaries,

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[96] Correspondence from F. Jenkins, AGG, NEF, to G.A. Bushby, Officiating Secretary to the GOI, Political Department, Letter dated the 18th June 1842, in *Selection of Papers*, pp. 290-292.

[97] C.A. Elliott attached the "greatest importance to constant and free personal intercourse" through touring by District Officers and their Assistants with the local inhabitants. He further wished that at the end of every year the Political Officer or his Assistants should have "visited every village in his jurisdiction, entered into communication with the villagers, and enquired into their revenue assessment, their supply of contributed labour, their cultivation and forest clearance, their troubles from wild animals or diseases, and any other subject of local interest or importance which may come up." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 135, dated January 1882, Memorandum on the Administration of the Naga Hills District, dated the 31st March 1881.

ordering people within a specific territory and maintaining colonial rule which subtly revealed the confluence of knowledge and power.

Inherent in the whole process of knowledge gathering was the figuration of the natives as nothing more than objects, numbers or brief references. Imbued with the notion of British 'civilizing mission' and western superiority, the surveyors often goes to the extent of differentiating information gathered from the accounts of natives' vis-à-vis knowledge produced by their direct observation. There is every attempt to displaced, supplanted hearsay or local knowledge of natives by observation made by the British and their quest for total and accurate knowledge of the region. Yet the knowledge about the region is not entirely the British's alone despite its claims of being based on scientific and empirical observation. As some knowledge had to come from the natives such as the names of mountain range, the knowledge produced were negotiated, mediated upon, and contested between the British and the natives.

As a concluding remark, the contestation between the local inhabitants and the British shows a certain limitedness of colonial rule in this frontier region. In particular, the altercation between the native state of Manipur and the British over certain territory subtly demonstrate the ingenious adaptability, compromise by the British in carrying out their practices of bounding and territorializing the region.

Chapter 2

The Notion of 'Tribe' in Colonial Northeast India, 1824-1947

Colonial writings on Northeast India, beginning from the early nineteenth century onwards, often referred to the frontier hill tracts as being inhabited by hordes of 'tribes'. Like elsewhere across the globe, in almost a century and a half of colonial rule the British produced an enormous archive detailing its activities with the various communities of Northeast India. The main assumption that informed British writings was that prior to their arrival in the frontier region the hill people had existed in groups of 'tribes'; and that the social structure of (pre)colonial Northeast India had remained an essentially 'tribal' one. This chapter is about this notion of 'tribe'; and how it was constructed and used in a particular geographical location with special emphasis on one of the frontier 'tribe' of Northeast India – the 'Nagas'. The study will chiefly address this issue: On what basis was a group such as the Nagas classified a 'tribe'? As a review of the idea or discourse of 'tribe', this paper will also examine British efforts at differentiating 'colonial subjects', its diverse practices such as a descriptive ethnography which in a way legitimated their claim of the Nagas as belonging to a 'tribe'. In threading through these aspects, the study will be based on the colonial archive which was composed of survey and military reports, census reports, ethnographical monographs, imperial gazetteers, and other strands of writings.

Covering the early phase of colonial rule – mostly the nineteenth century – the first section will examine how colonial officials posted in the region deployed the term 'tribe' on the basis of the official reports that they wrote, along with some of the works that they produced on their frontier experiences. As a frontier characteristic marked this period, colonial officials grappled with, and tried to ordered, the knowledge of newly-acquired territories and the people inhabiting them. The next sections will trace the gradual systematization, most evidently embodied in the census reports and supposedly ethnographic works, of the knowledge on tribes. The central role of ethnography and the racial theory both in colonial administration and in the construction of 'tribe' will be examined here as well. The study will proceed on to

seek out the assumptions that characterized the administrator-ethnographers group in their dealings with the Naga tribes in the early part of the twentieth century.

2.1 Early Colonial Contacts and Contexts, 1832-1890

Northeast India came within the influence of the expanding British Empire following the First Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26. As such, documentation on the hill tracts was fairly rich from that event onwards. British writings of this period chiefly concerned matters relating to geography, and were, thus, replete with instructions given to frontier officials to undertook topographical surveys, locate its inhabitants within the newly-acquired territories and further explored the unknown parts of the frontier. Consequently, it was in one of these surveys that Captain F. Jenkins and Lieutenant R.B. Pemberton undertook a route survey from Assam to Manipur – deputed directly by the Governor General as a strategic measures for the protection of the region from any further or possible invasion from the east – and first came into contact with one of the frontier 'tribes', the Nagas.[1] Coming into contact, in 1832, with the hill inhabitants in the course of this exploration, these two officials noticed that the Nagas on the frontier were 'a powerful tribe' who evinced a 'hostile disposition' towards the survey party.[2] They also experienced "the almost total absence of any communication between our [the British] subjects in Assam and the Naga tribes occupying the hills which separate them from Muneepoor [sic]".[3] It can be seen, then, that the earliest Europeans to come into contact with the hill people began to refer them as a 'tribe'. This reference may be partly because the survey party

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[1] National Archives of India, New Delhi, India (hereafter NAI), Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, Consultation No. 1/2, dated the 22nd July 1831, Minute by the Governor General, W.C. Bentinck, dated Simla, the 20th June 1831. Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant R.B. Pemberton were commanded by the Governor-General to survey and describe the best routes, locate places for the establishment of military outposts, and find out the resources of the country. The instructions of the Governor General echoed the mood prevalent among the British during the initial years of the British advent in the Northeast India, which was that of affording strong protection to the frontier so as to be best prepared in case of another war with the Burmese.

[2] NAI, Foreign Department, Branch – Political (henceforth FDBP), Cons. No. 70, dated the 5th March 1832. During the route survey, Captain Jenkins and Lieutenants Pemberton and Gordon, accompanied by the Raja of Manipur, Gambhir Singh, with 400 Manipuri sepoys, succeeded in effecting a passage through the Naga Country and the forest between the hills and the low banks of Assam and Northern Cachar. It was in the course of this exploration that they came into contact with the hill 'tribe', Nagas.

[3] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 114 - A, dated the 15th October 1832, Correspondence from Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton to the Chief Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, Fort William (henceforth GoI, FD, FW). It may be noted that colonial accounts are quite replete with references to place or 'tribes' names under numerous different spellings. For instances, the present day state of Manipur was refer to as 'Muneepoor', 'Munneepoore', 'Munipoor', or 'Muneepore', and so on. The contemporary appellation 'Manipur' will be used, for consistency, throughout this study.

was attacked and confronted upon in the hills. From this incident can be traced some of the British accounts of the barbarism and violent nature of the Naga tribe.

Post Jenkins and Pemberton's visit, steady references to the adjoining hills of the Assam plains began which were usually in connection with 'raids' and 'incursions' carried out by the hill people on the plains.[4] Much official correspondence was dedicated to know the cause of raids, the identity of the raiders and on strategies to control, punished, and suppressed them.[5] As raids were usually bloody and violent affairs, often with death, kidnapping and destruction, colonial officials treated it as acts of aggression on territory over which they had exclusive control and to which they must retaliated. In response to raids, punitive military expeditions – which double up as topographical surveys – were despatched against the raiders from the hills.[6] The officers conducting these expeditions were expected to make the Nagas, through collective punishment and peaceful conciliation with their chiefs, acknowledged the authority of the British and to refrain from raiding the plains. Moreover, they were required to produce a report of their undertaking and experience in the hills. In their narratives, two or three key practices of the Nagas were deemed a barbaric practice which became identifiable with the category 'tribe': raids, head-hunting, or slavery practice became the emblem of Naga savagery in official discourse.[7] The image of the Naga as a threat to imperial peace and order and a tyrant of the valley people were successfully projected by these official reports.

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[4] For example, R.D. Mangles, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, ordered that "the Political Department be informed" of any raids and incursions by these 'tribes'. In the 'Order' he also stated that the Governor thinks it "highly desirable [that] measures ... should be taken for the protection of the North Eastern Frontier of Cachar [part of the Assam plains] from the incursions of the Naga Tribes occupying the tract between Tularam's Country and Munnipore." The proposed 'measures' was that "a Munnipore Force should be stationed at some convenient point on the frontier, in communication, for the present, with Captain Burns, and eventually with the officer in command of the proposed Detachment from the Sylhet Light Infantry, in order to cut off the retreat of, or to pursue into their fortresses, any body of Nagas committing further aggressions." NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 2, dated the 6th March 1837. (Tularam or Tooleram, as he was referred to in British accounts, was the then king of the Princely state Cachar.)

[5] A cursory glance at the index of the Foreign Department reveals a total record of 15 raids for the years 1830-39; 11 for the years 1840-49; 1 for the years 1850-59; 5 for the years 1860-69; and 12 for the years 1870-79.

[6] Altogether there were a total of ten expeditions between the period 1835 and 1851, and two major operations between the years 1866 and 1880. The chief feature of the military expedition was a collective punishment meted out to the hill people in the form of destruction of food grains, fines and the burning down of villages. There were attempts, however, to restrain the hill communities from raiding through conciliation with the chiefs of each particular village indulging in raids.

[7] For instance, see Diary of E.R. Grange, Sub Assistant Commissioner, Cachar. NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 56 & K.W., dated the 10th July1839. Responding to a raid carried out by the Angami Nagas on Cachar – a British protectorate under Tooleram Rajah's rule – in the Assam plains, Mr. E.R. Grange undertook, on the order of the Government of India, a tour throughout the affected country. In his diary

Furthermore, Government reports also highlighted the slavery practice of the Nagas as the main sources of the turbulence and inter-tribal feuds in this hill tract. For example, in 1845 Captain Eld was assigned on a military expedition to submit the Nagas

> to the order of the Government, and to abstain[ed them] from trafficking in slaves, the existence of which trade has been the main causes of all the outrages in this part of the mountain range inhabited by the Nagas.[8]

In his military report, Eld further informed that a party of Angami Nagas raided a village called Bessome and 'cut off the head' of the former 'Gaon Burra' (village chief) and another villager with their spears and took some members of the village into slavery.[9] The image of 'the tribal' as violent in character was further enforced by descriptions such as this one as reported by an official: "With their [Nagas'] fierce savage dispositions, always ready to appeal to arms, and their contempt of death, they would have been very formidable neighbours but for the inferiority of their weapons".[10] The Nagas' readiness to violence and their total disregard for the sanctity of a human life were, then, projected as an innate and impulsive behaviour characteristic of the tribal.

Here in the survey reports or notes furnished during the military operations can be seen the origin of the notion of 'tribe'. In writing up their report, which mainly

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(for the date 27th January, 1839) he reports that the reasons of these attacks were merely for plunder, to extort conch shells, cloths, ransom, and slaves. He also inform us that the raiders "seized as many as they could, to obtain ransom from their relatives and killed all that attempted to escape, cutting off their heads with the blade of their spears which would be ransomed by their relatives also, for that is one barbaric customs of the Nagas." He also reports of slavery practice in this region. Here is an extract of his description: "...an extensive and infamous trade is carried on in slaves, who are stolen right and left by all in that quarter and sold to the Bengalli [sic] merchants who go up for cotton and I hear that a slave can be procured for 20 packets of salt, 7 of which is to be had for 1 Rs. I saw many Manipuris who had been thus seized whilst young, and sold both amongst Kukis, Kacharis, and Nagas."

[8] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 69, dated the 23rd May 1845, Correspondence from Major F. Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier (hereafter AGG, NEF), to F. Currie, Secretary to the GoI, dated Guwahati, the 3rd April 1845.

[9] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 70, dated the 23rd May 1845, Correspondence from Captian P. Eld, Assistant Agent to Governor General, NEF, to Major F. Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General, NEF, dated Guwahati, the 10th January 1845. Captain Eld informed that of the 8 young girls and one man carried off captives, 5 of the captives along with the heads of the deceased were ransomed by their friends while 2 were still "in slavery in Beren and 2 more in the Angamis country where the possessor have refused to let them go at any price." He observed: "Such is the life of the inhabitants of these small Naga villages which have not sufficient strength to resist the tyranny of their more powerful neighbours."

[10] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 322, dated the 20th December 1850, Correspondence from F. Jenkins to J.P. Grant, Secretary to Government of Bengal in the Judicial Department, Fort William, dated Guwahati, the 28th October 1850.

dealt with military matters, colonial officials were at the same time 'constructing' particular notion of people as belonging to certain 'tribe' or 'ethnic' groups. In other words, through the act of writing they were assigning certain 'essential' features, verifiable or not, over this community. At this stage, the essential traits that identified the Nagas as a 'tribe' was their actions that apparently were not conducive for the maintenance of law and order *viz.*, raids, slavery, and head-hunting. Moreover, these key practices allowed the British to labelled the Nagas with a generous variety of idioms such as 'wild races', 'savage', 'raiders', 'barbarous', 'ignorant' and so on. Further, the idea of the Nagas' 'history' as one of an anarchic existence and barbarism before *Pax Britannica* has been theorized in this report. Again, 'tribe', with all its connotation of violence and barbarism, was ascribed as the distinctive social structure of the Nagas. Thus, through an extensive volume of tour journals, diaries, official correspondences, and other reports, the British produced for itself an archive, a knowledge that naturally codified the behaviour of the Nagas. This production of knowledge was a significant achievement for the British as it not only led to the expansion of colonial rule in the North-eastern hills, but also legitimized this expansion as well.

In all these accounts furnished by the early frontier officials there was no effort, however, to understand ethnic identities from 'within' or from an 'emic' perspective – the viewpoint of the people being described.[11] The British were content with operating from an 'etic' perspective: that is, they describe the hill inhabitants in terms of pre-established, as well as ethnic, categories used by the Assamese and Cacharese plain dwellers.[12] To an extent, official discourse, thus, built upon categories already in use by the plain people. Drawing upon this category and influenced by nineteenth-century European thoughts of non-western people, a remarkably dormant view of the hill people as living in a state of 'barbarism' and

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[11] I draw this point from an article by Willem Van Schendel entitled, "The Invention of the 'Jummas': State Formation and Ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (Feb., 1992), pp. 95-128. For a discussion of an 'emic' perspective, see his analysis of one Francis Buchanan's journal (pp. 97-100.) who had undertaken a journey through the Chittagong hill tracts, in Bangladesh, and Tripura, in Northeast India, in the 1790s on the lookout for proper places to cultivate spices.

[12] An official Note on the Angami Nagas is revealing of this aspect. The Note stated: "Of the several sub-divisions of the Naga tribe the Angami confederation appears to be the most powerful. The term 'Angami' seems to be a Cacharese word signifying 'independent' or 'unconquered', and was most likely applied to these savages originally by the people of Cachar, as up to this day it is never used among themselves. They are in fact totally ignorant of its signification, and within their own confines go by the name of 'Thengee-mah'." NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 128/31 & K.W., dated the 19th January 1855, Note on the Angami Nagas.

'backwardness' prevailed throughout most of the colonial period. The main assumption of this thought, as formalized by nineteenth-century European writers and 'racial-evolutionary theories', was a vision of the 'tribal' people, in Crispin Bates words, "as inferior examples of humanity".[13] This impression legitimized colonial conquest "not merely a right of the fittest but a duty, a burden that must be shouldered if the world was to be civilized and the evolution of man advanced."[14]

What emerges from the colonial accounts also is a sense that the Naga Hills marked the physical, conceptual, and political boundary of the civilized Assam plains.[15] That the Nagas was an inherently 'tribal' society was both necessary for defining the borders of civilization, and an unavoidable result of the limited resources of the British in Northeast India.[16] As such, with the Nagas and other communities of the frontier hill tracts British intervention was aimed at a limited demonstration of their power. The strategy adopted by the British was the establishment of the North-East Frontier on the margins of the British Indian Empire, where they could resort to irregular use of military violence and other forms of punishment, so as to subtly convinced the 'tribals' of their political superiority.

As a result, British rule in the hill tracts was marked with uncertainty (about the stability of their rule), compromise (occupation of a territory followed by withdrawal) and ambivalence (conflicting perceptions of the 'tribal'). For instance,

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[13]Crispin Bates, '"Lost Innocents and the Loss of Innocence": Interpreting Adivasi Movements in South Asia', in R.H. Barnes, Andrew Gray and Benedict Kingsbury, eds, *Indigenous Peoples of Asia*, Michigan: Association for Asian Studies, 1995, p. 111.

[14]*Ibid.*,

[15] It may be noted that the Assam plains and the tribal hills were slated for different types of colonial rule. The Assam plains, with its 'civilizing' and 'benefiting' tea gardens, was intended to function as an ideal colonial space, where the political authority of the colonial state could be enforced more deeper in comparison with the adjacent tribal hills. There were signs, nevertheless, that the hills were, post the Burmese war, more than a mere strategic outpost for the protection of British possession in India. But, the British neither targeted the diverse tribes with the kind of political control that had been established in the Assam plains, nor tried to integrate the hill tribes *en masse* into the 'administered' Assam valley. For a brief account of the 'civilization' of the 'wildness' of Assam through the utilization of the labour of the aboriginal 'Dhangar' from Chotanagpur in Bihar, see Kaushik Ghosh, "A Market for Aboriginality: Primitivism and Race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India", in Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash and Susie Tharu, eds, *Subaltern Studies X: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 14-21.

[16] The impossibility of punishing raiding groups such as the Nagas inhabiting an 'inaccessible tract' and enforcing the surrender of 'captives and plundered property' was often lamented by frontier officers, such as E.R. Grange, in the light of "want of supplies and of the assistance of any kind for the conveyance of articles of necessary equipment and accommodation". NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 57, dated the 10th July1839. The expenses incurred for conducting a military expedition amounts to quite some figure: for instances, a sum of Rs. 662 was spent by Cap. Eld, Principal Assistant of Nowgong, during his late tour to the Naga Hills. NAI, FDBP-C, Consultation Nos. 162-65, dated the 20th June1845, correspondence from Cap. Eld to Major F. Jenkins, AGG, NEF, letter No. 186, FD, Fort William, dated 1845, the 20th June.

not all but most of the administrators serving in the frontier region shared the vision of the Nagas as a source of social and political trouble.[17] However, due to the hostility that marked the early contacts between the colonial state and the Nagas, the prevalent view of the state was one of an aggressively interventionist policy aimed at defusing the Nagas as a force in the hills. Frontier officials such as Major F. Jenkins called for an active interventionist policy in the Naga Hills and to maintained 'peace', if required, by force.[18] In a similar fashion, another official one John Butler advocated inducing the Nagas to construct roads by paying them either in kind or coin, supplying 'implements of husbandry', and teaching them the 'value of money' and 'industrious habits' so that eventually some little revenue may be realized for the "future control of the uncivilized tribes of this part of the frontier."[19] Thus, at first the colonial state sought to subdue the Nagas and their inter-tribal feuds by force and subjected them to the 'civilizing mission'.[20] The initial conviction of the British was that by halting raids or incursions, or by imposing settled agriculture, they would be able to tame the savage Naga into revenue-paying, governable subjects.

By the 1850s, however, there were contradicting views regarding the interventionist policy hitherto adopted by the colonial state along the lines advocated by Jenkins and others. A colonial official writes in 1850: "Our [the British] interference in the blood feuds of these savages beyond our own border was the original mistake."[21] He advocates that "for the future we [the British] should confine

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[17] For instance, while majority of colonial officials were vehement in their denouncement of the hill raiders, others such as T.C. Robertson held that "the Nagas are a humble peaceable race who have long carried on a traffic with the people of the plains". NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 105, dated the 30th May 1833, Correspondence from T.C. Robertson, AGG, NEF, to the Officiating Chief Secretary, GoI, Letter dated the 8th March 1833.

[18] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 24, dated the 25th May 1842, Correspondence from Major F. Jenkins, AGG, NEF, to G.A. Bushby, Esquire, Officiating Secretary to GoI. For instance, Jenkins observes: "it cannot be expected that peace can be maintained amongst such rude tribes, and a people so prodigal of human life, without being obliged occasionally to repel by force". He also opines that internecine warfare among the hill tribes "will only be entirely stopped when they are thoroughly satisfied of our superiority, and begin to appreciate the benefits introduced by our interference, in the affairs of the country."

[19] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 31, dated the 23rd May 1846.

[20] It may be worth mentioning that the interventionist policy was shared by the protestant Missionaries operating in the region. For instance, Miles Bronson, one of the earliest missionary to set foot in the Naga Hills, advocates the active interference of the Government in their dealings with the tribes. In a letter (dated Namsang, the 22nd July 1840) to F. Jenkins, Agent to Governor General, NEF, Bronson states: "I have lately been thinking whether it would not be well for you on the part of the Government to take some measures to get hold of the Nagas & to make them feel a sort of dependence upon them for livelihood, and particularly for the administration of all their internal affairs. I see nothing that is likely to prevent their improvement in civilization ..." NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 82, dated the 9th November 1840.

[21] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 311, dated the 20th December 1850, Minute by the Hon'ble J. Lowis.

ourselves to the protection of our own people [meaning the Assam plains] dealing out severe and swift retribution when they are attacked and confining ourselves to that."[22] Referring to the increase in the frequency of Naga 'raids', another official also opined:

> The present state of affairs in the Naga Hills ... would seem to have arisen entirely out of the endeavours made by the British authorities in Assam to restrain the violent and deadly feuds existing among different tribes and villages of Nagas.[23]

Similarly, the then Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, also declared that he deprecates the continuance of any such relations and interference with this 'barbarous tribes... [and their] "little wars" '. For dealing with this 'wild plundering clans', he opines that the true policy is to "stand strictly on the defensive, to protect as fully ... [the] border, and its inhabitants, but not to interfere beyond it from any motive however laudable."[24] Thus, in 1851, the Governor General insists on the complete non-intervention in the internal affairs of the hill tribes.[25] Consequently, the officers posted in the hills acknowledge the orders of the Government "directing the withdrawal of the whole of the troops from the Angami Naga Hills to Deemapore [sic]."[26] It was only by the year 1866, following the constitution of the Naga Hills District that the British began to actively interfere in the affairs of, and sought to

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[22] *Ibid.,*

[23] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 308, dated the 20th December 1850, Note by W. Grey Esquire, Officiating Under Secretary to the GoI, dated the19th October 1850. He reports: "it appears to me that from March 1847 to the end of February 1850, a space of three years, 63 persons were murdered and many more wounded by the Angami Nagas. But the great majority of those persons were murdered in the last 7 months of the period after an open rupture with the British authorities had occurred, those last few months include in fact 3 cases in which alone no fewer than 40 persons out of the 63 persons murdered are accounted for. Up to August 1849, covering 2 years and 5 months of the period embraced by Capt. Butler's statement, it appears that only 19 murders were committed by the Angami Nagas and these are comprised in 11 cases – being 4 cases in each of which 3 persons were killed, and seven cases in case of which a single murder was committed."

[24] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 318, dated the 20th December 1850, Minute by the Most Noble the Governor General of India, dated the 20th November 1850.

[25] The Governor General's opinion on this point, as recorded in his Minute dated the 20th February 1851, was as follows: "I dissent entirely from the policy which is recommended by what is called obtaining a control, that is to say, of taking possession of these hills, and of establishing sovereignty over their savage inhabitants. Our possession could only bring no profit to us, and would be as costly to us as it would be unproductive. The only advantage which is expected from our having possession of the country by those who advocate the measures is the termination of the plundering inroads which the tribes make from the hills on our subjects at the foot of them." Quoted in Note on the Angami Nagas, NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 128/31 & K.W., dated the 19th January 1855.

[26] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No.95, dated the 13th June 1851, Correspondence from Lieutenant G.F.F. Vincent, Acting Junior Assistant Commissioner, on Special Survey Duty, Angami Naga Hills, to Major F. Jenkins, AGG, NEF, Letter No. 19, dated Camp Mozomah, the 6th March 1851. Accordingly, the British force relocated to Dimapur which is located in the plains. This place is in present day Nagaland sharing a close border with Assam.

administered, the Nagas. [27] The pacification of the Nagas, thus, was a long process. However, it's imperative to note that some areas were never effectively pacified all throughout the colonial period. It is within this context, the inconsistent colonial strategies in controlling the tribes that the construction of the Naga tribe in Northeast India has to be located.

2.2 Tribe as Race

British writings often asserted that relations between the hill people and the Assam plains kingdom before British entry had been one of unrelenting antagonism.[28] The concept of the 'tribe' was used accordingly both to explain differences between the hill inhabitants and that of the plains, and again between the former and the British themselves. Quite often, in this discourse of difference, the notion of 'tribe' became synonymous with that of 'race'. The perception that human being is divided into distinct races, each with their own distinct hereditary characteristics, largely informed colonial official's writing on the 'tribes' of Northeast India. This infamous Victorian 'pseudo-science' of evolutionist racial ethnology's main supposition was the "belief that civilisation was the unique achievement of ethnologically 'advanced' races."[29] For instance, an official Note on the Naga tribe, in 1855, is fairly instructive of the way the notion of 'tribe' and 'race' could blend with one another:

> The Nagas are a numerous and powerful *race*, inhabiting the mountainous districts on the Upper part of the valley of Assam and southward of the Bruhmuputra [sic] river. They are the *wildest and the most barbarous of the hill tribes* in that quarter and are looked upon with fear and horror by the people of the plains. Sub divided amongst themselves they have at the same time no unanimity with each other and never act in concert together.[30]

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[27] For a detailed account of the administration of the Naga Hills District, particularly after the year 1880, see Peter Robb, "The Colonial State and Constructions of Indian Identity: An Example on the Northeast Frontier in the 1880s", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, May 1997, pp. 245-283.

[28] For example, it was claimed that "in the time of the Ahom [pre-colonial Assam kingdom] Rajas they [Nagas] occasionally raided the plains..." See *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XVIII*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908, p. 285. Likewise frontier officials such as Captain John Butler, Political Agent, Naga Hills, also firmly resorted to writing in a manner that sought to establish a hill-plain dichotomy. Here is an extract: 'I think we may well congratulate ourselves on possessing such a force in a province where, as I have learnt it aptly put, we are "all frontier," and exposed to the attacks of hardy mountaineers, who used, and still continue in many parts, to be the terror of the plains they hem in.' NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 92, dated December 1875.

[29] Susan Bayly, "Caste and 'Race' in the Colonial Ethnography of India", in Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi and Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 168.

[30] NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 128/31 & K.W., dated the 19th January 1855, Note on the Angami Nagas. Emphasis mine. The river 'Bruhmuputra' as mention in the Note is the present day river spelt 'Brahmaputra'.

What is remarkable about this passage was that, apart from the loose use of the category 'tribe' and 'race', the Nagas of the hills were casted in opposition to the plains people. Besides, the diverse tribes that comprised the Nagas were shown to be living in complete isolation from both the plains' population as well as without any interaction or interrelation amongst themselves. It is very enticing to read this remarks as part of contemporary European thoughts that see things in binary oppositions such as between 'barbarism' and 'civilization', or 'backwardness' and 'progress' and so on. In fact it may not be far from being accurate to state that colonial officials were often imbued with the prevalent western ideals and orientalist thoughts while projecting markers of difference between the hills and the plains in various aspects. For example, a prevalent orientalist perception, as informed by Susan Bayly, was of climate, topography, and physical surroundings as a determinant of human nature. [31] This 'environmental theme' was later on adopted by "Victorian ethnologists as part of the language of racial classification in which so-called 'civilized' and 'savage' races were distinguished from one another on the basis of habitat."[32] As Ajay Skaria has noted, though in a different context, many of the human groups that eventually became 'tribes' had lived in forests or hills which was looked upon as 'wild' lands, far from the 'civilization' that was often linked with plains or riparian regions.[33] So influential seemed to be this conception that we are not surprised to find one official remarking:

> We [the British] have no reason to suppose that the state of civilization in the hills was ever more advanced than we see at present; in the plains, however, it is otherwise, and there are numerous traces of a race and civilization that has long since passed away... [and] we come upon ruins and relics which bear testimony to the presence of a numerous and intelligent people.[34]

Thus, in the context of colonial Northeast India the Assam plains with its tea industry and settled agriculture, as different from the 'swidden' (or shifting) agriculture practices of the Naga hill peoples,[35] were labelled a more civilized portion of the region.

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[31] Susan Bayly, "Caste and 'Race' in the Colonial Ethnography of India", p. 174.
[32] *Ibid.*,
[33] Ajay Skaria, "Shades of Wildness: Tribe, Caste, and Gender in Western India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 3, August, 1997, p. 731.
[34] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. Nos. 273- 75, dated August 1874, Annual Report on the administration of the Naga Hills Political Agency for the year 1873-74, by Captain James Johnstone.
[35] It is important, however, to point out that not all of the tribes pooled together under the generic group 'Naga' practice 'swidden' cultivation (known locally as *Jhuming*). Groups such as the most powerful

Also, the hill people practice of a different religion – 'Animism' in colonial accounts – was also emphasized upon to assigned him to the category 'tribe'. In fact, as early as 1833, his lack of caste has been an indicator of difference between the plains and the hill inhabitants.[36] The Annual Administration report of Naga Hills, for the year 1873-74, reported that "the Nagas are in all respects quite different to the inhabitants of the plains, and are entirely free from all caste prejudices or any taint of Hindooism [sic]".[37] In 1878, another official also informed that as "the Nagas fortunately are not troubled with any caste prejudices ... [they] are only too anxious to be vaccinated and receive medicine."[38] The Nagas as a non-Hindu both acted as an indicator of difference and a cause for active British intervention in the affairs of the tribes. Colonial concern for the protection of the tribal from the influence of plain people began from around this period. For instance, a frontier official voiced his fear that if the government hand over the charge of the Nagas, particularly in the education sector, to the Assamese then the former "will soon learn to adopt the effeminate ways and religious characteristics of the inhabitants of the valley."[39] The official policy of exclusive administration of supposedly tribal areas, which carried within itself the concept of 'protection' and the 'civilizing mission', also has its origin here.

Thus, despite the initial turbulent relationship the British has had with the Nagas, the latter were often endeared more than the plain settlers. Colonial officials also often stress the nobility and independence of the Naga tribe. The Nagas, as one official puts it, "are hardy, active and industrious, all freemen and the women also enjoying a truly Germanic freedom entering into all the Councils of the men and

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of the Nagas, the Angamis practiced wet-rice terrace cultivation. For an informative account of 'slash-and-burn' or 'swidden' cultivation, as practice by the Zeme Nagas (who partly inhabited the present day Assam, Manipur and Nagaland), see Arkotong Longkumer, "Religious and Economic Reform: The Gaidinliu Movement and the Heraka in the North Cachar Hills", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, New Series*, Vol. 30, No. 3, December, 2007, pp. 499-515.

[36] While on a Special Survey Duty, F. Jenkins reports to the Agent to the Governor General, NEF: "The population of the hills consists of Cacharees who have embraced Hinduism, & of those who have not yet adhered to that superstition, of Nagas to whom the Country had originally belonged ..." NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 98, dated the 30th May 1833.

[37] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 274, dated August 1874, Correspondence from Captain James Johnstone, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Letter no. 103, dated Samaguting, the 30th May 1874.

[38] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 59, dated December 1878, Annual General Administration Report for the Naga Hills District for the year ending 31st March 1878, by Lieutenant H. Maxwell, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills.

[39] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 274, dated August 1874, Correspondence from Captain James Johnstone, Officiating Political Agent, Naga Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Letter no. 103, dated Samaguting, the 30th May 1874.

inciting them to fight."[40] Referring to the equality pervading among the Nagas, another colonial officer also reported that "the great difficulty in dealing with the Naga tribes is that there is no recognised head".[41]Another military officer, one Captain John Butler, also remarked:

> ...I have often known and proved him to possess many most noble and endearing qualities. I consider the highland savage of Assam, with all his faults, to be a *more manly*, loveable being than many of his lowland neighbours.[42]

The manliness attributed to the Nagas seemed to be because they had certain resemblance with the frontier officials, most of whom were public school products. For instance, the Nagas 'morung' or the "bachelors' hall" and the British public school had similar function: it was an exclusive male institutions where a boy was generally hammered into a man and taught the values and duties of life. Thus, although terms such as 'savages', 'ignorant', 'barbarous', 'bloodthirsty' and 'treacherous'[43] were still in use all throughout the colonial phase, there was some slight changes in its connotations over time. Captain John Butler, the official who used these idioms in a correspondence to his higher-ups in 1875, reported that on consenting to accept a spear to prove how 'friendly his feelings were really' towards the Nagas of a particular village, the latter were "childlike quite delighted ... and were most profuse to their offers to assist me in any way they could."[44] And there were efforts to understand more clearly too certain practices of the Nagas such as, for instance, headhunting and its meanings. John Butler also wrote, in that particular report of 1875, that the Naga seek "human heads, which he looks upon as the noblest

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[40] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 322, dated the 20th December 1850, Correspondence from F. Jenkins to J.P. Grant, Secretary to Government of Bengal in the Judicial Department, Fort William, dated Guwahati, the 28th October1850.

[41] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 21, dated 1878, October, Diary of Lieutenant C.R. MacGregor, 44th Regiment Sylhet Light Infantry, Commanding Escort of Chief Commissioner of Assam during Tour through Naga Hills. This was based on an interview with an old chief Rokitzu, the chief of the middle *Khel* (a clan division) of the village Mozema, who told MacGregor that they have no influence among the young men of the village, and prefer to abstain from raids. A statement of the old chief was reproduced in his diary which runs like this: "We old men wish to keep quiet, but the young men won't let us."

[42] NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 92, dated December1875, Correspondence from Captain John Butler, Political Agent, Naga Hills, to H. Luttman-Johnson, Esq., Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Letter no. 42, dated Samaguting, the 30th April 1875. My emphasis.

[43] These adjectives are from correspondence between Captain John Butler, Political Agent, Naga Hills, and H. Luttman-Johnson, Esq., Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Letter no. 42, dated Samaguting, the 30th April 1875. NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 92, dated December 1875.

[44] *Ibid.*, In the same letter, Butler also made this remarks: "The task of punishing savages, ignorant and barbarous, bloodthirsty and treacherous, who never, or seldom, dare to met their foe in the open, as man to man, is not congenial one. I think we all felt it was like giving a dose of medicine to a sick child".

trophies of the chase, with which either to decorate his ancestral halls or to adorn the walls of his assembly rooms (Deka Changs or Morangs), according to the custom of the tribe to which he belongs."[45] Compare this account with E.R. Grange's report in 1839 who report it simply as "one barbaric custom of the Nagas."[46] While Grange's account denounces this practice, Butler attempts a more in-depth description of the disputed custom, and even represented the perspective of the Nagas. In the earlier report, headhunting had been merely a symbol of 'barbarism'; almost half a century later it had become a symbol of ethnographic interests.

Although the distinctiveness of the Nagas from the plains people in customs and other social practices were becoming known and established, there had not been any attempt to actually systematize these differences yet. Nevertheless, a beginning had been made by some of the military officers, such as Butler and C.R. MacGregor, at attempts of a 'descriptive' ethnography of the Naga tribe.[47]And officials such as R.G. Woodthorpe began to quite regularly published their work of 'ethnological interests' in European Anthropological Journals.[48] The tide was turn when the Government also became interested and adopted agendas relating to ethnographic matters which led to significant transformations. In a Memorandum, C.A. Elliot, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1881, encouraged effort to record and salvage ethnographic knowledge of the Nagas by offering to published and reward supposedly ethnographic works.[49] The existing tribal institutions, its customs, practices, and other

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[45] *Ibid.*,

[46] NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 56 & K.W., dated the 10th July 1839, Diary of E.R. Grange, Sub Assistant Commissioner, Cachar.

[47] For instances, see NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. Nos. 91-99, Appendix X, dated December 1875. Lieutenant R.G. Woodthorpe, R.E., Assistant Superintendent of the Topographical Survey, attempts to describe the physical traits of the Nagas men and women, the dress and decoration, the weaponry, the structure of the village and its fortification, the mode of disposal of the dead and so on. See also NAI, FDBP-A, Consultation No. 505, dated 1880 January, Diary of Lieutenant C.R. MacGregor, Commanding Detachment, 44th Regiment Sylhet Light Infantry, stationed at Kohima, Naga Hills. MacGregor describes the practice of the 'genna' of the Nagas of Kohima, and the festivities associated with it, mentioning the pattern of the dresses of the men and women besides other aspects.

[48] For instance, see R. G. Woodthorpe's "Notes on the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the So-Called Naga Hills, on Our North-East Frontier of India. Part I", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 11, 1882, pp. 56-73.; and his "Notes on the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the So-Called Naga Hills, on Our North-East Frontier of India. Part II", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 11, 1882, pp.196-214.

[49] In a Memorandum on the Administration of the Naga Hills District (dated the 31st March1881) C.A. Elliott, Chief Commissioner of Assam, stated: "I look, moreover, to District Officers, and especially the younger officers serving in the Naga Hills, to carry out a systematic record of the institutions which have hitherto existed among the Nagas, – the village constitutions, the origin of clans, the laws of marriage, inheritance, and private rights in land and water, the superstitions, legends, religious belief, historical traditions, folk-lore, and the like. Not only are these matters of great importance and interest, but they can only be enquired into successfully at an early period in our rule, before the memory of the

information were to be written down before the changing times had forced its extinctions. With this new development, the image of the 'tribe' came to be defined in different ways which leads to the gradual systematization and definition of the tribe.

2.3 Tribe in Colonial Census: Quantifying and Defining the 'Tribe'

The first all-India census, conducted in 1871-72, and the subsequent decennial census that followed, tried to collect and systematized knowledge regarding the subject population including their customs, behaviour and, of course, their population. [50] Besides the collection of information, the Census of India has been an important instrument for differentiating 'colonial subjects'. As Bernard Cohn has noted, through the census or 'enumerative modality' the British "objectified social, cultural, and linguistic differences among the people of India."[51]Several scholars have also noted that race theory was experimented and elaborated through 'scientific' measurement, enumeration, and categorization of the people the British were ruling.[52] Science, in particular anthropometry, became integral to colonial administration in India. Hence, heavily replete with reference to the great racial diversity of India, the census was, no doubt, influenced by the prevalent race theory.

In the Indian context, the census of 1901 was particularly noted and most evident for its race-based classification of the population under the Chief Commissionership of H.H. Risley. An ardent proponent of race theory, Risley theorized that the inhabitants of India and its prevalent social structures originated out of the interactions among racial types. Applying anthropometry and racial theories to his study of the people of India, Risley devoted much of his focal attention on detailed

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customs recorded has died out; and they are matters the enquiry into which generally forms a link of sympathy with the people, who are pleased to find that their rulers take interest in what so closely concerns themselves. I shall be glad to publish works on these subjects free of cost, and their preparation will earn for an officer the approbation of the Local Government and a claim to official advancement." NAI, FDBP-A, Cons. No. 135, dated January 1882.

[50] As far as the North-eastern hill tracts were concerned, the district of the Naga Hills as well as the Garo Hills were excluded from the first census, and only a partial census of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were made – a simple counting of the people without any effort to obtain further details. Likewise, in the 1881 census, on account of the disturbances by the Khonoma village in the Naga Hills, only the civil and military population of the station of Kohima was censused. The estimated population of the Nagas in the Naga Hills was 93,000 heads; and for the entire Assam Province was enumerated at 104,650. See Table for Population, Area and Density in *Report on the Census of Assam for 1881*, Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1883, p. 34.

[51] B.S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 8.

[52] See Susan Bayly, "Caste and 'Race' in the Colonial Ethnography of India"; and Crispin Bates, "Race, Caste, and Tribe in Central India: The Early Origin of Indian Anthropometry", in Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 219-59.

measurements and classifications of what he calls 'physical types'.[53] Risley's concern with the physical difference of India's inhabitants is quite apparent in the reports of the census. For instance, he concludes that the measurement of the nasal index "brings the Mongoloid people of Assam and the Eastern Himalayas within the platyopic group, and effectually differentiates them from the broadheaded races of Baluchistan, Bombay and Coorg."[54] However, as far as the Naga Hills was concerned, the racial difference based on biological aspects, of the type propounded by Risley, failed to make much headway. There was no anthropometric measurement of the Nagas on a grand scale: but this was not the case of the Khasis and the Jaintias. Nevertheless, the report did not stop from constantly referring to the general population of the region as the 'Mongoloid races of India', the 'Mongoloid people of the Eastern Himalayas and the Chittagong Hills' or "the *Mongoloid* type of tribe as found in the Naga Hills'.[55]

Though no anthropometric measurement of the Nagas was conducted on a large scale, there was enough of a descriptive ethnography of this tribe along with other frontier tribes of Northeast India. Census and ethnography in India went along well which was especially true of the 1901 census. Glossaries indicating the whereabouts of the tribe and castes indigenous to specific region appeared which were compiled in an alphabetical manner.[56] Ethnographic appendices also appeared as part

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[53] The seven physical types listed by Risley were the *Turko-Iranian* type, represented by the Baloch, Brahui, and Afghans of the Baluchistan Agency and the North-West Frontier Province; the *Indo-Aryan* type, occupying the Punjab, Rajputana, and Kashmir and having as its characteristic members the Rajputs. Khatris, and Jats; the *Scytho-Dravidian* type of Western India comprising the Maratha Brahmans, the Kunbis, and the Coorgs; the *Aryo-Dravidian* type found in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, in parts of Rajputana, in Bihar, and Ceylon, and represented in its upper strata by the Hindustani Brahman and in its lower by the Chamar; the *Mongolo-Dravidian* type of Lower Bengal and Orissa, comprising the Bengal Brahmans and Kayasths, the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal, and other groups peculiar to this part of India; the *Mongoloid* type of the Himalayas, Nepal, Assam, and Burma represented by the Kanets of Lahonl and Kulu, the Lepchas of Darjeeling, the Limbus, Murmis, and Gurungs of Nepal, the Bodo of Assam, and the Burmese; and the *Dravidian* type extending from Ceylon to the valley of the Ganges and pervading the whole of Madras, Hyderabad, the Central Provinces, most of Central India, and Chota Nagpur. See E.A. Gait and H.H. Risley, *Report on the Census of India, 1901,* Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1903, pp. 500-01.

[54] Based on the measurement of nose, Risley grouped the 'living subject' nasal index under the category Platyopic which is below 110, Mesophic (below 110 to 112.9), and Pro-opic (113 and over). The proportion of the nose is determined by measuring the height and breadth from certain specified points, and the latter dimension expressed as a percentage of the former. The nasal index, thus, is merely the relation of the breadth of the nose to its height. For example, the index of the nose of a man nose which is as broad as its height is 100. See *Ibid.*, pp. 497 & 499.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 515. Originally emphasis.

[56] For example, starting from the year 1901, the Census of Assam has an alphabetically arranged glossary of the various tribes and castes indigenous to the province. The glossary gives brief information regarding the geographical location of a particular tribe, the subdivision amongst them and whether they were indigenous to the Assam valley districts or the Hill districts or both. See, for example, B.C. Allen, *Census of India, 1901. Volume IV. Assam. Part I – Report,* Shillong: Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1902, pp. 121-144.

of the census reports, containing accounts of the diverse groups of Northeast India.[57] Compiled by 'Political Officers'[58] posted in the respective frontier tract, the appendices gave various description of the tribals' way of life. It includes accounts of the divisions and polity, character and habit, the system of government, natural phenomena, or beliefs (regarding future life), the process of disposal of the dead, the physical traits, dress, cultivation, musical instruments, and weapons. In other words, the census is an attempt at a total knowledge of the subjects under study. It was in the census operation that the diverse tribes were quantified, described ethnographically and located territorially thereby leading to a systematic and 'scientific' knowledge of Northeast India's hill societies.

But although the term 'tribe' had appeared in the first census itself, yet, there were no definition of its meaning and no strict distinction in its connotation between race, caste and tribe at least in the early census. In fact, it was even used in a flexible manner as one could see in the use of phrase 'caste, race or tribes' of India in the various census reports.[59] There was a certain amount of incoherence in these categories. Though the census officials were far from clear with regard to the criterion of distinction between caste and tribe, yet initiative were taken to differentiate these two. For that purpose religion was deployed as a factor – although this was not the only criteria – to determine whether or not a group should be a tribe. The focus on religion, along with caste, was because many British officials in the middle of the nineteenth century believed it as the 'sociological keys' in understanding the Indian

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[57] For instances, there appeared a Note on the Lushais by Major Shakespeare, C.I.E., D.S.O., Superintendent of the Lushei Hills in B.C. Allen, *Census of India, 1901. Volume IV. Assam. Part I – Report, (*Shillong, 1902), Appendix B, pp.145-151. Similarly, in G.T. Lloyd, *Census of India, 1921, Vol. III, Assam. Part I – Report,* (Shillong: Government Press, 1923), there is a Notes on Certain Frontier Tribes, by Captain G.A. Nevill, I.P., Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract, pp. x-xi. In the same census reports, J.H. Hutton – C.I.E., I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills and Honorary Director of Ethnography, Assam – also contributed accounts on the tribes of the region entitled "On the Connection of Different Naga and Other Tribes in Assam, their Origins and Certain Customs", Appendix C, pp. xvii-xix; and "On the Disposal of the Dead among Naga Tribes and Others", Appendix D, p. xx.

[58] The 'Political Officers' were expected to be 'educated amateurs' and relied upon to discharged most of the delicate function of the colonial state in the 'field' (as embodied by British colonies). In other words, they were the ideal administrator of the colonial government who could tactfully handled their subjects so as not to draw the state into unnecessary jeopardy. Thus, these 'practical men' often had to conduct constant tours and explorations to get a hang of the conditions of the native subjects, and importantly to know the natives' traditions and customs. See Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945,* Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 48, & 198-99.

[59] For example, the *General Report on the Census of India, 1891*, has a whole section of a chapter entitled 'Caste, Tribe, or Race'.

people.[60] Howsoever inadequate it appears to be, religion was deployed as a marker of specific groups. An example can be seen in the report of the census of 1881 which 'explained that the term "Hill tribes" has been used somewhat arbitrarily to designate certain of the non-aryan tribes, which are decidedly hostile to Hinduism than others.'[61] Thus, the roots of the polarization of caste plain people and hill animistic tribes became evident in the census when the British calculated, mapped, classified, and represented identities of the groups of Northeast India in terms of religious criteria.

The 1891 census further sought to club 'tribes' as those who practised 'Animism'. The report stated that "it was the intention of the framers of the rules for enumeration that under the head of Animistic should come all members of the forest tribes who were not locally acknowledged to be Hindu, Musalman, Christian, or Buddhist, by religion."[62] Earlier, the first all-India census had the tribes all over India clubbed together under the category 'Others'.[63] Although the criterion so introduced was rather unsatisfactory, it was used widely and extensively. Though census official acknowledge the negative connotation involved with the term 'Animism' while describing 'tribal' religion, yet for the purposes, or convenience, of the census the term was used prevalently.[64] In the subsequent 1931 census, 'Animism' was replaced

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[60] B.S. Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia", in B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003 (first published in 1987), p. 242.

[61] The Nagas along with other groups such as Abors, Daflas, Garos, Khasis, Santengs, Kukis, Mikirs, Miris, and Mishmis are included under the term 'Hill Tribes' while many other tribes of the Northeast such as the Kacharis, Hajongs and Lalungs, which are classed as 'aboriginal' in the report (Table No. VIII, Religion Tables), have been entered as Hindus. See *Report on the Census of Assam for 1881*, p. 34.

[62] J.A. Baines, *General report on the Census of India, 1891*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893, p. 158. Using the definition of one Dr. Tiele, the report (in page 157) describes Animism as follows: "Animism is the belief in the existence of souls or spirits, of which only the powerful - those on which man feels himself dependent, and before which he stands in awe-acquire the rank of divine beings, and become objects of worship, These spirits are conceived as moving freely through earth and air, and, either of their own accord, or because conjured by some spell, and thus under compulsion, appearing to men (Spiritism). But they may also take up their abode, either permanently or temporarily, in some object, whether lifeless or living it matters not, and this object, as endowed with higher power, is then worshipped or employed to protect individuals or communities (Fetishism). Spiritism, essentially the same as what is now called Spiritualism, must be carefully distinguished from Fetishism, but can only rarely he separated from it."

[63] The memorandum of the 1871-72 stated: "The 5 millions of "Others" are chiefly composed of the hill tribes and aborigines in the Central Provinces, Bengal and Assam, Berar, and British Burma; but it is very difficult to draw the line between Hindooism [sic] and the rude religion of some of these tribes, and very possibly many have been classed under the one, when they might with equal propriety have been ranked in the other category." See Henry Waterfield, *Memorandum on the Census of British India 1871-72*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1875, p. 19.

[64] For instance, B.C. Allen, the compiler of the Assam Census of 1901, reports: "Animism is not unfrequently described as 'devil worship,' and there is a tendency to look upon the religious ideas of

by the euphemistically sounded 'Tribal Religion' while the category 'Others' were reserved for, as the report stated, a "comparatively insignificant number of persons who return themselves as deists, agnostics, free thinkers, rationalists, theosophists, Christian Scientists, etc."[65] The change in its connotations may be partly because of the fact that the census was edited and compiled by J.H. Hutton, a colonial official well known for his protectionist approach towards the 'tribals' in Northeast India.

While religion, besides other criteria, was deployed as the main marker of difference to identify groups, the state-sponsored linguistic survey had the effect of collectivizing the sparsely distributed different groups, at least in the report. Officials conducting the census survey often encountered, and had to grapple with, a multi voluminous distinct languages and local dialects in the hill tracts. In coming to terms with this linguistic multiplicity the officials, for matter of convenience or for producing a report in a format they could understand and easily referred to, clubbed together groups under one generic head. The case of the Nagas demonstrates this point succinctly. B. C. Allen reports that the census staff, while conducting census in Manipur, has a "natural tendency to lump all hillmen together under the generic name [Naga]". [66] As a result, "the generic term has been preferred, and people have been returned as speaking Naga, instead of the local dialects, such as Khoirao, Kwoireng,

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the hillmen as something peculiarly savage and absurd, worthy only of contempt and abhorrence; but as a matter of fact these primitive systems of religion, which, though they vary in detail in each tribe, have much in common with one another, are far from discreditable to the intelligence of their founders." Though he acknowledge its negativity, he stated that "for the purposes of the census, Animism can, however, be more readily defined by the negative method, as the creed of those members of the aboriginal tribes who did not claim to be followers of the main recognised religions." See B.C. Allen, *Census of India, 1901. Volume IV. Assam. Part I – Report,* p. 46.

[65] J.H. Hutton, *Census of India, 1931: With a Complete Survey of Tribal Life and System, Vol. I,* Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1986 (reprint), pp. 391-92. Under the category 'others' also includes "those eccentrics who made such returns of religion as "*Ahimsa*", "Truth", "Reason" and "Freedom for India" ... and those who returned themselves as having no religion or who merely failed from indifference, or from inability to express themselves, to make any return of religion at all. It includes Confucians ... and also a number of Chinese ancestor-worshippers returned as Animists (*i.e., Nat* worshippers) from Burma. It also includes Ad-Dharmis who objected to being described as Hindus, and ... [t]he followers, some thousands in number, of a prophet, or a rouge, named Pao Chin Hao, who has recently arisen in the Chin Hills in Burma and started a new religion, which includes an inspired script and one or two most engaging features, such as the institution of religious police whose business it is to arrest diseases".

[66] Likewise in the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur the natives – who probably spoke Mutonia and Namsangia [local dialects] – have been return in the census "under Naga, pure and simple." Though Allen regrettably informed that the recording of Naga dialects is not fully complete, he opined that the enumerators, composed of British officials, Gurkhas and Manipuris, rather "deserve commendation, for having succeeded in recording as many as sixteen different kinds of Naga, th[a]n blame for having overlooked distinctions of which few, if any, people in the district at the time of census had heard." See B.C. Allen, *Census of India, 1901. Volume IV. Assam. Part I – Report,* p. 89.

Khongoe, Phadang ..."[67] Hence, as many as forty eight different sub-groups speaking a distinct dialect were listed under the 'Naga group' – a sub-group of the Tibeto-Burmese languages – in the Linguistic Survey of India.[68]

The quest for knowledge of colonial subjects and in differentiating, collectivizing, enumerating, and locating them as well as knowing their languages and dialects, no doubt, produces wide ranging results. Besides fusing different groups under the generic term Nagas, the British (on the basis of all these knowledge on the former and other communities all over India) were able to come up with a definition of 'the tribe'. By the time of the census of 1911 a definite definition of 'tribe', distinctive from 'caste', has emerged which held that:

> A tribe in its original form is distinguished from a caste by the fact that its basis is political rather than economic or social. The members believe that they all have a common origin, but what holds them together is community of interest and the need of mutual defence; and aliens who are willing to throw in their lot with the tribe are freely admitted. Especially is this the case with women obtained by purchase or capture. The tribe is not associated with any occupation, and there are no functional restrictions. It is also not necessarily endogamous, though in practice it is largely so, owing to its own and its neighbours' unwillingness to give girls to outsiders. Its members usually speak the same language, which is often peculiar to the tribe. Tribes that has [sic] long been in contact with Hinduism have modified their original type, and have come to conform more or less closely to the pattern of an ordinary caste, and to adopt the restrictions of associated with the caste system. Sometimes this process has proceeded so far that the tribe has been transformed into a caste.[69]

This passage embodied the long years of colonial effort to put into effect the ordering of a group not conforming to the dominant culture/religion in India – Hinduism and Islam. What is also evident is the sharp distinction that's been firmly established between two forms of colonial constructs – 'caste' and 'tribe'. As the Census of 1931 stated the term 'tribe' was "provided to cover the many communities still organised on that basis in whose case the tribe has not become a caste".[70] A tribe is then, in the colonial imagination, more backward than a caste. The distinction, along with the

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[67] *Ibid.,*

[68] The Naga group speakers were further subdivided into Western Naga Sub-Group Sema, which includes Angami and others; Central Naga Sub-Group such as the Lhotas and Aos ; Eastern Naga Sub-Group like the Angwanku or Tableng tribe; and the Naga-Bodo Sub-Group which includes Kabui; Naga-Kuki Sub-Group composing of the Mikirs, Sopvoma or Mao Nagas; and Naga Unclassed. The total number of speakers of the Naga group was estimated at 292,799 heads according to the Survey Estimates of the 1891 Census, and 322,774 speakers according to the Census of 1911. See G.A. Grierson, *The Linguistic Survey of India and the Census of 1911,* Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919, pp. 17-21.

[69] *General Report of the Census of India, 1911,* India, 1914, p. 369.

[70] J.H. Hutton, *Census of India, 1931, Vol. I-India, Part – III, B. Ethnographical Notes by Various Authors,* Simla: Government of India Press, 1935, p. 425.

definition of the 'tribe', was significant in that it both authoritatively identified the Nagas as a group belonging to a 'tribe' and that it allowed the colonial state to develop different strategies of control in the hill tracts.

2.4 Tribe in Administrative Ethnography

Along with the colonial census a dominant tradition of colonial ethnography also contributed to the construction and the consolidation of an ethnic tribal identity. A brief survey of supposedly ethnographic writings on Northeast India reveals the colonial preoccupation with kinship and 'tribal' customs as dominant identity markers. Among the earliest works that attempted to describe the 'ethnography' of the British subjects was Dalton's *Ethnology of Bengal.* Published in 1872, Dalton's work was a product "of a long service in Asam [sic] and Chutia Nagpur [sic], the most interesting fields of ethnological research in all Bengal".[71] Based mainly upon his personal observations during many years of district work, he compiled, though very briefly, "an account of the tribes in Bengal from all available sources of information".[72] This work represents perhaps the first effort at acquiring 'total' knowledge of the tribals' various aspects or 'way of life'. About thirty years later, several monographs were produced on the various Naga tribes which look more or less like Dalton's model.

Though there had been brief ethnography of the Nagas in the writings of officials and soldiers such as J. Butler, R.G. Woodthorpe and MacGregor, it was not until the early nineteenth century that a systematic ethnographic description of the tribes of the Assam Province was attempted. Under the direction of the Government of Assam, several monographs were compiled and published accordingly. The first on the Naga tribes was compiled by T.C. Hodson in 1911.[73] In 1921, J.H. Hutton produced works on the Angami Nagas and the Sema Nagas. This was followed by J.P. Mills' Lhotha Nagas (1922), the Ao Nagas (1926) and the Rengma Nagas (1937). These series of ethnographic monographs more or less shared the same format and

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[71] The descriptive ethnology begins with an account of the geographical distribution of the tribe, their earlier settlement, to religion, house and infrastruoture, arts and crafts, features (physiognomy) and their origins to reports of migrating wave, religious festivals, customs, treatment of wives, costumes, weapons, burial grounds and the mode of disposal of the dead. See E.T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal,* Calcutta: Indian Studies: Past and Present, 1960 (originally published in 1872), p. 2. The present day Assam and Chotanagpur were previously spelled Asam and Chutia Nagpur.

[72] *Ibid.,* p. 1.

[73] T.C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur,* Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1974 (originally published in 1911.)

style, like the early monograph of T.C. Hodson, detailing the social, political, religious and cultural aspect of the Naga tribes.[74] As each and every aspect of the tribal 'way of life' was thus inscribed in the monographs, it signifies an accomplishment of 'total' knowledge of the subject population. But more importantly, the monographs acquired the status of an authoritative source both in the contemporary times and in the present-day.[75] Moreover, it further strengthened the point that the colonial officials had been stressing all along – the Nagas as a 'tribal' entity.

While further strengthening the notion of tribe, the monographs also proved to be useful to frontier officials in several ways. First, in the local context it provided the colonial state with the useful knowledge that would facilitate the smooth function of colonial administration. For instance, a frontier official C.A. Soppitt reported that he drafted a brief sketch of the Kachcha Naga tribe as it may "prove of value to officials in frontier districts, who are often called upon to decide cases in which the customary procedure can be the only guide to a correct decision."[76] Like the Imperial Gazetteers the monographs, then, became useful as a handbook for district officials. Thus, the Nagas ethnography can be regarded as an outcome of the direct nexus between anthropology and colonial administration.

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[74] The monographs on the Naga tribes were divided into five sections with additional appendices. The first section ,entitled General, covers habitat and affinities, origins and migrations, appearances, dress, weapons, and character; the next section (Domestic Life) describes the villages and house structures, arts, manufactures, currency, agriculture, livestock, hunting and fishing, food, drink and medicine, and the daily life; in the third section (Social Life) we have an account of the organization of society, laws and customs, exogamy, property and disputes centering round it, war and women; section four (Religion) narrates popular beliefs, spirits and deities, magic, hierarchy, ceremonies related with birth, death and marriage, calendar, miscellaneous forces; and the last section trapped the folklore and legends into the pages of the monographs. Hutton's monographs further added another section which was language. The Appendices further gives extra ethnographic accounts.

[75] In an interesting article, Sanjib Baruah has pointed out the deployment of a particular text – which was quoted *verbatim* – from one of the monographs by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) in its website to denote the 'Naga-inhabited areas'. See Sanjib Baruah, "Confronting Constructionism: Ending India's Naga War", *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 40, No. 3, May, 2003, pp. 322-23. The text was from J.P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas,* London, 1922, p. xvi. It stated: "The expression Naga is useful as an arbitrary term to denote the tribes living in certain part of the Assam Hills, which may be roughly defined as bounded by the Hukong valley in the north-east, the plains of the Brahmaputra valley to the north-west, of Cachar to the south-west, and of the Chindwin to the east. In the south the Manipur valley roughly marks the point of contact between the "Naga" tribes and the very much more closely interrelated group of Kuki tribes — Thado, Lushei, Chin, etc."

[76] The brief sketch by C.A. Soppit, Sub-Divisional Officer, North Cachar Hills, deals with the 'Empeo or Kachcha Naga tribe' [present-day Zeme Naga tribe] describing the principal characteristics, manners, and customs of the race, the Naga law on marriage, rights of succession, and other ethnographic details. See the preface of C.A. Soppitt, *A Short Account of the Kachcha Naga (Empeo) Tribe in the North Cachar Hills, with an Outline Grammar, Vocabulary, & Illustrative Sentences,* Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1885.

Second, as British social anthropology was becoming a discipline[77] at about the time that the monographs and other descriptive ethnographies were being attempted, the monograph writers benefitted greatly from both ends of the world. That is administrators who published those ethnographies make use of their deputation in the hills as a cultural anthropologist or a field worker because the colonial setting of the Naga Hills provided the ambience for the conduct of ethnographic investigation. Based on their experiences these officials, later on, were able to acquired entrance into premier academic institutions in England thereby becoming reputed Professors in anthropology.[78]

The monographers were, no doubt, influence by racial difference and constantly refer to the Nagas as unmistakably 'Mongoloid'. Yet, the concept of 'race' and difference was used, in the monographs, in a socio-cultural sense. In the colonial monographs, the concern shown by the British administrator-ethnographers to mark off tribe from caste was based more on socio-cultural aspects and not biological ones such as the ones adopted by Risley. Colonial ethnography of the Nagas, then, was referring to a combination of diverse ethnic groups who could be grouped or distinguished on social and cultural, and biological to some extent, scale of evolution.

That the tribes were to be protected from outside influence is also most evident in the various monographs produced for the Assam province and in other writings of the monograph writers. The writers of these monographs were, not surprisingly, protectionist of the tribal 'old ways of life'. They were quite vehement in their critique of the changes brought about by the natives' contact with 'civilization'. At the receiving end of their criticism were the plainsmen, traders, and 'foreign elements': the full brunt of their vehement disapproval was surprisingly directed at the Christian missionaries and their activities. J.P. Mills, for instance, dedicated a note on

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[77] Henrika Kuklick informs us that the first university position - a Readership for one E.B. Tylor - in anthropology was created in 1884 in Britain at the Oxford University. With this development, the British Association for the Advancement of Science also agreed to allow anthropology with a separate section of its own which became known as Section H. As a result, anthropology became a formally accepted and recognized discipline. The gradual professionalization of anthropology can, thus, be traced back to these developments. See Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within,* p. 6.

[78] The link between the Nagas ethnography and academic, in particular Cambridge University, institutions has been discussed in detail by Andrew West. For an informative account of how the prominent monograph writers' T.C. Hodson, J.P. Mills and J.H. Hutton achieved academic status on their return to England after their colonial service in the hills of Northeast India see Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", *History and Anthropology,* Vol. 8, Nos. 1-4, 1994, pp. 55-88.

the adverse effect that the tribe encounter with the introduction of 'civilization'.[79] In his monographs on the Rengma Nagas, Mills also disapproved of the action of the Mission forbidding new Christian converts the use of the 'morung' or "bachelors' hall" and undermining its value as a useful tribal institution.[80] Mills defence of the 'morung' and the criticism thrown at the Mission partly may be due to its resemblance with the English Public School life. Because like the Public school the 'morung' serves as a disciplinary institution where a boy, as Mills puts it, "is taught his duties in life and generally hammered into shape."[81] At another instant, he writes that "among the boys of the village there is a certain amount of rough play, and a bumptious or obnoxious youngster is taught his place exactly as he is in an English Public School."[82]

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[79] In a brief Note, Mills brings to light some evils brought about by contact with civilization – through the visits of tribesmen to the plains and through the penetration of foreigners into the hills – which have influence the culture and mode of life of the indigenous inhabitants in numerous ways thereby reacting on the mentality of the villages, usually to the detriment of their pride in their customs and history. The effect was the introduction of venereal disease, tuberculosis and epidemics; the emergence of an innate tendency to imitate foreigners who display a culture in some way regarded as 'higher'; the increase of prostitution and introduction of much foreign rubbish and cheapjack ware by improved communications; the replacement of the national drink of the hill tribes rice beer by the harmful distilled spirit or liquor; and countless subtle changes. A great deal of criticism was thrown at the Christian mission. Stating that a village founded by the American Baptist Mission as a Christian village contained more opium addicts than the whole of the rest of the tribe, he blamed the mission's forbiddance of alcoholic liquor among their converts as the causes of the Nagas becoming inveterate opium addicts as they had taken to it as a substitute. Likewise the mission's abolishment of the Feasts of Merit was blamed for breaking the monotony of village life and the natural way of distributing wealth among all its inhabitants. Again, he reports that the mission banned on consumption of rice beer leaves the tribal drinking in secret which leads to a bad conscience. On the replacement of native dresses by the foreign dresses at which the missions are in the lead, he laments: "To substitute soiled and poor quality western clothes, or more often a caricature of them, for the exceedingly picturesque Naga dresses is an aesthetic crime." Further, he informs that education of the type which is given has been on the whole 'an evil rather than a good' as it created a mindset that perceived that the Government would provide jobs for them. See J.P. Mills, "Notes on the Effect on some Primitive Tribes of Assam of Contacts With Civilization", in J.H. Hutton, *Census of India, 1931: Vol. I – India, Part III – Ethnographical*, pp. 147-49.

[80] According to tradition, boys beyond the age of 5 or 6 gather in the 'morung' (or bachelors' hall) and sleep together where he is taught many aspects ranging from customs and traditions to the old ways of life; from honour to respect and so on. Mills highly disapproved of the 'very dangerous step' taken by the Mission, in forbidding their converts to use the 'morung' and in undermining it as an institution, without taking into consideration the psychological aspect of the matter. He digressed into the fact that the thousands of Naga disputes that have been brought before him in the course of his service – and in particular violent quarrels between fathers and sons – are more frequent in tribes which have no 'morungs'. As an example, he gave the case of the Sema tribe where father-son dispute 'are disastrously common' in comparison with the Ao tribe, where quarrels between fathers and sons are rare since the 'morung' plays an important part. See J.P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas,* London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1937, pp. 49-51.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[82] The measures meted out to the 'obnoxious youngster' includes putting stinging leaves in the dark where the intended lad usually sits or sleep; or a more elaborate punishment such as making the boy jump onto a sort of a see-saw plank on one end while on the other end was attached a wooden pillow.

There appeared, then, two contradicting 'ideal tribal' for the administrator-ethnographer and the missionaries respectively. To the missionary, the ideal tribal was one who shed his old 'heathen' habits and became Christian converts. In stark contrast, the administrator-ethnographer group wanted that the tribal be left of its own accord, with the state least interfering in their affairs and if needed be protecting them from outside influences. One reason for this protectionist attitude was, as pointed out earlier, that the tribal forms an important component in the ethnographic project that they were carrying out; and that the administrators had an academic career to pursue after their service and deputation in the anthropological 'field' – the Naga Hills. Their work in Northeast India later propelled them to important position in the anthropological department of academic institutions.[83] But whatever the reason, the notion of protecting the tribal from 'outside' was to partly influence the creation and legitimization of what in British administrative language became the 'Tribal Areas'.

2.5 Designating Tribal Areas

While the monographs merely depicts the colonial difference among subject population, colonial administration, directly or indirectly, put into effect these difference along political and territorial lines through the establishment of 'Tribal Areas'. The concept of rendering protection to the tribal from 'outside' influence, as stated in the monographs and other writings, became practical when the Governor in Council, with the consent of the Governor General, prescribe the 'Inner Line' in the Naga Hills district.[84] The powers conferred by the line 'prohibit all persons residing

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On jumping to the end, the wooden pillow automatically flies up and hits the boy on the back of the neck. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[83] J.P. Mills became a reader in the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London from 1948 to 1955. Moreover, in addition to a Readership, he held the office of President (1851–1953) at the Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute of which he was long associated. Further, he was awarded the Rivers Memorial Medal by the same Institute, in 1942, for his fieldwork among the Nagas of Assam. During his Readership, he engaged himself with the compilation of a bibliography of ethnographical matters relating to Assam which, however, never got published. See J. H. Hutton, "James Philip Mills: 1890–1960", *Man*, Vol. 60, Jun., 1960, pp. 89-90. In a similar fashion, T.C. Hodson worked as Registrar of East London College (1911–1926), and became a Reader in Ethnology at the University of Cambridge in 1926. Likewise, J.H. Hutton ended up as Professor of anthropology at the University of Cambridge for a period of thirteen years since 1937. See Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", pp. 78-80.

[84] Exercising the powers conferred by section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 (V of 1873), the Governor in Council with the sanction of the Governor General in Council, prescribed the 'Inner Line' in the Naga Hills District, under the Government notification No. 7014-A.P., dated the 15th November 1928. The line was drawn based upon natural indicators including rivers, mountain peaks, crest, and paths. NAI, Foreign and Political Department (henceforth FPD), GoI, File No. 59-X, Serial Nos. 1-2, 1929.

in, or passing through, the Naga Hills district, other than officers on Government duty, from going beyond the "Inner Line"...without a pass under the hand of the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills district.'[85] The rhetoric behind this measure was the protection of the hill people from external influence. But, it virtually isolated the 'tribes', subjecting them to exclusive mode of control.

The ordering of the Nagas to a specific geographical boundary has been a rather long process, beginning as late as the earliest contacts. Yet, the 1930s ordering of tribals acquired a new dimension in that the colonial officials were informed by the concept of protection of the hill people. In colonial Northeast India's administration, 'Tribal Areas' were classified according to their political evolution into an 'Independent territory',[86] 'Unadministered Tribal Areas'[87] and 'Administered Tribal Areas'.[88] Regardless of the distinct definition of these terms, they, including 'backward tracts' and 'excluded areas', are synonymous terms connotative of one thing – the management (but importantly the creation) of so-called 'Tribal Areas'. Yet, the distinction is necessary to marked out areas from a firmly 'pacified' one to that of a less controlled area. For in the 'independent' and 'unadministered' areas the tribes still indulged in head-hunting and slavery practices occasionally which in fact was continuing as late as the last years of British rule in India. For example, in 1946 we still find a Political officer trying to settle old feud and head-hunting raids between the Angs [Konyak Nagas' chiefs] of the village Namsang and Borduria (both in 'unadministered' area) in the Naga Hills district.[89] This demonstrates that imperial 'pacification' in the North-eastern hill tracts is something of a myth as despite formal annexation some areas remained virtually untouched by British authority throughout the colonial period.

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[85] *Ibid.,*

[86] 'Independent territories' are those areas which though regarded as within the British "political sphere were left to themselves unless or until their behaviour to neighbouring tribes called for punitive measures". These areas might even subsequently be left out of actual political control subjected only to occasional visits of Government officials if the territories were considered too remote. NAI, External Affairs Department (hereafter EAD), GoI, External Affairs Branch, File No. 116-X/35 (Secret), 1935.

[87] In the "Unadministered Tribal Areas', there was a form of what was described as 'loose political control' in which there were periodical visits by Political Officers. *Ibid.*

[88] To the 'Administered Tribal Areas' suitable British regulations and enactments were applied from time to time as they were considered as becoming a bit civilised. These areas were gradually incorporated into a Province as a district and the people were regarded as British subjects. *Ibid.*

[89] The Fortnightly report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the second half of February, 1946, informed that hostilities going on in the unadministered portions between the Namsang villages of Kaimai and Nyenu and the Borduria village of Mokatoo led to head-hunting raids and ransom of hostages. NAI, EAD, GoI, Central Asia Branch, File No. 315 C.A. (Secret), 1946. The mention villages are now in the present-day Arunachal Pradesh.

The classification of the 'tribal areas' were also a result of administrative convenience over the question of who – the Local or the Central Government – will borne the expenditure for the management of the 'Tribal Areas'. After consultation with the Governor of Assam, it was decided that the administered portion will be treated as part of the Assam province and the unadministered portion controlled by the Governor on behalf of the Central Government as Agent to the Governor General. [90] However all expenditure incurred in the management of the area are chargeable to the Federal revenue of the Governor General in Council.[91]

Another important development in the ordering of people within a specified location was the emergence of the 'Excluded Areas'[92] and 'Partially Excluded Areas'. [93] These official phrases were a lineal descendant of the older official term 'Backward Tracts' which denote the areas inhabited by the tribes of the Northeast Frontier. Robert Reid, a frontier official, reported that these areas 'differ markedly among themselves', but

> ... they have this one characteristic in common, that neither *racially, historically, culturally, nor linguistically* have they any affinity with the people of the plains, or with the peoples of India proper. It is only by an historical accident and as a natural administrative convenience that they have been tacked on to an Indian province.[94]

In this passage can be seen the embodiment of what the British has been trying along the Northeast Frontier all throughout the colonial period – the othering of colonial subjects. One can say that the othering, or 'tribalization', of the inhabitants of the hill tracts was complete by this time: in particular, with the designation of a specific 'Tribal Areas' following the establishment of the 'North-East Frontier

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[90] NAI, FPD, GoI, File No. 546-X (Secret), 1935.

[91] NAI, EAD, GoI, External Affairs Branch, File No. 116-X/35 (Secret), 1935, Correspondence from O.K. Caroe, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S., Deputy Secretary to the GoI, FPD, New Delhi to C.S. Mullan, Reforms Officer and Additional Secretary to the Government of Assam. D.O. No. 7116-X/35 (Secret), dated 16th July 1935.

[92] As explained by Sir Robert Reid, the term 'Excluded Areas' is an official phrase drawn from the India Constitution Act of 1935. As it under the direct administration of the Governor, the elected Ministry has no jurisdiction over this area. The Naga Hills District, the Lushai Hill District, the Balipara Frontier Tracts, the Sadiya Frontier Tracts, the Tirap Frontier Tract, and the North Cachar Sub-Division of the Cachar District falls under the 'Excluded Areas' category. See Robert Reid, "The Excluded Areas of Assam", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 103, No. 1/2, Jan.-Feb., 1944, p. 18.

[93] Under the 'Partially Excluded Areas' were included the Khasi and Jaintia Hill district, the Garo Hill district in Meghalaya and the Mikir Hill district which forms a part of modern Arunachal Pradesh. The term, as Reid informs us, "is also a legislative expression, invented for the purposes of the 1935 Act, and means that they have elected representatives in the Legislature, that the Ministry is primarily responsible for the administration, but that the Governor is charged with a special responsibility for their peace and good government, a responsibility which it is far from easy to discharge to one's satisfaction." See *Ibid.*

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 19. Emphasis mine.

Agency' in October, 1943.[95] Now, a person automatically became a tribal who was born into or who inhabited those areas.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, by sifting through some of the techniques that were used by the colonial state to deal with an independent-minded 'savages', this article has tried to present the historical context which eventually led to the construction of the tribe 'Nagas' in Northeast India. British concerns for the construction of the 'other' arose because it constituted a set of ideas and texts representing the story of the 'civilization' of 'inferior' races. Moreover, colonial obsession with classification was not only of interest to academic and anthropological study, but also was of equal importance for the administration of the subject population. The British applied the term 'tribe' as the distinctive structure of the Nagas' society, proved its authenticity by generating an extensive archive and at the same time used it to justify its rule. In articulating 'tribe' within the discourse of racial difference, colonial administration relied on a variety of classificatory criteria – whether it be cultural, geographical, linguistic, physical, or political criteria – that identified the Nagas as belonging to a 'tribe'. The essential traits of 'tribal' characteristics includes 'primitivism', 'barbaric' and 'childlike' behaviour, the absence of caste values and so on, that are fundamentally different from, or even opposite to, 'civilized' society.

However, as the markers of tribal characteristics often underwent constant changes, what ought to be take into account was the persistent, and ingenious adaptability of colonial discourse in finding new markers of difference suitable to its requirements. Thus, all throughout the colonial period the British produced many ambivalent images of the Nagas as the 'other'. For instance, on the one hand, the early officials regarded the Nagas to be formidable 'barbarians' and 'savages' who were to be dealt with severely by violent punitive military expedition; on the other hand, the 'tribes' were projected as 'childlike' and thus had to be dealt with more gently, even

[95] The 'North-East Frontier Agency' was composed of the 'Lohit Valley Subagency' in present-day Arunchal Pradesh and inhabited mainly by the tribe Chulikata Mishmis; the 'Siang Valley Subagency' which is home to the Abor tribes on the border of Tibet; the 'Subansiri Area' of the Daflas and Apa Tanis tribe; the 'Se La Subagency' which was inhabited by the tribe Monba; the 'Tirap Frontier Tribal Area' which is the territory of the Konyak Nagas near the ministerial district of Sibsagar in the extreme North-east of present-day Assam; and the 'Naga Hills Tribal Area' which gradually became the state of Nagaland. NAI, EAD, GoI, Central Asian Branch, File No. 26 – C.A. (Secret), 1945, Report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the year ending June 30th, 1945, by J.P. Mills, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S., Adviser to the Governor of Assam for Tribal Areas.

protectively, particularly in, and after, the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The latter phase further produced a binary opposing image of the tribal. One is the 'ideal' tribal of the administrator-ethnographers who continued to adopt the traditional, old 'ways of life'. The other is the missionaries' tribal who converted to Christianity and became 'civilized'. This shifting as well as ambivalent perceptions of the Naga tribes shaped colonial 'tribal' policy in Northeast India.

Based on this study of the Naga tribe, we can see that the category 'tribe' is actually a creation of colonial ethnography that got codified in the census reports, monographs and other strands of colonial writings in British India. In a sense, the category 'tribe' is basically a construct used by the British to more conveniently list their subjects. But, although it was a colonial construct, the people concerned had appropriated it, and in the present-day have held onto this category in an effort to achieved political influence in the post-colonial period.[96] The category that seemed to be forced upon the hill community, with the blanket term 'Nagas', by the British and the plain people precisely to mark out differences have now been internalized by the people designated so. Not only has it become a significant marker of social differentiation and identity assertion but also an important tool of expression for 'self-determination' or empowerment.

As a last word, this study is also a humble attempt to historically locate specific colonial ethnographic practices by looking at the context from which the category 'tribe' was constructed in one colonial setting. No doubt, we can notice some curious complementarities between the act of observing, writing, reporting, and administering in the construction of the 'tribe' Nagas. In all the attention given to the various aspects of the tribal, however, there is little or no interest in the viewpoint or agency of the tribal. When colonial officials direct their interest to the suppression of raiding or headhunting or write about any other cultural aspect of the Nagas, the attention was on how they thought it is or had been. The agency of the Nagas was neither important nor relevant. Colonial officials concerned themselves with representing the viewpoint of the Nagas regarding their origins, migrations, folklores, socio-cultural practices, polity and so on: in short, the concern was in representing 'the history' of the Nagas who has no histories or no written source of their existence.

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[96] The ongoing cease-fire and peace talks between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), who claimed to represent the voices, and struggled for the self-determination, of the Naga people illustrates this point succinctly.

In a literal sense, colonial ethnography is, then, the one-sided, distorted 'history' of the Nagas.

Chapter 3

The Colonial State, Christian Missionaries and the 'Civilizing Mission' in Northeast India, 1836-1947

This chapter will be an attempt to explore the contradictions of colonial rule – what some scholars calls the 'tensions of Empire'[1] – in one specific geographic locale, Northeast India. To do so, it will trace the affiliation between the Christian missionaries and the colonial state. Though the relationship shared by the state and the Christian mission is one of mutual understanding, inconsistencies and ambivalence, yet they both identified themselves as ushering in progress and 'civilization' to the native people. Like elsewhere across the globe, the concept of the 'civilizing mission' was used to legitimize colonial rule in Northeast India. As has been established by many, the 'civilizing mission' was aimed both at 'material progress' such as medical treatments, introduction of technology, wage labour, and so on; and 'moral progress' such as education, conversion to Christianity, abolition of 'barbaric' customs and so on.[2] The purpose of this chapter, then, is to present the perceptions of the state and the missionaries with regard to the 'civilizing mission' which might be contradictory, if not poles apart. (For example, while the mission took the Christianization of the natives very seriously, the state looks upon these activities as a hurdle to an efficient administration). Thus, accordingly this study will revolve around the issue of what is the 'civilizing mission' for these two. The approach adopted will be to examine certain contours of the discourse and practice of the 'civilizing mission' so as to expose the ambivalent position of the state and the mission in their dealings with each other and with the native hill community. In doing so, I will based this study on the proceedings between the state and the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (henceforth ABFMS) that was quite operative in the Naga Hills and parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

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[1] See Frederick Cooper, and Ann L. Stoler, "Introduction: Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Nov., 1989, pp. 609-621.

[2] Michael Mann, ' "Torchbearers upon the Path of Progress": Britain's Ideology of a "Moral and Material Progress" in India', in Harald Fischer-Tine and Michael Mann, eds, *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India*, London: Anthem Press, 2004, pp. 13-23.

The first section will try to see the nature of the alliance between the state and the mission, and the compulsions under which both function in order to fulfil their specific roles as a harbinger of 'civilization' and 'progress' in the nineteenth-century. Here I shall try to assess the colonial state's and the Christian mission's strategies to carried out the 'civilizing', if not the colonization, of the natives. This section will outline the commonality shared by the state and the mission. In doing so, I will elaborate on the close cooperation and mutual relationship between Reverend Miles Bronson, one of the earliest missionary to the Assam, and the able British official Captain Francis Jenkins.

But despite the mutual cooperation between the state and the mission, there arose some subtle tensions and clashes of interests over various issues. As such they were not always in perfect harmony which point to the evidence that the relationship between the state and the mission has been a rather complex one. The next section will very briefly address this issue. In pointing out the contestation and contradictions within colonialism, the ambivalence in the discourse of the state and the mission, the study will proceed chronologically as well as thematically. Further, this part will outlined along what lines did the mission and the state went on a collision course.

The third section will trace the shift in the state-missions' relations. Here an effort will be made to examine how the relationship between the state and mission gradually changes over the course of their interactions with the native hill people. The purpose of this section, thus, is to explore issues such as why state's officials of the twentieth-century became a vehement critic of the Christian mission. This part of the chapter will also highlight the marked departure in the attitude of state's administrators, who were self-professed anthropologists as well, in contrast with nineteenth-century officials.

But while noting the 'dissimilarities' between the missionaries and British administrator, most of whom were ethnographers, the fourth section will also try to draw out the 'similarities', if any, between them which may be somewhat difficult to ascertained. An important question that needs to be addressed here is this: Did this self-professed ethnographers and missionaries complement or threatened each other's perceptions? In so doing, this section will highlight some issues revolving around the debate on the 'denationalization' of the Nagas – the process, in simple definition, where native people lose their chief characteristics, culture and tradition as a result of contact with 'foreign' culture.

3.1 State-Mission Relations in the Nineteenth Century: Of Assistance and Connivance

The ABFMS was primarily interested in finding a way and setting up a mission in China through northern Myanmar.[3] But as this option was not so feasible the ABFMS, closely on the heels of the British advent into the region, chose Assam as a stopover station and started sending missionaries to it. It was both a strategic exercise to connect the already-established mission in Myanmar with Assam and partly a response to the invitation of the Captain Francis Jenkins and 'other friends of the mission'.[4] Capable that he was, Captain Jenkins[5] aptly grasped the frontier condition of the Northeast and the significant role that the mission could impart in 'pacifying' the relatively 'savage tribes' inhabiting the hills. In compliance with the Captain's invitation, Rev. and Mrs. Nathan Brown and Mr. and Mrs. O.T. Cutter became the first ABFMS missionaries to reach Assam via Myanmar in 1836. Armed with a printing press, they set up the first mission station at a place called Sadiya, Assam. The following year Rev. Miles Bronson[6] arrived in Assam along with his wife

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[3] The ABFMS became interested in the China mission following a journal by one Charles Gutzlaff who projected the picture that the Chinese are not averse to the Christian religion despite the acknowledgment that the Chinese government resented foreigner's entrance. But their intention of entering China through their Bangkok mission, being not practical, they tried other option through the 'Shan mission' in northern Myanmar. See Lal Dena, *Christians Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India with particular reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills, 1894-1947,* Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988, pp. 21-22.

[4] A.K. Gurney, "History of the Sibsagar Field", in *Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886*, The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union, 1887, p. 20. Captain Jenkins, C.A. Bruce, the official in charge of the tea plantation, Charles E. Trevelyan, the young English official at Calcutta and a Utilitarian, and William H. Pearce of the British Baptist Missionary Society were instrumental in bringing the ABFMS, through correspondence and promise of financial aids and other assistance, to Assam. For a fuller account of the events which led to the invitation of the mission, see Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in Northeast India: Historical Perspectives,* Delhi/Guwahati: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Christian Literature Centre, 1983, pp. 61-63.

[5] Francis Jenkins was born at Cornwall in England to a family of deep Christian values, his father being a Reverend. In 1810 he arrived in India and joined the imperial army. Upon completion of military training he started his career as Ensign in 1812. Over the years he rose through the ranks becoming Lieutenant in 1816, Captain in 1830, Major in 1849, and Lieutenant Colonel in 1851. He finally retired in 1861. As he displayed the most intimate knowledge and superb handling of frontier affairs he was appointed, in April 1834, as Agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier and Commissioner of Assam. See H.K. Barpujari, *Francis Jenkins: Report on the North-East Frontier India, (A Documentary Study with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary),* Guwahati/Delhi: Spectrum Publications, 1995, p. vi.

[6] Born on the 20th July 1812 at Norway, New York in America, Miles Bronson had his education at Hamilton Literary and Theological Institute. In the year 1836, he was ordained and appointed by the American Baptist Board of Foreign Mission for missionary service in Assam. All throughout his life tragedies and bereavement one after another followed him. He was married thrice to Ruth Montague Lucas, Frances Danfoth and Mary Rankin. He died on the 10th November 1883 at Michigan, America. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi (henceforth NMML), The Miles Bronson Family Papers (henceforth MBFP): Journal Entries and Sermons, 1863, Acc. No. 3275, Roll No. 1, NMML.

and Rev. Jacob Thomas. But, Bronson had to labour alone as his companion, Rev. Thomas was killed tragically when a falling tree hit the boat they were travelling on while approaching Sadiya up the Brahmaputra river on the 17th July 1837. Despite the drawbacks, Bronson started work among the Singphos, a trans-frontier 'tribe', from the mission station which he started at Jaipur, Assam for a period of two years. Though Bronson was still harbouring the notion and the intention of eventually finding a way into China, he became aware of the possibilities offered by the communities such as the 'Namsang Nagas' who inhabited the hills just adjacent to the Jaipur station.[7] In a correspondence to the ABFMS's Board in America, Rev. Bronson remarked that he found the diverse hill people as 'exceedingly interesting' which furnished the "most inviting fields for missionary labours."[8] After some initial hurdles, Bronson was gradually successful in living and carrying out mission work amongst the Namsang Nagas.

In the endeavour to 'civilize' the Namsangias, Bronson was assisted in great measures by Captain Jenkins, in particular, and other like-minded British officials. So enthusiastic was the Captain about the mission work among the region's hill communities that F.S. Downs has aptly commented that Jenkins "seems to have been more religiously motivated but his basic commitment to the values of modern education for the people of Assam would have fit in well with Trevelyan's philosophy [meaning Utilitarian thought]."[9] Apparently, as the son of a Reverend, Jenkins might have a deep commitment to, and an inherent tendency for propagating, Christian values and traditions. But, he was, in the first place, an efficient administrator of a

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[7] As in all colonial documents and mission accounts, the 'Namsang Nagas' are referred to by a variety of inconsistent terms such as 'Namshang Nagahs', 'Nam Sangh Nagas', 'Namsangheas', 'Namsangeas', and so on. For a matter of consistency, I will use the appellation the 'Namsang Nagas' or the 'Namsangias' throughout this paper. The Namsang Nagas that was associated with Bronson is now located in the present day Arunachal Pradesh. Their village lies south-east from the mission station Jaipur. Situated near a tributary of the Brahmaputra, the mission station Jaipur became more important particularly after an insurrection by the Khamptis, another border 'tribe', who destroyed the first mission station Sadiya in 1839.

[8] In a letter to the American Baptist Foreign Missions in America, Rev. Miles Bronson reports that the way into China is already opened. The Reverend also reports that though a missionary cannot pass into the Chinese territories conveniently as yet, he opined that the missionary, by fixing a "station directly on this boundary line, can in a very important sense have a position of his field of labour within the Celestial Empire." NMML, Missionary Correspondence, American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies Records (henceforth MC, ABFMSR), South India & Assam, Acc. No. 3242, Reel No. FM-55, 1817-1900, Correspondence from Reverend Miles Bronson, Assam, to Rev. S. Peck, Boston, dated the 6th June 1837.

[9] Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in Northeast India: Historical Perspectives,* Delhi/Guwahati: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Christian Literature Centre, 1983, p. 63.

calibre quite unmatched by his successor. Appointed Agent to the Governor General in 1834, he was given a challenging responsibility in maintaining stability and order in a relatively 'chaotic' frontier marked by the recurring fear of another Anglo-Burmese debacle. To top it up, the diverse 'hill tribes' surrounding the Assam plains presents another preoccupation to him and other frontier officials. For officials like him, the maintenance of some forms of order on the unpredictable frontier was the most requisite necessity at the beginning of their rule, so as to encourage the cultivation of the tea industry. Their chief concern was the suppression of chaos – which in official discourse covers a variety of vocabularies such as 'raids', 'headhunting', 'inter-tribal/internecine warfare', 'incursions', and so on – and the establishment of a good, stable government. Indeed, while expressing concern and anxiety to bring the native under 'control', official accounts are also often replete with numerous references to usher in 'civilization' to the Nagas. Hence, the occasional raids and plunder directed by the Naga tribes on the plains are looked upon by the British officials as a direct threat to the order and the 'rule of law' they were struggling to imposed on the newly acquired territories. Engaging with and disciplining the turbulent 'tribes' – through fines, collective punishment, conciliation with the chiefs of offending tribes, desecration of the offender's villages, illegalization of practices such as headhunting and so on – became the special task and a constant challenge for the frontier official who were imbued with the concept of the 'civilizing mission'.[10]The state responds with expeditionary force that in official discourse became the effort or the measures to 'civilize' the tribes. However, this exercise seemed to not achieve the desired results with the consequence that raids and violence from the hill tribes continued on. In this state of affairs, the arrival of the missionaries became a welcome aspect, as military expeditions prove a costly affair and does not necessarily stop raids.[11]

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[10] Jana Tschurenev has pointed out that Britian's civilizing mission in India, as a concept, took on a life of its own following a shift in the ideological understanding of India from the 1820s onwards. The theory pervading British society was "Utilitarianism, the ideology that expressed the desirability of reforming and restructuring Indian society according to the European model, which had implications in terms of potential interference in certain religious customs: if these customs were considered intolerable it was the moral duty of Christians and civilized humans to abolish them." See Jana Tschurenev, "Between Non-Interference in Matters of Religion and the Civilizing Mission: The Prohibition of *Suttee* in 1829", in Harald Fischer-Tine and Michael Mann, eds, *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India*, London: Anthem Press, 2004, p. 71.

[11] The numerous reports of the Foreign Department files dealing with Naga raids and incursions on the Assam plains and on the neighboring villages in the hills were a testament to this aspect. In fact, this information on raids furnished by frontier officials detailing the extent of damages, casualties, and the

Within this context, Jenkins also noted the strategic location offered by the Naga Hills as a buffer zone between British India and the neighbouring forces from the east. Consequently, with the protection of British territories a priority, the colonial state evolved a policy of control which was subsumed under the rhetoric of the 'civilizing mission'. This aspect is subtly noted by Captain Francis Jenkins, in his 'Journal of a Tour' throughout the Naga Hills. In it he made the following observation:

> With the means we [the British] possess of instructing and humanizing the Nagas there seems to be every reason to hope that these unfortunate races may soon rise in the scale of civilization, and their country be rendered of importance to the state, not only from its resources but from strong positions it affords to secure the whole of Assam with a small force from any attempts of our ambitious neighbours [the Burmese].[12]

Therefore, the evolution of the concept of the 'civilizing mission' in Northeast India has to be located within the context of the strategic location of the Naga Hills and the economic resources it possessed and promised. But, more importantly, it was also for the control of the hill communities that Jenkins and other officials took a personal interest in, and gave assistance to, the work done by Bronson among the Namsang Nagas.

However, in the effort to introduce 'civilization' among the Namsangias, a problem which both the colonial state and the mission encounter was the 'independence' of the Naga tribes. The Nagas, and this is true of other hill communities as well, very resolutely defended their independent existence and treats intrusion into their territories with the utmost hostility. Indeed, even Bronson had to spend a considerable time before he was successful with the Namsang Nagas. The Rev. who seems to have achieved the confidence of the Namsangias, to quite an extent, observed that it was the salt springs that made them so independent and sees it

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suspected offenders are a constant feature of official reports all throughout the colonial period. A cursory survey of the Foreign Department index, for instance, for the years 1830-39 revealed around 11 'raids', 'aggressions' and 'outrages' committed by the Nagas on British territories.

[12] The strategic location of the Naga Hill tracts was emphasized upon by Jenkins: "The occupation of these tracts will also enable us to connect lower Assam with Sadiya by a good practicable road that is now very much wanted, and to open roads for our troops towards the most vulnerable portions of our frontier, the passes to Ava and the Singphos country." National Archives of India, Foreign Department, Branch Political (henceforth NAI, FDBP), Consultation No. 53, dated the 16th May 1838, Correspondence from Captain Francis Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier (henceforth AGG, NEF,) to H.J. Prinsep, Secretary to the Government of India (henceforth Sec. to the GoI), Secret Department, Fort William.

as a crucial impediment to the spread of Christianity. In a letter to Jenkins he advocated that:

> Nothing important will ever be effected among the Naga tribes either towards their education or civilization until they are made less independent of the Govt. by the occupation of their salt springs, or by occupying so many of them as will supply the demand with a better and cheaper kind of salt. Then they might be more readily induced to cultivate the tea, and to become industrious in their habits.[13]

Curiously enough for a missionary, Bronson goes to the extent of mentioning that a direct intervention by the Government – by occupying and claiming half of the products of the Nagas' salt springs – would make this tribe acquired civilize ways and make them listen to "proposals about tea operations & other useful pursuits."[14] Thus, the plan chalked out to 'civilize' the Naga people was by inducing them to manufacture tea[15]: that is, by trying to redeemed the Nagas from his utter backwardness through wage labour. Bronson pressed his proposal on British authority which was consequently well received by the latter. Not only did the Governor

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[13] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 124, dated the 22nd November 1841, Correspondence from Miles Bronson to Captain F. Jenkins, AGG, Guwahati.

[14] The full text of Bronson's scheme, though a bit lengthy, is reproduced here: "Now I profess no great skill in politics but if you will pardon the liberty, I will mention what I have thought upon the subject. I understand that the Government hold a claim to ½ of the salt springs, and that it is intended to place a magistrate at Jaipore soon. Now were the Nagas say the Namsangeass, Bor Deorias, Pam Deorias and Puluyeas called down by this magistrate and hold a consultation with them informing them that the Government wishes to employ them in the manufacture of salt and tea and would reward them for the same and that they intended to work that portion of the salt wells that belonged to the Company so as to make it more profitable as in our basins and coal lines – I think the effect upon the Nagas would be salutary. If they saw that the Government salt was cheaper and better they would be ready to work their own wells in the same way. Besides they would feel that they were not so very independent of all other means of support after ½ of their salt wells are gone & when salt is made better and cheaper than they can do it. This might prepare them also to listen to our proposals about tea operations & other useful pursuits. It is their salt that makes them so independent & I confess that I see no likelier way to make them impose than for Government to take half themselves. I think it very important that a magistrate be placed at Jaipur or Borhath, and that the Nagas understand that he will listen to all their difficulties, & that they never undertake to redress their own injuries irrespective of him." NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 82, dated the 9th November 1840, Correspondence from Miles Bronson to Captain Jenkins, Namsang, Naga Hills, the 22nd July, 1840.

[15] Drafting a plan to introduced to the Nagas civilized ways, Reverend Miles Bronson reports: "It strikes me that we should aim at benefiting the people in every way in our power, and perhaps nothing is more needful than to correct their indolent habits and to induce among them some knowledge of the arts. I have thought of introducing among them the manufacture of tea on the following planning, to get them all engaged in the cultivation of the plant and in the manufacture of Green tea, which could be sold in the state to Mr. Bruce or some Company at 1 Rupee of ¼ per seer. ... The profit would all be theirs, and lend to get industrious habits introduced. Besides, it would send a lot of tea into the market without trouble and care on the part of Superintendents. It would also help to civilize the people. Besides, it would enrich and improve the country and bind the Nagas to the Company by another strong link. I have conversed with Mr. Bruce upon the plan, and he has spoken very favorably." NAI, FDPB, Cons. No. 128, dated the 11th May, 1840, Correspondence from Miles Bronson to Capt. F. Jenkins, dated unknown.

General's Agent of the Northeast Frontier, Captain F. Jenkins, appreciated and sympathize with the efforts of the missionary in turning the attention of the Nagas to 'industrious pursuits', he also sought the approval of his higher-ups for the Reverend's project.[16] The latter's effort made the Reverend spoke very highly of the Captain as "a most warm-hearted & valuable friend ... [whose] kindness is almost without bound."[17] As a direct consequence of Captain Jenkins request, the higher authorities, though wary at first, approved the support of the Reverend's plan.[18] However, owing to the sickness of Mr. Bronson, the death of his sister Rhoda, and Bronson's unduly departure from the hills, the project literally failed to neither redeem the tribes from their utter backwardness nor could the natives render any aid in the government's multifarious scheme. But, what was evident from this episode was the role played by Bronson and his explicit participation as a government functionary, an agent serving the political aims of the state. Another point that should be noted was the complementariness that the colonial state and Miles Bronson found in each other. For the colonial state, the missionary's utility lay in his influence over the Namsang Nagas, and his ability to refrain them from raids and aggressive acts. For Bronson, the collusion with the state presented him with a chance and more importantly finances for spreading the gospel.

Another civilizing dimension that the frontier officials identify with the Christian mission was the establishment of schools. For instance, Captain Jenkins made an appeal to his higher-ups, which was consequently approved, for some financial grants to support a school that Miles Bronson has started in the Namsang

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[16] For example, here is a sample of a transcript of a correspondence forwarded to Fort William. In one letter, Jenkins reports: "...by a proper cooperation with that gentleman [Bronson] and the encouragement of the Nagas to cultivate the products of their Hills and the tea in particular, we [the British] may hope ere [sic] long to see civilization greatly advanced among the Nagas, and our supremacy gradually extended over the hills, without which, and the consequent suppression of the constant feuds amongst the tribes, there seems to be little hope of effecting any great change in the habits of the people, or of our being able to avail ourselves of the great natural resources of the fine tract of mountainous country." NAI, FDPB, Cons. No. 128, dated the 11th May, 1840. The letter dated 14th April, 1840 was from Capt. Jenkins, the AGG, NEF, to J.H. Maddock, Esquire, Sec. to GoI in the Political Department, Fort William.

[17] NMML, MC, ABFMSR, South India & Assam, Acc. No. 3242, Reel No. FM-55, 1817-1900, Correspondence from Miles Bronson to Rev. S. Peck, dated the 6th June 1837. It may be imperative to note that in Northeast India, F. Jenkins acted a multiple role as a colonial official, a missionary-administrator, and a patron of the missionaries.

[18] In reference to the enterprise of Miles Bronson, His Lordship, the Governor General, agreed to pay a contingent bill "in consideration of the peculiar circumstances of this case ... small sums, not amounting in the whole to more than 100 Rupees monthly, for objects of practical utility connected with the improvement of the Naga country, and spent with the men of leading its population into habits of industry." NAI, FDBP, Consultation No. 129, dated the 11th May 1840, Correspondence from W.C. Bayly, Assistant Secretary to GoI, to Capt. F. Jenkins.

village in 1838.[19] British officials and tea planters also endowed generous financial grants to the missionaries to be dispensed for various purposes in favour of the 'Naga Mission'.[20] Likewise, about a score of high- and low-level officials as well as doctors and civilians in the service of the state also made some financial donation to the Orphaned Boarding School established by Bronson at Nowgong, Assam in 1841 following his abrupt departures from the hills.[21] Besides that, the state's officials imparted assistance to Bronson in his effort to make the Nagas a 'reading people': the Reverend did so by reducing the Naga language to the written form in the Roman character.[22] In fact, all the missionaries make it their first priority to gain an understanding and mastery of the diverse languages and dialects of the various tribes in the Assam plains through some native Assamese or, if fortunate, through the tribal before commencing their work in the hills.[23] Almost all the missionaries such as Miles Bronson, E.W. Clark,[24] S. Rivenburg,[25] and others spent considerable time and labour

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[19] In a correspondence to higher authorities Jenkins, the then Governor-General's Agent of the North-East Frontier, stressed the importance of "soliciting the assistance of Govt. for the support of the Naga school, which the missionaries have succeeded in establishing in the Naga country." He also report that "the mission with which Mr. Bronson is connected is struggling under great pecuniary difficulties". As such he requested the Government "to expend a monthly sum not exceeding 100 Rupees a month in aid of the Mission ... [to] give permanency to the school, and extend [its] usefulness considerably." NAI, FDBP, Consultations No. 128, dated the 11th May, 1840, Correspondence from Francis Jenkins, the AGG, NEF, to J.H. Maddock, Esquire, Sec. to GOI in the Political Department, Fort William, letter dated the 14th April 1840.

[20] For an outline of the financial donations that the State's officials endowed on the missionaries' efforts to civilize the Nagas, see Appendix – III.

[21] Though the orphanage was under the patronage of the American Baptist Foreign Mission, yet the colonial officials also partly financed it. For a list of the officials patronizing the institution see Appendix – IV.

[22] The following were the books produced and printed by Miles Bronson: *The spelling Book & Vocabulary* (financed by the tea planter C.A. Bruce), *Catechism in Naga*, and *Phrases in Singpho and Naga*. Correspondence from Bronson to Rev. S. Peck, Boston, dated Namsang, the 1st April 1840. NMML, MC, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3243, Reel No. FM-56, 1817-1900.

[23] For example, Bronson, in a correspondence to Boston detailing the tribes that required the Mission's 'immediate attention', remarks: "The Naga missionaries should make their first stopping place at Jaipur [in the Assam plains] where they could get a knowledge of the people and language. That would aid them in their future labours. After that they might live upon their native hills, and thus be directly be among the people." NMML, MC, ABFMSR, South India & Assam, Acc. No. 3242, Reel No. FM-55, 1817-1900, Correspondence from Bronson to Lucius Bolles, Corresponding Secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission, dated the 1st June 1838.

[24] Rev. E.W. Clark arrives at the mission station Sibsagar, Assam in 1869. He had to spend almost six years in the Assam valley before embarking on a mission among the Ao Nagas in the Naga Hills. It was only in 1876 that he was able to establish himself at a place called Molung. See Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India,* Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907, pp. 15-16. E.W. Clark produced many works among which includes his Ao-*Naga Dictionary,* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1911.) Besides this a primer, Catechism, Life of Joseph, a hymn book and the Gospels of Matthew and John were carried out through the press in the Ao Naga dialect. See Rev. S.W. Rivenburg, "Historical Sketch of the Ao Naga Mission", in *Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886*, The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union, 1887, p. 83.

to study, learn and master the various language of the Naga tribes to which they were assigned. The British officials welcome the mastery of language – in Bernard Cohn words the 'objectification' of language – as it obviously is "an instruments of rule to understand better the "peculiar" manners, customs, and prejudices" of the subject people and, of course, "to gather information necessary to conciliate and control".[26] Thus, in trying to make the Nagas a 'reading people', the missionaries also, directly or indirectly, aided and abetted with the state in the colonization of the hill tribe.

As we can see, the strategy adopted by the colonial officials was by aiding and conniving with the missionaries who seemed to have an edge, to some extent, in gaining the trust of the Nagas without the use of force. The missionaries were successful in gaining the natives' trust as the latter often approach the former for medicines and treatment of ailments. For example, we have a chieftain of a particular Naga village, who was earlier hostile to the missionary Miles Bronson, approaching the same "for medicines for old sores on his leg."[27] This was taken by Bronson as an "opportunity to go and ... pressed upon him [the Naga chief] the importance of embracing Religion."[28] Another missionary who came at a much later period, Rev. C. D. King, also reminisced about the 'significance' of the first question – "Can you cure disease?" – that a Naga asked, through an interpreter, when the latter approached the former for the first time.[29] In a similar fashion, Rev. E.W. Clark, the pioneer missionary among the Ao Nagas in 1876, made the remark that "some knowledge of medicine is also of great advantage; it is an open door into many homes, and puts an end to consulting soothsayers and sacrificing to demons."[30] Wishing that he had a "more accurate knowledge of medicine", Clark wrote: "The natives are afraid to go to

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[25] Rev. Sidney W. Rivenburg along with his wife Hattie Rivenburg came and relieved the Clarks in 1883 at Molung who went on a furlough. Rev. S. Rivenburg translated a primer, arithmetic, hygiene, and some of the New Testament around the year 1905 which impress Mr. Bamfylde Fuller, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam. Rivenburg reported that the Commissioner expresses "his willingness to have the books printed at government expense." See Narola Rivenburg, ed., *The Star of the Naga Hills: Letters from Rev. Sidney and Hattie Rivenburg, Pioneer Missionaries in Assam, 1883–1923,* Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1941, p. 97.

[26] Bernard Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command", in Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of Knowledge*, Delhi/ Mumbai: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 46.

[27] NMML, MC, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3243, Reel No. FM-56, 1817-1900, Journal of Miles Bronson, journal entry dated the 27th April 1840.

[28] *Ibid.,*

[29] NMML, MC, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3248, Reel No. FM-61, 1817-1900, Correspondence from C.D King, Nowgong, Assam, to Dr. Murdock, dated the 19th June 1879. Rev. C.D. King arrives at Samaguting, Assam, in 1879 with the intention of working among the Angami Nagas. The following year he moved to the newly-built district headquarter, Kohima and started a school.

[30] Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India,* Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907, p. 68.

the government hospital, and yet they do trust us."[31] Clark also reported that the occasional diseases such as fever that often strikes the natives afforded "the missionary an opportunity of exercising some medical skill and taming their savagery."[32] Thus, medicines and its curative power were ingeniously used by the missionary to treat the body of the subject population, gained his trust and colonized his consciousness while carrying out the great 'civilizing mission'. In turn, their experience among the 'hill tribes' was much appreciated by the state.[33]

Thus, in this early phase of colonial rule, British officials, no doubt, acknowledged the valuable part played by the missionaries in pacifying the Nagas inhabiting the hill tracts of the region. As such, there was an effort on the part of the colonial state to assist the missionaries financially besides imparting help in other ways such as accommodating the missionary in Government bungalows and in aiding the missionaries' journey to the hills.[34] Besides, it was in the self-interest of the colonial state to assist the missionaries as the latter were able to 'pacify' the Nagas and other turbulent tribes without the use of force (which were usually in the form of military expedition.) Moreover, the missionaries also brought new knowledge of the hill country and its inhabitants. As the Government were grappling with the newly acquired territories much of what the missionaries added to the effort of the knowledge acquisition was a welcome aspect too.[35] In like manner, if the writings of

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[32] *Ibid.*,p. 18.

[33] Often the missionary imparted his/her experience from contacts, and mode of dealings, with the natives to the state's personnel. For instance, R.B. McCabe, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills in 1885, while touring among the Ao Nagas, reported that he was "much pleased to obtain the benefit of his [referring to Rev. E.W. Clarke] experience in dealing with this semi-barbarous race [the Ao Nagas]." NAI, FD, Branch External -A, Cons. No. 20, dated March 1886, Tour among the Ao Naga Villages.

[34] In his various correspondence to the 'Mission Room' in Boston, America, Reverend Miles Bronson mentions the kind reception and the 'hospitality entertained' by Captain F. Jenkins while being put up at Guwahati. Correspondence from Reverend Miles Bronson, Assam, to Rev. S. Peck, Boston, dated Sadiya, the 7th August 1837. NMML, MC, ABFMSR, South India & Assam, Acc. No. 3242, Reel No. FM-55, 1817-1900. The missionaries has to, indeed, undertake a tedious journey from America to the port of Calcutta, and from there up the river Brahmaputra to Guwahati, Assam, in a steamer and from there to a place called Sadiya. The missions made this a major station to disperse missionaries to various parts of the region by dinghy boats or by finally trekking up the hill tracts with the aid of native coolies. It was in such a course of journey that missionaries highly appreciated the Government rest houses as it was there, in the words of the missionary C.D. King, "just where and just when ... [they] needed it." NMML, MC, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3248, Reel No. FM-61, 1817-1900, Correspondence from C.D King, Nowgong, Assam, to Dr. Murdock, dated Dunsiri River, the 19th June 1879.

[35] In a letter forwarded to Miles Bronson, Captain Jenkins informed that the Government is very pleased with the report of the former's short journey to the Naga Hills. Here is a full excerpt of the letter as reported by Jenkins: "I have the pleasure to forward a draft in your favor [sic] for 200 Rs. from Mr. Robertson, the Dy. Gov., who has been *much pleased with your report of your trip to the Naga*

the early missionaries were any indications, then, there definitely was awareness among the missionaries that they could not carry out the 'civilizing mission' without the support and protection of the colonial state. Thus, the objective of the State and the missionaries converges which was that of ushering in 'civilization' to the hill tribe. In fact, in both the discourse of the state as well as the missionary accounts, the 'civilization' of the native tribal was a constant and a common theme. It can be seen, then, that there is a congruence of interests between the colonial state and the mission, at least in the initial years.

3.2 Tensions and Contradictions

In view of the financial aid expended by the state, as evident from the Bronson-Jenkins collaboration, there is a tendency to regard mission and government as a single entity, working together hands in glove with each other. However, the favouritism shown by the state seems to be decided by the individuality of the officer concerned and the frontier contexts. After the departure of Bronson from the hills in 1841, there was a long gap of about almost forty years before the next missionary could be sent among the Nagas. It was only in 1869 that Rev. E.W. Clark, accompanied by his wife Mary Clark, arrives at Sibsagar in Assam to spread the gospel among the 'heathen' hill community. The then commissioner of Assam, Colonel Hopkinson, when approached by the missionary for permission to start work among the Ao Nagas, was hesitant to allow it owing to the enactment of the 'Inner Line regulation'.[36] Moreover, Molung, the place where Clark proposed to go was near the territory where Captain J. Butler, while conducting survey duties, was attacked and killed by a Naga spear in 1875. For these reasons, Clark was forbidden to enter the hills. But, determined that he was, the following year in 1876 Clark left for the hills, unassisted and unaccompanied by any state's personnel along with the native

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Hills & with your attempt to instruct this interesting people. Mr. Robertson wishes this money be applied in behalf of this race and I think it would not be better laid out than in passing your expenses in another expedition to the Naga country if you could consequently enable it. At the same time with the permission of your friends I would propose that ... annual donation should be defrayed to the education of Naga youths & setting up a school for them in the hills or at Jaipur as you might think best after consulting the Naga chiefs." Emphasis mine. NMML, MC, ABFMSR, South India & Assam, Acc. No. 3242, Reel No. FM-55, 1817-1900, Correspondence from Capt. F. Jenkins to Bronson, dated the 17th October 1839.

[36] Lal Dena, *Christians Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India with particular reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills, 1894-1947,* Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988, p. 25.

Assamese missionary who goes by the name Godhula. Thus, not always did the state assisted and connived with the missionaries.

This inconsistent state policies apart, there was also a conscious effort on both the part of the mission and the state to draw a line, maintain a distance between them. For instance, though the Government adopts what was notoriously known as the policy of 'non-intervention' in their early dealings with the diverse tribes of the Northeast, yet it actually aided the missionaries directly with financial assistance. But while the state financially backed the Christian missions, there was a certain amount of hesitation and deliberation about taking such steps. A correspondence to Captain Jenkins from the Assistant Secretary to the Government of India, Fort William, held that:

> [I]t would not be consistent with the principle upon which the Government has hitherto acted and may give rise to inconvenient applications in other quarters, were the aid of the government to be given to an establishment [Bronson's project] with professed missionary views.[37]

This correspondence reveals the problems in the co-ordination between low level and high level colonial officials which further reveals some limitedness of colonial rule. However, the very same letter consented to aid the effort of Bronson, owing to "the peculiar circumstances of the case."[38] The same theme is also repeated by Captain F. Jenkins himself, advising caution against any dissemination of the knowledge (about the funds that are being endowed on the Naga Mission) to the general public.[39] The government thus, finds itself in a dilemmatic situation when faced with the question of living up to its credo of a secular state which meant non-interference in the religious and customary practices of its subject people but importantly refraining from favouring and directly aiding a religious establishment. The strategy adopted by the colonial state in the nineteenth-century was best reflected in the words of the Chief

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[37] NAI, FDBP, Cons. No. 129, dated the 11th May, 1840. Letter from W.B. Bayly, the Assistant Secretary to the GoI, Fort William, to Captain F. Jenkins referring to the 'civilizing' works undertook by Rev. Miles Bronson among the Nagas.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] Here is an extract of Jenkins advising utmost secrecy regarding the Government funds: "I think it would be prudent if you were to say nothing about the appropriation made by the Govt. as they are very apprehensive of any precedents of this sort for the same wants exist amongst all the Missions as with yours and if the gift to us makes no noise, I may be able to get it continued with a little management." NMML, MC, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3243, Reel No. FM-56, 1817-1900, Correspondence from Capt. Jenkins (On the subject of improving the Naga tribes) to Rev. Miles Bronson, dated the 25th May 1840.

Commissioner of Assam, C.A. Elliot, revealed in a conversation with the missionary E.W. Clark, in 1885: "Officially, I have to be very careful about what I do to favo[u]r any sect or religion, but, personally, I have a very kindly feeling toward your Society and its work here."[40]

Likewise, some policies and measures adopted by the state did not certainly go down well with the missionaries. In the light of the expansion of the tea company's spaces the missionary Bronson remarked that 'the Nagas are extremely jealous of the Company in consequence of their "onward march", ... [which] tended to make them still more suspicious'. [41] In consequence of this event, Bronson declared that he would refrain from any activities "what in their [the Nagas] eyes would connect me with the Company's affairs". [42] Similarly, E.W. Clark also noted this problem in the following words:

> Glorying in their independence, these savage hill men were utterly opposed to any movement that foreshadowed in the least any alliance whatever with this great and ever-encroaching power.[43]

This mis-identification of the white missionary with other agents of British colonialism is a constant distressing problem for the missionary in their interactions and efforts at evangelizing the native people. Often, this not only put the mission work at jeopardy, but also the life of the missionary in peril as was the case with E.W. Clark. On one occasional village tour, Mr. Clark and his native Assamese helper Godhula came across a particular large Naga village severely ravaged by the small pox disease as a result of a visit from an English survey party just before their arrival. As a consequence of this, they found the village in a hostile mood, "with an oath that a European head should pay the penalty."[44] Much to their dismay, the missionaries

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[40] The Chief Commissioner also remarks that he is 'personally interested' in the mission work of Mr. and Mrs. Clark among the Nagas. Further, he insists that he would be happy to print, at Government expense, a grammar and a dictionary of the language of the Ao Naga tribe if the missionary couple could send it to him. See Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India,* p. 43.

[41] NMML, MC, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3243, Reel No. FM-56, 1817-1900, Correspondence from Miles Bronson, Naga Hills, to Captain F. Jenkins, GGA, Guwahati, dated the 27th June 1840.

[42] *Ibid.*, For example, there are numerous references made about the encroachment of British tea planters on the Nagas territory and, in particular, on the Lotha Naga inhabited country. NAI, FDBP, Cons. Nos. 169-172, dated the 17th Nov., 1849, letter dated 30th Oct., 1849, from AGG, NEF, to the Secretary to the GoI, Fort William.

[43] Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India,* p. 17.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

discovered that "these oath-bound warriors knew no difference between an English official and the humble messenger of the cross."[45]

As much as the Missionaries welcome the financial endowments and other aids, they are very critical of the morality of the frontier officials too. Ironically, the official reports are very silent on this subject which subtly reveals the very nature of the colonial archive: which is that of repressing, erasing certain facts or events while at the same time celebrating, or giving more than proportionate attention to other kinds of knowledge or aspects. In a letter to the Board in America, the Reverend Bronson had this to speak of Captain Jenkins and other frontier officials (though he did appreciated their aids and endowments):

> But judge of our feelings, when we learned that he [Captain Jenkins] as well as almost all Englishmen, were living improperly with native women. He however, has only one who has been with him since it might affect the interests of the mission. I have very reluctantly mentioned this subject. Gladly would I have disown the veil over this sin. But under certain circumstances, the dearest interests of the mission cause might be affected, and having a knowledge of the fact, the Board may have it in their power, to lessen the evil.[46]

The same theme was repeated by Hattie Rivenburg who initially started their mission work among the Ao Nagas at a place called Molung in the Naga Hills with her husband, Reverend Sidney Rivenburg, from the year 1883 onwards. A few years later, the Rivenburgs were assigned to Kohima, "a government military station with a thousand native soldiers and a dozen or more English officers, notorious for their impure relations with native women."[47] "This latter situation", asserted Hattie, "will greatly handicap our work of preaching the gospel to a conquered people, who class all white faces as the same."[48] She was bitter about the clubbing together of the white missionary with the British officers and personnel serving in the frontier region. There seemed, then, to have been an identification problem which often frustrated the missionaries to a great extent, to the extent that it turned out to be a dampener and an obstacle to the mission work. As Hattie Rivenburg points out, the British officers' relations with native women, in particular, "results in a serious Eurasian problem, a

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[46] NMML, MC, ABFMSR, South India & Assam, Acc. No. 3242, Reel No. FM-55, 1817-1900, Correspondence from Miles Bronson to Rev. Lucius Bolles, Corresponding Secretary, American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, dated Sadiya, Assam, the 7th August 1837.
[47] Narola Rivenburg, ed., *The Star of the Naga Hills*, p. 67.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

problem which is undoubtedly one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of Christianity with which the missionary has to deal."[49]

Again, a difference in the nationality and the denominations (of Christianity) also seemed to pit the missionary against the British officials. As compared to the American Baptist missionaries operating in the region, most of the British officials were Anglicans, or as Hattie Rivenburg pointed out, "members of the Church of England."[50] This proved to be a source of a subtle tension as evident in the apt observation made by Rev. Bronson. The pioneer missionary to Assam wrote: "I find that there has been a considerable prejudice against us as Baptists and dissenters. Nearly all in this country who professed any thing are high churchmen."[51] This faint strain between the missionaries and the colonial officials may have something to do with class and the respective background or upbringing too. Hattie Rivenburg pointed out that the British ranking officers were mostly the "younger sons of the English nobility ... [who] have the best education that England can offer".[52] In contrast, most of the missionaries had a humble background and struggled a bit in their early life. For example, Rev. Rivenburg grew up on a farm, nearly failed an important exam with the possible outcome that he could spent his whole life there on the farm.[53]

As such, though the missionaries required the state's protection, yet at the same time there is a conscious attempt to demarcate themselves from the government as a separate entity which occasionally led to a critique of the state and its personnel. As such, what John Comaroff points out, though in a different context, regarding the missionaries "self-appointed stance" as the "conscience of British colonialism, its moral commentator",[54] fitted quite well in the context of Northeast India as well. The criticism and contradictions directed by the mission at the state uncovered a strain relationship between them, a tension that runs along the lines of policies, issues of morality, nationality, class and denominational sects. But, importantly it exposes the loopholes, silences, erasures and bias of the colonial archive on which we are so dependent for doing history. A counter reading of the missionary accounts with that of

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[51] NMML, MC, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3243, Reel No. FM-56, 1817-1900, Letter from Miles Bronson, Nowgong, Assam, to Rev. S. Peck, Boston, Mission Room, dated the 13th November 1843.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[53] See the foreword (by Romeyn H. Rivenburg) of Narola Rivenburg, ed., *The Star of the Naga Hills*, p. 7.
[54] John L. Comaroff, "Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 16, No. 4, (Nov., 1989), p. 663.

the official reports has subtly reveal this aspect and at the same time has prove enriching.

3.3 Shifts in State's Attitude towards the Mission: The first half of the Twentieth Century

The turn of the twentieth-century marked the establishment of some form of British administration and a relative stability in the Naga Hills. A gradual shift can be seen in colonial officials' dealings with the missionaries in this 'Administrative phase' in contrast with the 'Military phase' (the late nineteenth-century) officials such as Francis Jenkins and others .[55] Later administrators, such as in particular, J.H. Hutton[56] and J.P. Mills,[57] no longer became an ardent supporter of the Christian missions and often denounced, quite vehemently, the activities of the missionaries. Though Government funds and stipends were continued on, the missionaries' civilizing works became a subject of vehement criticism from the State's officials which became the dominant pattern of the colonial state's policy towards the missionaries. Consequently, the state became more involved in the definition, or policing, of the missionary methods and policies.

The shift in colonial officials' attitude towards the Christian mission may partly be due to the relative stability that the British managed to achieve over major parts of the tribal hill tracts. As the maintenance of law and order was the most important part of their administrative effort, colonial officials, naturally and understandably, was not so appreciative of any tensions arising among its subjects. In fact, a British administrator called the missionaries' conversion work as a "sword of

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[55] This is Andrew West's periodization of British rule in the Naga Hills. The late nineteenth-century was the 'Military phase', the chief feature of which is the numerous British military expeditions to the Naga Hills; and the beginning of the twentieth-century was the 'Administrative phase', where the British established some forms of administration in the Naga Hills with its district headquarters at Kohima. See Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", *History and Anthropology,* Vol. 8, No. 1-4, 1994, pp. 55-88.

[56] J.H. Hutton joined the Indian Civil Service in 1909 and spent most of his administrative career, first as a Political Officer and later a Deputy Commissioner in Assam, particularly in the Naga Hills. He was appointed the Honorary Director of Ethnography for Assam in 1920. Part of his job as a Deputy Commissioner includes a regular travel within Assam, and in 1923-1934 he undertook a touring of previously unadministered Naga territory. Further, in 1929 he was appointed Census Commissioner for India.

[57] J.P. Mills entered the Indian Civil service in 1913 and joined Hutton in the Naga Hills in 1916 as the Sub Divisional Officer of Mokokchung Subdivision. He was appointed Honorary Director of Ethnography for Assam in 1930, awarded the Rivers Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute for his fieldwork among the Nagas of Assam in 1942 and the following year made Adviser to the Governor of Assam for Tribal Areas and States.

dissension".[58] Often, the unrest created among the native subjects became a source of a head-on collision with the British administrators. For instance, J.H. Hutton recalled settling his first dispute case, as a Deputy Commissioner in 1913, in response to complaints from one particular Naga village against the proselytizing method of a missionary.[59] This was one in many incidents where British officials had to mend the discord created by the missionaries among Christian converts and non-Christians in many Naga villages.[60] Again, the isolation of the hills and the marginal nature of the area had, as Andrew West has demonstrated, provided an opportunity to study its inhabitants, as a hobby in their leisure time, and produce 'ethnographic' works and monographs on the diverse Naga tribes.[61] Moreover, this works enjoyed quite some popularity among the English readers back at home, became an authoritative source and further aided in the administration of the tribal hills. [62] As a result the administrator-ethnographers lot was rather obliged to denounce the missionaries 'civilizing' activities which they perceived as a threat to the 'primitive' culture they were observing. The attempt to record this also meant critiquing the imposition of western culture on the Nagas, which was exactly what the missionaries were doing.

As such British administrators such as Hutton and Mills look with dismay at the changes that the missionaries were ushering in the Naga Hills, a process better known as 'denationalization'. They felt that they should trap the tribal 'way of life' in some monograph pages before time and the missionaries' evangelical work eroded it all away. In writing an introduction to J.P. Mills' monographs on the Lhota Nagas,

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[58] J.H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968 (first published in 1921), p. viii.

[59] The elders of the Naga village Pangti make the complaints to Hutton, the then Deputy Commissioner of Mokokchung Sub-division, Naga Hills, because the missionary has been "initiating his converts by immersing them in the village spring". The villagers are precisely objecting to the use of the pond both on 'sanitary and religious' grounds. See J.P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1922, p. xi.

[60] For a brief account of 'social tensions' generated by the missionaries conversion activities, see Richard M. Eaton, "Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1984, pp.1-42.

[61] Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", pp. 55-88.

[62] This aspect is subtly revealed in a foreword to Hutton's monograph on the Sema Naga tribe by Henry Balfour. The latter wrote: "It is of the utmost importance not only to the Science of Man, but also to responsible officialdom, since a just and enlightened administration of native affairs cannot be established and pursued without an intimate knowledge of and sympathetic interest in the natives themselves, their customs and their point of view." See J.H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, p. xv. It may be mention that Henry Balfour was a keen folklorist and President of the Folklore Society who undertook a tour of the unadministered parts of the Naga Hills in 1923 with his good friend Hutton and Mills. He shared the administrators' vision and concern for preservation of tribal customs and traditions. See Henry Balfour, "Presidential Address: The Welfare of Primitive Peoples", *Folklore*, Vol. 34, No. 1, March 31, 1923, pp. 12-24.

J.H. Hutton echoed this aspect subtly.[63] The administrators' perception of themselves as protector of the old tribal mode of life and existence often set them on a war path with the missionaries. And as protectionist, the administrators' confrontation with the missions runs along the lines of changes of various aspects viz. changes in material costume, the change in psychology of the natives, societal transformation and so on.

An example of this conflict was reflected in the controversy revolving around the issue of adoption of new foreign clothing, both western ones and Assamese garments, by the Nagas. Christian mission, it may be noted, often imposed the wearing of foreign clothes on its new converts to indicate a symbolic transformation of personal behaviour: this practice became, as an English official puts it, "the sign and emblem of the Mission policy".[64] For instance, in reference to the Ao Naga tribe adopting the Assamese costume of jacket and body cloth, the pioneer missionary, Mary Mead Clark, observed approvingly "with encouragement and delight the slightest evidence of some innate refinement."[65] Foreign clothes may range from European styles such as long shirts and skirts, khaki shorts, white blouses, coats and so on or the dhotis, body cloth and so on of the Assam plains. Such alteration brought by the missionaries certainly did not go down well with colonial officials such as J.P. Mills. Bitterly criticizing the mission for actively encouraging this practice, Mills stated that it undoubtedly spread pulmonary disease, was completely unsuitable to the Nagas' mode of life, and psychologically as well as dangerously caused the Nagas to adopt a foreign outlook towards life and manual work.[66] Further, Mills stated that mission's agenda of clothing the naked Nagas did not necessarily generate better effects or promote morality among the natives. In a mocking tone, Mills wrote: "More of the body is covered up, but I have yet to find that this leads to stricter morality."[67]

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[63] Hutton states that the reason why he instigated J.P. Mills into studying, and producing a monograph on, the Lhota tribe is that the mention tribe were "beginning to lose their distinctive features and were in danger of early denationalization between the upper and the nether mill-stones of Christianity, as taught by the American Baptist Mission, and Hinduism, as practised by the Nepali settler or by the Assamese who are the neighbours of the Lhota on the plains side." See J.P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, p. xi.

[64] J.P. Mills, "*The Effects of Mission Work among the Aos*", in J.P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, Delhi/Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1973 (originally published in 1926), p. 422.

[65] Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India*, p.54.

[66] Richard M. Eaton, "Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971", p. 14. See also J.P. Mills, "*The Effects of Mission Work among the Aos*", pp. 421-22.

[67] See J.P. Mills, "Notes on the Effect on some Primitive Tribes of Assam of Contacts with Civilization", in J.H. Hutton, *Census of India, 1931: Vol. I – India, Part III – Ethnographical*, Simla: Government of India Press, 1935, pp. 147-49.

Again, the administrators and the missions had a very different outlook on the aesthetic appreciation of natives' costumes. Mills, for example, regarded the denigration of the Nagas' dress as an 'aesthetic crime' where "from the artistic point of view it is especially and utterly to be condemned."[68] The administrators, in fact, very appreciatively extolled praises about the picturesque Naga costumes.[69] On the other hand, the missionary, with his or her evangelizing agenda, described the Naga dress as simply 'degrading and repulsive'.[70]

The administrator-ethnographers group were also doubtful of the 'civilization' of the Nagas and strove to preserved native customs to the utmost limit possible, and to ensured that changes, as must inevitably come, shall not be destructive in its abruptness. However, practices such as headhunting, the cruel method of sacrificing bulls, and other customs were illegalized by the government long before. Despite the prohibition, officials like Mills speculated that though the suppression of practices such as headhunting by the government was 'wholly good', it probably does not benefit the people.[71] In contrast was the attitude of the Baptist missionaries which made every effort to prohibit each and every customs and ceremonies and tribal social institutions including the Nagas' Feast of Merit and the village *Morung*.[72] Hutton, for instance, is very critical of the missionaries' banning customs such as the Feast of Merit and uprooting something which they do not understand nor sympathize with and replacing it with a 'superficial civilization'.[73] Not only was the monotony of a village life broken, Hutton observed, the ban had a far-reaching effect in the economy, artistry, material costume and morality of the Naga village with the end result of

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[68] *Ibid.*,

[69] See for example the account of J.H. Hutton (footnote no. 3) regarding Naga dress in J.P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1922, p. 421. Hutton described it in the following words: "All Naga tribes have a most remarkable appreciation of the effective and picturesque in dress, and their use of colour is usually in extraordinarily good taste and particularly well adapted to the surroundings in which it is displayed. The designs of their cloths are conspicuous for the right use of brilliant colours..."

[70] Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India*, p.54.

[71] For instance, Mills made this observation: "The number of lives saved by the suppression of the practice [headhunting] is therefore negligible, and is far more than balanced by those lost through the spread of disease made easy by safe travelling everywhere. In addition to this there is a very real loss in virility and keenness." See J.P. Mills, "Notes on the Effect on some Primitive Tribes of Assam of Contacts with Civilization", pp. 147-49.

[72] For example, the Baptist missionaries imposed a ban on the Naga Feast of Merit associating it with binge drinking, merry-making and wasteful feasting. Likewise, the mission also prohibited its new converts from living in the village *Morung*, bachelors' hall where a Naga is usually shaped into a man. See Richard M. Eaton, "Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971", p.14.

[73] J.P. Mills, "*The Effects of Mission Work among the Aos*", p. 421.

spreading an "unspeakable drabness over village life."[74] Hutton also deemed the suppression of the village *Morung* as 'unwarranted' for its effect in destroying the 'strong communal feeling' and substituting it with 'individualism', an aspect which was foreign to the Nagas.[75] Again, the missions' ban on its converts taking the indigenous rice beer called '*madhu*' – as result of which teetotalism became synonymous with Christianity – was altogether bad, wrote Mills, as many ended up drinking secretly but with a bad conscience and adopting substitutes such as opium and *ganja* (hemp).[76] It was precisely these sets of prohibitions and negation of natives' culture, as preached by the missionaries that appeared disapprovingly harmful to the Nagas, so the administrators perceived.

In a complete about turn, the administrators, though a part of the colonial machinery, were also doubtful about the type of education imparted upon the Nagas. The position of the administrators has been a rather ambivalent, complicated one. It is true that the government continued funding the mission school all throughout the colonial period. [77] But for all its support, the administrators regarded that the type of education disseminated, through a mutual co-operation between mission and government, had "been on the whole an evil rather than good."[78] This, according to an official, was because of the expectation by an educated Naga from the government for trivial posts such as clerkships – described by the Nagas as a 'sitting and eating' job –

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[74] Mills observed that ban on the Feast of Merit disturbed the natural way of distributing wealth with the result that stored grains ended up rotten instead of being eaten up by the villagers. Mills lamented that the missions' prohibition had also extinguished Nagas' artistry – wood-carving on xylophones, *morung* halls, and other structures – and ornaments or tribal finery. Most of all, Mills was bitter about the perishing of tribal songs and traditions which was often sung and observed at the feasts. See J.P. Mills, "Notes on the Effect on some Primitive Tribes of Assam of Contacts with Civilization", pp. 147-49.

[75] Hutton stated that while an "Animist puts his village before himself ... a Baptist puts himself before his village." *Ibid.*, p. 149. However, he pointed out that the converts had became selfish, unlike the non-Christians, and will worked together if it concerned the Christian religion unlike in secular matters where the welfare of the individual was rated high above the body politic. Further, he speculated that "if the process continues their villages will become mere collections of houses instead of highly-organized social units in which every man shoulders his burden of service and responsibility." See J.P. Mills, "*The Effects of Mission Work among the Aos*", p. 420.

[76] Deeming the missions' insistence on abstinence as producing a bad effect, Mills cited an example of a pure Christian Ao village, called Molungyimsen, having the highest number of opium addicts in comparison with other Ao Naga village, both Christian and non-Christian. See J.P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, pp. 147-48.

[77] Rev. J. E. Tanquist acknowledged the Government stipends and grants for the Kohima Mission Training School in 1927. In the same year, Rev. William Pettigrew also reported a Grants-in-Aid received from the State. NMML, Geographic File (hereafter GF), ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3256, Reel No. FM -715, 1817-1969, ABFMS: Assam Baptist Missionary Conference Report: Twenty-Fifth Session, Golaghat: Assam, November 23-December 1, 1927.

[78] J.P. Mills, "Notes on the Effect on some Primitive Tribes of Assam of Contacts with Civilization", pp. 147-49.

which resulted in an explosion of unemployed, educated Naga youths who were unwilling to live the life of their fore-fathers.[79] They held the mission as partly responsible for the situation. At this accusation, the missionaries did acknowledge that their educational methods were having a considerable influence on the natives. However, they were unwilling to take all the entire blame upon themselves and as such were quick to throw back the blame on states' official as well. One missionary remarked that an average educated native boy would not take up "any kind of work that might soil his soft hands or ruffle his well oiled hair" because the natives had a conclusive idea that "all Sahibs [Europeans] do office or white collar work".[80] This was because of the natives' erroneous impression of the Europeans and their manner of life, wrote the missionary, besides regarding everything about Europeans' as 'superior', be it in "economic, social, cultural and religious achievement."[81] The states' official, then, as it turn out, often were in the same pedestal with the missionaries despite their criticism of, and their efforts to shy away from, the latter. This brought us to examine the similarities shared by them despite their ambiguous relationship, as the next section will address.

3.4 Similarities and Dissimilarities

In an article on the ambiguous relationships between missionaries and anthropologist, Sjaak van der Geest noted that the former has often been perceived as anthropologists' 'polar opposites' – ethnocentric preachers and people who transforms, destroys culture and traditional knowledge, and erodes rituals and practices.[82] Similar is the case in Northeast India where the Christian missions were often blamed from many quarters, in particular, by the administrators who double up as ethnographers, professional anthropologists and other academically inclined Europeans.[83] As apparent, the administrators regarded themselves as preservers of

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[79] *Ibid.*,

[80] NMML, GF, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3255, Reel No. FM -714, 1817-1969, R. Wickstand, "The Ao Naga Church and Discipline," September 1933.

[81] *Ibid.*,

[82] Sjaak van der Geest, "Anthropologists and Missionaries: Brothers under the Skin", *Man*, New Series, Vol. 25, No. 4, Dec., 1990, pp. 588-601.

[83] The administrators, however, often insist on their 'amateur' status "in not having any training and in their command of anthropological theory." But, despite their excuse they saw themselves as 'professional ethnographers' doing an important task of "identifying, describing and classifying tribal peoples." To this groups can also be included Mr. Henry Balfour, a curator of Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford and president of the Folklore Society, a friend of Mills and Hutton who even undertook a tour of some parts of the Naga Hills in 1923; and the professional anthropologist, Christoph von Furer-

tribal cultures from erosion by western cultures, as recorders of tribal way of life and as protector of the natives from foreign influences.

As much as they disagreed with each other, in their perceptions and writing, the administrator-anthropologists and the missionaries, however, shared points of similarities. A 'well-known similarity', as Sjaak van der Geest pointed out, which an anthropologists and missionaries shared, was the 'isolation' they faced and a keen interest in ethnography.[84] This is an aspect which seemed to be the case with both the missionary and the anthropologist in the North-eastern tribal hill tracts. We need not mention again the keen interest that the administrators had on the native 'hill tribes'. But not every missionary had an interest in ethnography. Nevertheless, some did made attempts at an ethnographic description of various tribal cultures. For example, besides the ordinary accounts of mission works we have a missionary, one Mary Clark, describing the material costumes, mode of 'savage worship' and 'strange legends' of the Ao Nagas.[85] However, in matters regarding ethnography the administrator-ethnographer's group regarded themselves as the better informed and the authoritative source and often spoke disparagingly of the missionaries' ethnographic knowledge. This was evident, for instance, in Mills criticism of Mary Clark's account of the Ao Nagas' material costume as a "scanty and ... a misleading description of Ao dress".[86]

Again, the missions' response to the bunch of brickbat thrown at them for their role in the denationalization of the native tribal, from various quarters, sometimes throws up interesting aspects. Indeed, it is true that the mission were often made the scapegoat, in large measures, for its role in denationalization. However, the mission was also reluctant to take all the blame alone and often made counter-accusations against its critics which tended to subtly reveal the part played by both the state and the mission. In response to the objections and condemnations from administrators, a missionary, Rev. F.W. Harding came out in defence of the mission, and its role in the denationalization of the indigenous people of Assam.[87] A glance at the critique from

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Haimendorf, who published a work on, in particular, the Konyak Nagas. See Andrew West, "Writing the Nagas: A British Officers' Ethnographic Tradition", pp. 77, 80-81.

[84] Sjaak van der Geest, "Anthropologists and Missionaries: Brothers under the Skin", p. 589.

[85] See Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India*, pp. 49-63.

[86] J.P. Mills, "*The Effects of Mission Work among the Aos*", p. 421.

[87] In a paper entitled "Indigenous Christianity in Assam: A Visualization of its Life and Organization, of its attitude towards Tribal Heritage, and of its part in Denationalization", (Gauhati: Assam Christian Council, 1939), Rev. F.W. Harding compiled together the various definition of 'denationalization'. He wrote to say that some regards it as "the cardinal sin of mission work that ... happens where foreign

the missionary brought to light certain aspects that signified that the administrator, for their whole stance as protectionist or preservers, may be sharing the same boat with the missionary after all. Indeed, as the missionary puts it, the accusation of the missions as mainly responsible for denationalization indeed has a 'habit of backfiring'.[88] This aspect is evident, for instance, when Mills talked about recruiting labour personnel for the 1st World War. The full text is reproduced below:

> When recruits were called for the Naga Labour Corps in the Great War very few Ao Naga Christians were prepared to leave the comforts and security of their own homes and face the unknown, and their response was miserable compared with that of their unconverted brothers.[89]

Here, the double standards of the administrator-anthropologists were subtly highlighted. The same officer who had been disapprovingly criticizing the negative effects of mission work did not, in the slightest, consider the recruitment of a labour corps and sending them into foreign territories as denationalizing. As someone who had been harping at the corrosive denationalization of the Nagas by the missionaries and the plains, read Hindu and Muslim, culture, Mills perhaps did not deemed it bad or think it might not have some unforeseen effects on the natives volunteering for the purpose of the state's projects. For all his critique thrown at the missions the changes brought about by the missions' efforts in transforming the native, Mills perceived that it fell far short of the denationalizing process. This tendency to remain silent on matters of state's interest was a common aspect among the administrators as they were, of course, first and foremost, state's official. Oblivious to what they write or spoke against, the order and stability of the state had to be maintained at all cost.

In fact, the administrators did not seem to mind the efforts of the missionary Rev. William Pettigrew's to recruit natives for their services to the colonial government as Labour Corps to be sent to France during the First World War. In fact,

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missionaries have planted Christian churches and schools." He goes on to say that critics "recognize the process of denationalization in the wearing of European clothes and shoes, in the adoption of western music, in the using of the Roman alphabet, in the playing of western games like cricket, football, hockey, tennis, in the use of western surgical and medical science, in the bringing in of western types of architecture, in the cutting of the hair in European style, in the using of western films and fountain pens, gramophones and typewriters, flash lights and Boston garters, and in the sale and consumption of distilled liquors." Further, he states that "others think of denationalization as a mental attitude which regards everything western as superior, an attitude that copies rather than creates." NMML, GF, ABFMSR, Burma/Assam, Acc. No. 3253, Reel No. FM-712, 1817-1959.

[88] *Ibid.*,

[89] J.P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, p. 420.

he was even commissioned as an officer in the British army and accordingly relocated to Kohima.[90] The missionary, who had earlier laboured among the Tangkhul Nagas of Manipur, [91] moved to Kohima in 1917 and conducted an impressive job for the colonial state.

As such, the administrators often tended to overlooked their own role, or influence, despite all the resentment they expressed regarding the missions as responsible for imposing a 'superficial civilization'. In other words, what one is trying to say was that the administrators' accusation of the mission as responsible for denationalization was a bit one-sided. In the course of the interaction with the natives, the administrators also, without his wishes or knowledge, partly influence the native to a great extent or have a part in the denationalization of the native. Upon closer examination, the administrator-anthropologist and the missionary are not so different from each other at all and had almost the same effect on the natives. As a missionary, Rev. R. Wickstand, pointed out, the dress are often emulated by the natives and "accordingly, it is the height of their ambition to like a Sahib [meaning the European] both in dress and work."[92] In the same breadth, he stated that the "missionaries and Government officers are largely at fault" for the Ao Nagas adopting the psyche "that European manner of dress is the signal of culture and education."[93] Further, he sadly observed that even "poor boys who cannot afford to buy a pencil return from school dressed like the Prince of Wales."[94] It seems, then, that for all the critique fired at the missions for encouraging the natives to abandoned their tribal dress, the administrators were also sort of inspiring the native to abandoned their costume. Their very presence in the native territory had an equally denationalizing effect on the natives' admiration for, and adoption of, European culture.

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[90] F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period, 1836-1950,* Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1971, p. 160.

[91] The life, career and proceedings of Reverend William Pettigrew was another classic case of mission-state collusion or the missionary as a spearhead of the government's practices and intention. Originally a British, he actively tried to influence and pressurize, to an extent, the government into granting a mission plot and allowing another missionary family to move to the native princely state of Manipur. This was accordingly complied with because of his services to the colonial state's war effort. See *Ibid.*, p. 160. He was also appointed as Superintendent of the first real census of the 'hill tribes' in the 1911 census by the state government of Manipur. This was because he was the only man who mastered the language of the hill tribes. See Elungkiebe Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Materials,* Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 2005, p. 88.

[92] NMML, GF, ABFMSR, Assam, Acc. No. 3255, Reel No. FM -714, 1817-1969, R. Wickstand, "The Ao Naga Church and Discipline," September 1933.

[93] *Ibid.*,

[94] *Ibid.*,

Another aspect that suggests that the administrator often overlooked their role in the denationalization of the Nagas was in the pattern of the house structure which was often emulated by the natives after 'foreign' models. Every official and missionaries that was posted in the hills, without exception, build bungalows and household structure that was completely different from the pattern of the indigenous huts. A missionary, Rev. F. Harding, noted that the natives often build houses resembling the worst type of shack as a result of imitation after "houses and other buildings built by Europeans and Americans living within the territory of the tribes concerned."[95]This being the scenario, Harding made this speculation:

> Possibly it might be better for Government officials and missionaries living among such peoples, to live in houses built of such materials and of such patterns as satisfy the needs of an ordinary hillmen. It might be far better perhaps to build ... dak bungalows [postal office] and treasury buildings and schools and churches according to some indigenous plan and out of such materials. Unfortunately, we have neither of us always done so.[96]

What the Reverend was pointing out was that both the administrators and the missionaries, for all their accusation over who was the more responsible for denationalization, had an impact, more or less, on the denigration of the tribal world. In other words, it was an indirect counter response at the critics – which included the administrator-anthropologists besides others – that they themselves were, unavoidably and irrevocably, partly responsible for denationalization.

Indeed, the question as to who was the greater defaulter in the denationalization of the native tribal seems to beget no appropriate conclusion. The missionary could be regarded as having the larger influence or the more aggressive in terms of their cultural arrogance towards tribal or, as they often put it, a 'heathen' society. On the other hand, the administrators displayed keenness and an understanding of the native social structures and customs. But despite that both had an almost similar effect on the natives. In all this was the natives themselves who were appropriating, recreating, and interpreting new aspects, signs and values from their encounter with their colonial masters and their 'foreign' culture.

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[95] Rev. F.W. Harding, "Indigenous Christianity in Assam", p. 18.
[96] *Ibid.*,

Conclusion:

In this chapter, a modest effort has been made to move away from monolithic notion of colonialism as an abstract process or as a broad explanation for explaining the socio-religious transformation in the hill tracts of the North-East Frontier. Instead, this study tried to examine the 'tensions of empire' or inner conflicts arising from differing interests among various agents of colonialism – in particular between British official and American Baptist missionaries – through an understanding of the 'civilizing mission' for a period spanning almost a century of colonial rule in Northeast India. In so doing, the underlying ambiguities and contradictions has revealed a complicated relationship between the state and the mission. It can be seen that Christian missions and the state were, from the very beginning, mired up in a tension which led them to adopt an ambivalent relations with each other. In some projects they found common cause, as was the case in the early period, while in others they battled with each other over this chief, basic issue: what seems best for the natives? Accordingly, this study has tried to pay attention to the complexities and contradictions riddling colonialism, taking into account the contradictory agendas, designs, intentions, and motives of colonial agencies. In so doing, the study has reveal, as Stoler and Cooper puts it, "competing agendas for using power, competing strategies for maintaining control, and doubts about the legitimacy of the venture."[97] It follows, then, that the study of colonialism and the establishing of Christianity in Northeast India is more than just an analysis of socio-religious change.

Invariably influenced by context, the mission-state relationship underwent changes and shifts over time. The early period saw a phase of connivance and mutual co-operation between state's officials and missionaries as was the case in the days of Jenkins and Bronson. In the mid-nineteenth century, the missionaries' requirement of state's protection, on the one hand, and the state's dependence on the mission for pacification, on the other, foster a kind of mutual relationship between them, a relationship that grew out of necessity and expediency. On the basis of the relationship, the nature of their alliance, and the compulsions under which both function in order to fulfil their specific roles, one can also see that the missionaries often fell into complicity with the state. And the missions were only too pleased to be

[97] Frederick Cooper, and Ann L. Stoler, "Introduction: Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule", p. 609.

co-opted with the political impetus for the sake of financial funds which were given for mission schools, translation works of native language and other 'civilizing' projects. The mission and their activities, then, were largely informed by political and economic motivations. The missionaries, however, tried to distance itself from the state on the issues of morality, conflicting notions of progress and 'civilization' and other aspects. Likewise, while appreciating the role of the missionaries in 'pacifying' the tribes, thereby ensuring stability and smooth functioning of administration and commercial activities, the state also felt the necessity to distance itself from the missionaries activities so as to perhaps bind itself within the principles of the so-called policy of 'non-interference' with the native affairs and, in particular, their religion. As such, in the actual working out of the relationships this relationship was not without tensions, and not always in perfect harmony. Over time, this relationship became more strained.

The first half of the twentieth-century marked a drastic shift in the state-mission relations. In stark contrast with nineteenth-century British officials was the attitude of the administrator-anthropologist groups along the lines of J.P. Mills and J.H. Hutton who deeply expressed their resentment at the changes that were being brought over the hills by the missionaries' activities. Expressing concern at the fast-paced 'denationalization' of the natives, these officers became doubtful of the effects of, on the whole, western 'civilization' itself. The contradicting perception between the mission and the state also became most evident in this period. As can be seen, while the state aspired for stability of their rule, collection of revenue (in the form of 'house tax'), and not an abrupt changes in the natives' 'way of life', the missionary aimed at the overall changes of the natives' point of view and its complete replacement of their culture and traditions with the supposedly 'civilized' Christian tradition. In that sense, it may be pointed out here that the missionaries can be regarded as the more naïve and ethnocentric due to their cultural arrogance. In general, missionaries in the colonial period came to the various mission fields in Northeast India convinced of their cultural, moral, intellectual and spiritual superiority of what they thought as western 'civilization'. In contrast with the administrators, there definitely was no evidence in the missionary account of seeing a different society – a 'heathen' society in their accounts – in its own terms, and values. But, despite their stance as a 'protectionist' of natives, the administrator-anthropologist group also had an equally corrosive impact on traditional culture just by their

presence on the hills. And as much as they vie for the isolation of the native and as much as they wanted to preserved native culture and tradition, their first loyalty remained with the colonial state too. Thus, in spite of their best intentions to preserve native cultures on the part of the officials and despite the honest endeavour of the missionary to save the natives from eternal damnation, the end result was the same – it led to the 'denationalization' of the natives.

A last word, a counter-reading of the accounts of mission and state has also revealed certain aspect about the nature of the colonial archive: the intentional or unintentional suppression of certain knowledge and facts, or its biases, or its characteristic as a heavily contested terrain. For example, there was deliberation on the part of the political masters to be silent on particular issues such as morality (but subtly reported and critique by missionaries' account); or to be the authoritative voice in the representation of native's culture over the missionaries. A reading of the source material of the missionaries with that of the state has, thus, proved enriching and profitable.

Conclusion

To briefly recapitulate, in this study I have thematically look at some aspects of colonial writings and practices in Northeast India – namely of topographical exploration, and the classification and the 'civilization' of principally the 'tribe' designated as the 'Nagas' – to explore the intimate relationship between knowledge and rule. Taking a cue from Bernard Cohn's concept of the 'investigative modality', this study has tried to demonstrate how knowledge became integral to colonial rule and strategies of control in the peripheral frontier region or a buffer zone of British India. The advent of the British marked the beginning of the documentation of the region in every possible conceivable way of profound magnitude and thoroughness – a production of knowledge and records of various aspects in ways that the natives themselves cannot see and carried out which at the same time demonstrated the superiority of western knowledge system in comparison with the natives'. In encountering a multiplicity of language, culture, and 'tribes', the British attempted and ordered this inchoate entities and a relatively new territory into a textual form that can be easily understood by them thereby creating an extensive archive. The archive of knowledge collected on the region, on its geography, ethnography and so on was always in the process of restructuration and refinement and as such its form and content underwent changes throughout the colonial period. While greater focus was given to the topography of the region and how best to secure their political, military and economic interests in the initial phase of colonial rule, a good deal of interest was directed at detailing the ethnography of the people gradually by the late nineteenth-century onwards. The shift from topographical preoccupation to the ethnographic marked the changing frontier conditions and coincided with important developments in the metropolitan context. But despite the changes the struggle or the will to know and rule remains an integral characteristic throughout the colonial period.

Central to the whole process of knowledge and control was the territorialization of the Naga Hills as an administrative body; and the construction, in part, of the Nagas as a particular group of people, a 'tribe', based on the long drawn-out process of documentation of the Naga people through the colonial surveys, ethnography, the decennial censuses and other knowledge-acquisition projects. Colonial imagination needed something to collectivize the mass of the diverse

communities inhabiting the hill tracts, thereby creating the 'Naga tribe'. The labelling of the Nagas with the category 'tribe' reflects the significance of the word for the legitimization and expansion of colonial rule in the region: its description and classification became a key facet of colonial administration and understanding. In this context, 'tribe' as a fundamental concept, then, led to the dichotomization of an uncivilized native and a civilized British. And under the British rule, this notion of 'tribe', and a savage one at that, drew upon contemporary discourses of Nagas' savagery, raids and headhunting rites (as received from the plains people), as well as on British perception and observation of what a 'primitive' society was like. Colonial writings and narratives, in a way, dramatized these native practices as an indicator of barbarism. Throughout this study, I have seek to demonstrate that in the early writings on the Nagas and the reports dealing with surveys and raids, the Nagas as a definition or in the colonial imagination became, more or less, synonymous with violent behaviour – a group continually creating problems on the plains, a community with an inclination for inter-village/clan conflict, and a people governed by traditional rites of headhunting and other 'primitive' customs in comparison with the British. Colonial authorities, then, developed a framework that makes the unfamiliar and the strange people, the Nagas, appeared both as different and threatening. The skirmishes between the British and the Nagas, the military expeditions that followed and the official reports that called for the suppression of raids and headhunting conveyed ideas about Naga savagery that needed to be rein in and controlled for the greater good of the region. The treatment and projection of the Nagas as a community indulging on raids and plunder in colonial discourse has great significance in the creation of a group and in the ways the British produced different images of the subjects they were ruling. As such, while the plains folks were typified as not so violent and thus governable, the hill people were characterized as the tyrants of the former. By implication, then, the indigenous practices of the hill people stood out in stark comparison, and in challenge, to the order of society and polity that the colonial 'civilizing mission' was trying to put into place.

But though the term 'Nagas' were documented in official records and other strands of writings, the people referred to by that collective term did not actually identified themselves with it throughout the greater part of the colonial period – but instead to a conglomeration of identities on the basis of village and clans. In fact, prior to the entry of the British in the region, it seems likely that the various

communities who were now group under the umbrella term 'Nagas' did not have any sense of common ethnicity or collectiveness. To a large extent, it was the missionaries and British officials who began deploying the term 'Nagas' in a collective way. [1] It was through their discourse and correspondences that the term took on a life of its own, which was a build-up on idioms as used by natives of the plain area. In a sense, the now widely accepted category 'Nagas' was in part imposed from outside which was ironically internalized by the people concerned. Thus, colonial administration and its understanding of the concept of 'tribe', which have been built over a long period of time, along with several other process gradually and consequently led to the constitution of the Nagas as a 'tribe' or an 'ethnic' group as has been euphemistically used now in the present day.

If colonial administration or, more specifically, colonial ethnography was crucial to the constitution of an identity and maintenance of colonial rule, then there is a need to examine the curious affiliation between colonial administrative knowledge and academic discipline such as anthropology or ethnography. An inference can be made over the issue of whether to view anthropology as an instrument of control to colonialism. Talal Asad has advised caution against such perception asserting that it was a "mistake to view social anthropology in the colonial era as primarily an aid to colonial administration, or as the simple reflection of colonial ideology."[2] But this study concerning localized, peculiar ethnographic practices tends to consider that it definitely has some role in the maintenance and stabilization of colonial administration. As such it is the study's contention that there is an undeniable complicity between colonial administration and ethnography in the context of the Naga Hills – though it may not be 'primarily an aid' to colonial rule. Indeed, not only

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[1] In tandem with the official documentation projects of the Naga tribe, the colonial state's practice of employing natives in various project ranging from porters during expeditions, to road construction workers and other activities may have foster a sense of collectivism. In fact, during the First World War, a Labour Corps of about 2,000 Nagas were sent to France which was aptly observed by a colonial official as an event, "which had an eye-opening impact on the Nagas who returned home with the rich experience of the outside world." (See Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam, 1883–1941,* Delhi: Eastern Publishing House, 1942, p. 163.) It was particularly after some people got some exposure to modern warfare and other aspects, like those personnel of the Labour Corps during the world wars, that a sense of common ethnicity and the advantages such identity has for lobbying gains from the colonial state emerged. The memorandum submitted by the Naga Club, a collection of Nagas war veterans and Gaonburas (interpreters) and others who held some form of position under the colonial office, to the Simon Commission on the 10th January 1929 is a testament of this aspect. Very briefly, the memorandum asserted the Nagas as a single entity as different from and less-advanced than the two main religious communities of India, Hindus and Muslims.

[2] Talal Asad, "Introduction", in Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London: Ithaca Press, 1975, (originally published 1973), p.18.

were the various military expeditions and other forms of coercive forces central to the control of the Naga tribes, which had been the chief characteristics of the greater part of the nineteenth century. Ethnographic knowledge, as evident from the state's directives to its personnel particularly from the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, did have a key role in the smooth functioning of the colonial state. By then, control of the Nagas was carried out no longer through punitive military expedition, but through efficient administration made possible by ethnographic knowledge and description of the Nagas' practices and customs. Colonial ethnography along with the state-sponsored project of the decade-wise censuses, then, turns out to be an important instrument in the services of colonial administration.

In summarizing this study, another crucial instrument of control that has to be mention was the rhetoric of the colonial 'civilizing mission', and the activities of the Christian mission in Northeast India. This is the precise reason why I have incorporated the Christian missions within the ambit of colonialism or treated it as an agent of colonialism. I justified this by demonstrating that the ABFMS did connived with, at least in the early phase, the British officials in the region for the 'pacification' of the native Nagas. The trend was received with open arms by the colonial state. In fact, early British officials such as F. Jenkins were administrators with strong missionary leanings. Thus, there developed an intimate relationship between them based on mutual benefits, assistance and connivance. But this relationship was marred with contradictions and tensions, undergoing a significant shift over time which was in tune with the changing local and the metropolitan context. We can see a harsher criticism of missions' activities in the first half of the twentieth century in contrast with the nineteenth century. This was because of the inherent tendency of the colonial state to check the activities the mission when the latter tends to threatened the smooth functioning of its administration. The tension between the two heightened with the rise of anthropology as a professional discipline and when the administrators serving in the Naga Hills treated their posting space as their study field and began publishing ethnographic accounts of the Nagas. What followed was a clash of interest between the Christian missionaries and British officials with the latter advocating least interference of the native people by any outside influence followed by a vehement criticism of the mission activities as an eraser of natives' way of life. Consequently, two conflicting image of the ideal tribal emerge for the two. In the missionary eyes,

the native Nagas were 'heathens', primarily understood as a suitable candidate for salvation through conversion. In stark contrast, with an inclination for protection, the administrator idealized, preferred a native who still clung to the old, traditional lifestyle. But despite their best intentions – British officials for protection of the 'natives' and the missionary for redemption of the 'heathens' – the end result was more or less the same in the sense that there was a tremendous transformation in the culture, thinking and lifestyle of the hill people.

And as much as they disagree with each other, both the mission and the state, whether intentional or unintentional, each planted a history – of origin, customs, polity, and other aspects – to a people hitherto without a written word. Colonial agencies, especially the administrative-ethnographers,[3] by writing about the Nagas, a 'traditional' society on the brink of disappearance from 'outside' influence and the changing times, in a way solidify ethnography as history. The ethnography of the Nagas, then, literally became their history. Likewise, the missionary was not far off in projecting a picture, prior to their advent, of an existence of mindless 'savagery' marked by headhunting rites and raids and inter-village/clan feuds. A reading of any missionary texts suggested the imposition of a kind of history that moves in a linear path, a society waiting to be transformed from 'backwardness' to 'progress', 'darkness' to light, and from 'heathenism' to 'civilization'. But what forms the common plot in both the history version of the two colonial agents was the projection of the natives' history – prior to their glorious entry laden with the 'civilizing' measures and ideas of their culture – of an existence in a static state of fantastic savagery.

As a concluding remark, one has to also note the difficulty of reconstructing the pre- and the colonial past by the utilization of largely official sources and mission's accounts. Using this source meant the inevitable beginning of modern history of the region from the advent of the British and the ABFMS. No doubt, a community with no written sources began to figure quite notably in the texts and discourse of the colonizing agents. But the dependence on this source for doing history, however, tends to deprive the natives of agency and at the same time projected an image of them as types or figures lacking individuality or the will to choose their destiny. Indeed, what emerges was the notion that they existed solely for

[3] The monographs published by J. Hutton, J.P. Mills and T.C. Hodson often begin with accounts of the origin and the migrating wave undertook by the Nagas that made them finally settled in the Naga Hills.

the purpose of receiving the colonial 'civilizing mission' and the benefits accrued from colonial rule. In a sense, the native was silent and he/she has to be represented and spoken for.

A last word, because this study assesses the colonial situation, writings, developments, and activities partly in the light of the present day predicament of Northeast India,[4] the study may tend to be, or deemed, a bit teleological in design. If true, this would constitute a grave offense indeed to the practice of historical enquiry. However, one seek to justify this approach by suggesting that a natural aversion to teleology must not discourage oneself from asking, and seeking to explain (read interpret) how and why the historical course actually taken made great sense in the historical, or colonial, context of its unfolding. One can avoid teleology and still explain how the Nagas were subdued, made the 'other' and subjected to a form of exclusive control by highlighting the colonial context – as the knowledge production of colonial subjects was also invariably informed by context. By focusing on the writings and practices of the British which was inevitably used to express, order, classified and objectified a particular hill community, the 'Nagas', this study represents a modest effort to suggest that colonial knowledge of a group and their classificatory practices inevitably played an important role in the construction, in part, and constitution of an ethnic identity.

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[4] 'Ethnicity' and identity assertion for identification and articulation within the Indian political discourse seems to be a trend characteristic of this region, which, however, was treated as a threat to the regional and national stability and security. By this I meant the innumerable groups and identities demanding total independence and self-determination, or separate statehood, or even still reclassification of status as Scheduled Tribe or Caste, based on ethnic, hence racial grounds. As such, there had been, and continued to be, a proliferation of militant groups such as Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagalim (IM), the self-styled 'representative' of the Naga people. Apart from it, there are other groups and factions such as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland Front in Assam (which demanded a separate Bodo state or 'Bodoland'), the People's Liberation Army in Manipur, and so on. Besides this older groups, there emerges in recent years groups such as the Dima Halam Daogah (DHD-J) representing the 'voices' of the Dimasa people. All these groups enjoyed 'popular' support, mostly achieved through extortion and intimidation, and in fact could be classified as some extortionist corporate body.

Appendix I

Table 1 List of Naga Dwars and villages lying between Dekhoo and Dhunseeree rivers. Dated, Seebsaugur, the 28th August 1844.

Dwars [A hill region or mountain pass]	Villages
1. Namsang	Namsang
	Nangta
	Kangshing
	Jangsa
2. Dupdor	Nowgong
	Larayan
	Santoong
	Deka Hymong
	Boora Hymong
	Cormoong
	Longtaee
	Akooeea
	Soosoo
	Boga Langee
	Mulotopia
	Silajoo
3. Assringiya	Asringiya
	Lasso
	Kampoongiya
	Nowgong
	Booragaon
	Moonsing
4. Hatteegurh	Kolaburria
	Samsa
	Japhoo
	Mookheegaon
	Burdoobiya
	Aleefa
	Karee
5. Dyung	Loongtung
	Burgaon
	Halleegaon
	Bhedaree
	Kaboong
	Mikilaee
	Mohom
	Akook
	Lahootee
	Khergaon
	Saneegaon
6. Paneephat or Lota Dv	Kangogaon

Doria	
	Khergoan
	Sunkah
	Telleegaon
	Sonareegaon
	Patagaon
	Koragaon
	Nowgaon
	Nunkung

Source: NAI, FDBP, Consultation No. 124, dated the 19th October 1844, correspondence from Mr. B. Wood, Sub Assistant Commissioner, Golaghat, to Captain T. Brodie, Principal Assistant Commissioner, Sibsagar, dated Golaghat, the 4th July 1844.

Appendix II

Table 2.1 List of the Villages under the several Naga Chiefs

Tabloong	Tabloong, Namsang, Nangta, Kansang, Tangsa, Rungoja, Rangam, Nengsa, Nengnain, Chinloee, Chengtong,Chinkong, [&] Ching Phoee.
Jaktoong	Jaktoong, Konghon, Tingtak, Loongma, Totak , Tophang, Chingkong, [&] Seyong.
Mooloong	Burgaon, Nougong, Lakma, Poiloong [&] Mooloong.
Changnoee	Chungnoee, Kamloong, Nougong, Muoloong, Karoogaon, Lumcha, Moneyegaong[&] Booragaon.
Joboka	Joboka, Horoo-oothoo or Lungthing, Bur-oothoo, [&] Byagaon.
Banfera	Banfera, Nuogaon, Nokrang [&] Oonoogaon.
Kooloong	Kooloong, Bur Moothoon, Nuagaon [&] Horoo Moothoon.
Paneedwar	Paneedwar, Singpoongiya, Hooroogaon, Pooloong, Tapeegaon, Bekagaon, Burkoorma, Bekagaya, Khetreegaon [&] Banjapree. [These are tributary to both Paneedwar and Burdwar.
Burdwar	Burdwar, Jakum, Dadum, Loongtoong, Boonteen, Bansgaya, Sunkan [&] Kaeemaee.
Namsang	Namsang, Kanjang, Soobang, Doodam, Magaon, Horoomoorma, Khetreegaon [&] Lamcha.

Table 2.2 Table of Distances

No. stages	SEEBSAGUR TO	Distances		Remarks
		Miles.	Furlongs.*	
1st	Baleegaon	12	4	
2nd	Nagenee Mara	9	0	The ascent commences here.
3rd	Kanghong	4	0	About 160 houses.
4th	Jacktoong	6	5	Little water found on the road.
5th	Moolong Salt well	12	4	At 4 ½ m. passed through Tingtak; at 6 ½ left Burgaon to the left; at 8 ½ passed through Naogong.
6th	Horo Paneenoee	5	4	A clear stream between Moolong and Changnoee; at 3 passed Mooloong.
7th	Changnoee	6	2	Crossed two running streams; the latter the boundary between Mooloong & Changnoee.
8th	Towkak River	9	0	Crossed several streams; two having strong discharges at 7 m. Left Booragaon1 ½ mile to the left.
9th	Nambetoo	5	2	At 4 miles passed through Longling village, which is nearly a mile long.
10th	Teesee Nuddee	4	6	A clear stream; Jobka passed at ¼.
11th	Same stream	0	6	At ¼ passed Banfera.
12th	Teebace	0	6	At 3 passed Bur Moothoon.
13th	Disang river	0	5	At 2/5 m passed through Horoo Moothoon.
14th	Towrah	0	6	At 4/2 passed through Paneedwar village.
15th	Soonputtun	8	0	At 1 ½ passed Takeem; at 3/2 crossed the Bakloof; and at 5/2 passed through Kangang.
16th	Hookum Jewry; Tea Baree, Assam Company's	6	2	Namsang crossed twice, once at starting & again at end of the march.
17th	Jeypore	9	0	

*Furlong – Unit of measurement, originating in Medieval England, equivalent to about 200 metres (220 yards).

Source: NAI, FDBP, Consultation Nos. 19-20, dated the 23rd December 1843, correspondence from T. Brodie, Officiating Magistrate, Sibsagar, to F. Jenkins, Commissioner, Guwahati, dated the 9th April 1842.

Appendix III

Table 3 List of Colonial officials patronizing the Naga Mission

Sl. No.	Date of Donation	Donated by and Purpose of Donation	Amount in Rs.
1	March 1838	C.A. Bruce for the Naga Spelling Book.	100
2	8th August 1838	C.A. Bruce towards a Boarding School.	500
3	September 1838	Captain S.T. Hannay to support 10 Naga lads in school for a year.	240
4	23rd March 1839	Lieutenant Short to Naga Mission for general purposes.	50
5	13th November 1839	The Honorable T.C. Robertson, Deputy Governor of Bengal to defray the expenses of a second tour to the Naga Hills.	200
6	1st March 1840	Lieut. Brodie a Bhutan Pony for the Mission.	60
7	9th March 1840	Captain S.F. Hannay's second donation to the Naga Mission.	240

Source: NMML, MC, ABFMSR, 1817-1900, Acc. No. 3243, Reel No. FM-56, Assam, letter from Rev. Miles Bronson to Rev. S. Peck, Corresponding Secretary, American Baptist Board of Foreign Mission, Boston, dated Namsang, Assam, the 1st April 1840.

Appendix IV

Table 4 Subscription List to the Nowgong Orphan Institution Fund

Sl No.	Name	Residence	Mode of Payment		Amount in Rs.
			Monthly	Yearly	
1	Capt. J.J. Gordon,	Jeypore, [Assam]	Monthly		50
2	Capt H. Fouquett,	do	do		10
3	Jim Davis, Esq., Dr.,	do		yearly	25
4	Ms. Halford	do		yearly	15
5	James Chandoya,			yearly	6
6	J. N. Strong, Esq., Sub Asst.,	do		do	32
7	S.S. Ryan, Qr. Master Sergeant,	do		do	12.8
8	Major Jenkins,	Guwahati, [Assam]		yearly	50
9	Captain J. Butler,	do		do	25
10	C.J. Simons, Esq.,	do		do	18
11	W.M. Robinson, Esq.,	do		do	50
12	J.M. Martin, Esq.,	do		do	25
13	Geo Hookens,	do		do	12
14	T. Gomes,	do		do	25
15	J. Buchanan,	do		do	12
16	C. Delanoujine,	do		do	12
17	Major J. Fischer,	do	donation		
18	J.M. Campbell, Adjutant,	do		yearly	25
19	K.M. Scott, Esq., Surgeon,	do		do	25
20	Captain Scott,	do		do	48
21	G. Hudson, Esq.,	do		do	16
22	C.R. Strong, Esq., Sub Asst.,	Nowgong, [Assam]		yearly	16
23	B. Rowletts, Esq.,	do		yearly	12
24	C.J. Pingaut, Esq.,	Apothecary	do	do	12
25	Total Subscriptions for the year				1243.8

Source: NMML, MC, ABFMSR, 1817-1900, Acc. No. 3243, Reel No. FM-56, Assam, correspondence from Miles Bronson, Nowgong, Assam, to Rev. S. Peck, Mission Room, Boston, dated the 15th December 1841.

Appendix V

Chronology: The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) in Northeast India

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1836	Reverend and Mrs. Nathan Brown and Mr. and Mrs. O.T. Cutter were the first ABFMS missionaries to reach Assam via Burma. Armed with a printing press, they set up the first mission station at a place called Sadiya.
1837	Rev. Miles Bronson arrives at Sadiya with his wife. He first works among the Singphos from the Jaipur mission base for two years. Accompanying him was Rev. Jacob Thomas who died tragically while they were approaching the station.
1839	The ABFMS station shifted to Jaipur, Assam, following an insurrection by the Khamptis, a community from the Burma border.
1840	Bronson begins mission work among the Namsang Nagas.
1841	Bronson retreated back to the Assam plains owing to his continuing illness and the death of his sister Rhoda. Established the Nowgong Orphan Institution.
1869	Rev. Edward W. Clark arrives at Sibsagar with his wife Mary Mead Clark.
1876	Clark successfully established a mission station among the Ao Nagas at Molung in the Naga Hills.
1879	Rev. C.D. King arrives at Samaguting, Assam, with the intention of starting work among the Angami Nagas.
1880	King moved to Kohima and started a mission school.
1883	Rev. Sidney W. Rivenburg along with his wife Hattie Rivenburg came and relieved the Clarks at Molung who went on a furlough.
1885	Rev. William E. Witter started work among the Lhota Nagas opening schools and preparing some books in the Lhota dialect. Just as he was getting acquainted with the Nagas, deteriorating health forced him to return to America.
1886	The Jubilee Conference of the American Mission held at Nowgong, Assam.

1891-94	The Rivenburgs went on furlough. The Triennial Missionary Conference began to be held annually all over Assam.
1894	F.P. Haggard moved to Impur, Naga Hills. He was joined the following year by S.A. Perrine and W. Dring. Rev. William Pettigrew started mission work among the Tangkhul Nagas of Manipur after a much awaited clearance from the British Political Agent.
1895	A Naga by the name Saliezhu was appointed a missionary by Rivenburg.
1906-07	H.B. Dickson came to Kohima and relieved the Rivenburgs who went on furlough again.
1908	Dickson resigned from the mission, a result of a fall-out with the Rivenburgs over the chief issue of dealing with the natives. It was asserted that Dickson was getting too 'personally' involved with the natives.
1911	Rev. Pettigrew was appointed Superintendent of the Census in Manipur as he was the only man who had mastered the language of the 'hill tribes'.
1912 stay	J.E. Tanquist arrives at Kohima to assist the Rivenburgs. He went on to there till 1947.
1917	Rev. Pettigrew moved to Kohima and in return for his support of the war effort was commissioned as an officer in the British army. He was instrumental in recruiting the natives to the Labour Corps for services in France during the First World War.
1923	The Rivenburgs retired from mission work.
1939	Rev. F.W. Harding came out in defence of the mission against critiques for its role in the 'denationalization' of the indigenous people of Assam.

Appendix VI

Selected Concise Biographies of Colonial Officials

Here I compiled as briefly and as best as possible the lives and career of prominent British officials during the time period covered by my study. The biographical sketches will proceed in a chronological manner of their entry and postings to the Northeast frontier region. The information is gleaned from stray and varied sources, both primary and secondary.

Francis Jenkins, (b. 1793 - d. 1866)

Early Life: born at Cornwall, England to Reverend Jenkins.

Career: Arrived at India and joined the colonial army in 1810. Started his military career as Ensign in 1812, and rose through the ranks becoming Lieutenant in 1816, Captain in 1830, Major in 1849, Lieutenant Colonel in 1851, and retired in 1861; was appointed, in April 1834, as Agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier and Commissioner of Assam.

Lt. John Gregory,

Career: deputed by the Government of India to be in charge as the first Deputy Commissioner (henceforth DC) of the Naga Hills district with its headquarters at Kohima, 1866.

Capt. John Butler, (d. 1876)

Career: conducted the surveys and triangulation of the Naga Hills in the winter season of 1872-73 and 1875-76 along with Lt. R.G. Woodthorpe and Major H.H. Godwin-Austen and initiated the tradition of descriptive ethnography of the Nagas; died tragically in the hills as a result of a spear wound.

Lt. R.G. Woodthorpe,

Career: started survey works in 1871-72 as Assistant Superintendent in the Lushai Hills, and consequently in the Garo and Naga Hills; published works of 'ethnological interest' in European anthropological Journals (the JAI); tried to divide the Nagas into 'kilted' and 'non-kilted' Nagas.

Major H.H. Godwin-Austen, (b. 1834 - d. 1923)

Early Life: born in Teignmouth.

Education: Royal Military School, Sandhurst.

Career: joined the colonial army in 1851 reaching the rank of Lt. Col.; conducted the surveys and triangulation of the Naga Hills in the winter season of 1872-73 and 1875-76; retired from the Trigonometrical Survey of India in 1877; published ethnographical works in the JAI.

Awards and Honours: in his honour the Karakoram peak or K2 in the Himalayas was originally named Mount Godwin-Austen.

C.A. Elliot, (b. 1835 - d. 1911)

Education: Educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge.

Career: appointed to the Bengal Civil Service in 1856, Secretary to the Famine Commission in 1878, Census Commissioner in 1880, Chief Commissioner of Assam (1881-85) and Member of the Governor General's Council (1887) and Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1890-1895). In his famous memorandum of 1881 as Chief Commissioner of Assam, he calls for Political Officers of remote districts to adopt an interest in the ethnography of their subjects for efficient administration. Instrumental in directing the government's attention to undertake the project of an official or salvage ethnography. Under his reign, Deputy Commissioners were appointed who were known as Political Officers since 1872.

T.C. Hodson,

Career: work as Political Agent and Superintendent in Bengal, Khasi Hills and Manipur; discharged from the ICS in 1901; was Registrar of East London College, 1911-1926, and became a Reader in Ethnology at the University of Cambridge in 1926 and later in 1932 occupied the William Wyse Chair of Social Anthropology.

J.H. Hutton, (b. 1885- d. 1968)

Early Life: Born at Yorkshire, England.

Education: At Essex and at Worcester College, University of Oxford where he took a third class degree in Modern History in 1907.

Career: Joined the Indian Civil Service in 1909 and started his administrative career in Assam as Political Officer and later as DC of the Naga Hills District from 1917-35; appointed the Honorary Director of Ethnography for Assam, 1920; published

two monographs on the Angami and Sema Nagas, which earned him a D. Sc from the University of Oxford in 1921; appointed Census Commissioner for India, 1929; resigned from the Indian Civil Service in 1936; appointed to the William Wyse Chair of social anthropology at Cambridge University in 1937.

Awards and Honours: awarded the Rivers Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (henceforth RAI) in 1929 and elected president of the Institute in 1944 and 1945; gave the Frazer memorial lecture in 1938 and in 1932 won the silver medal of the Royal Society of Arts. He retired from the professorship in 1950.

J.P. Mills, (b. 1890- d. 1960)

Education: at Winchester and Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

Career: entered the Indian Civil Service in 1913; appointed DC of the Naga Hills, 1935-37; the Honorary Director of Ethnography for Assam, 1930; Adviser to the Governor of Assam in 1943; became a reader in Language and Culture with special reference to south-east Asia at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1948-1955; held the office of President at the Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1851-1953.

Awards and Honours: awarded the Rivers Memorial Medal by the RAI in 1942 for his fieldwork among the Nagas of Assam.

C.R. Pawsey, (b. 1894 - d. 1972)

Career: the last British DC of Naga Hills, 1945-47.

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Maps

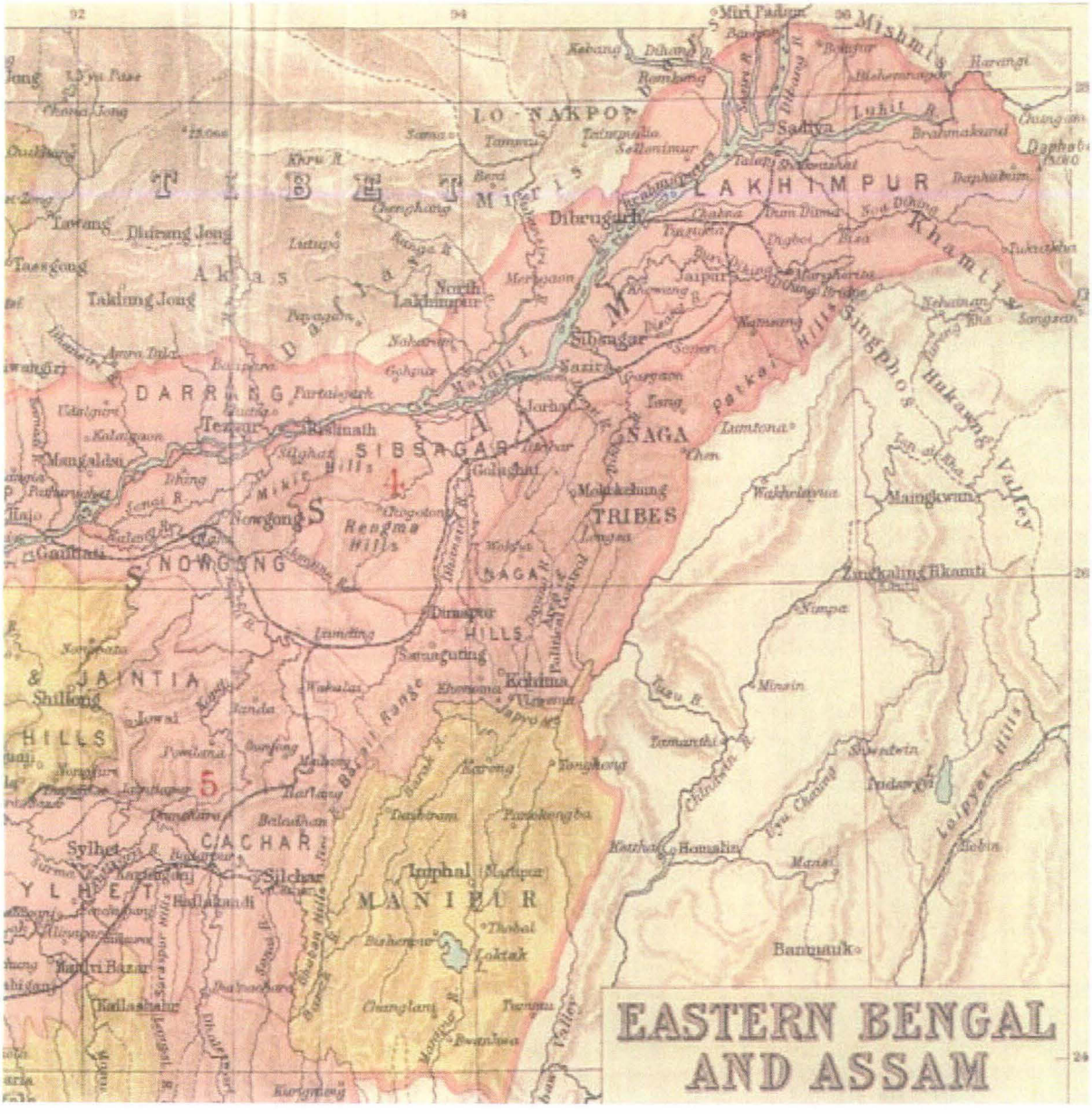

Figure 1 "Eastern Bengal and Assam," Imprint: *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, v. 26, Atlas 1909 edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907-1909, p. 30.

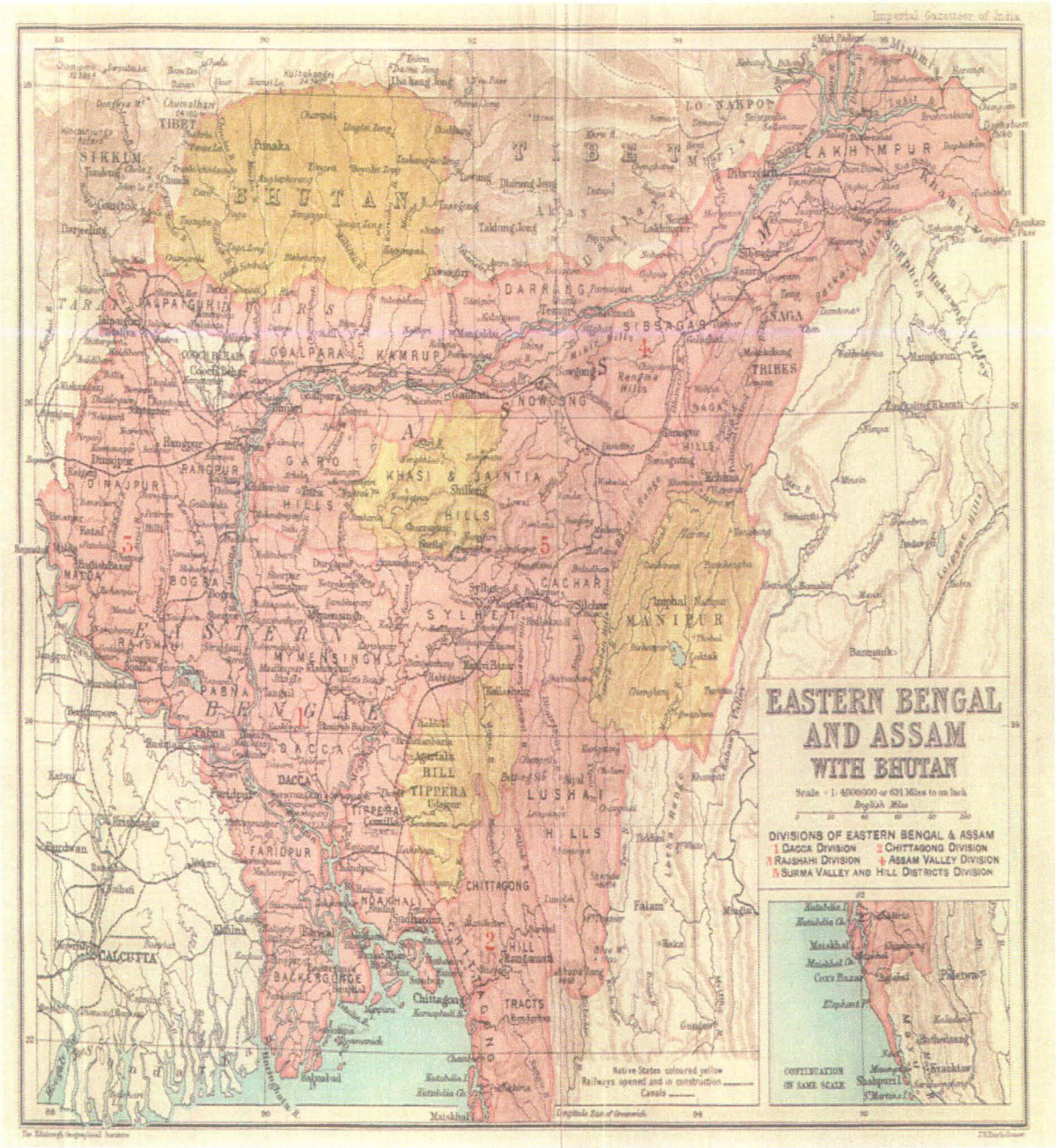

Figure 2 "Eastern Bengal and Assam with Bhutan," Imprint: *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, v. 26, Atlas 1909 edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907-1909, p. 30.

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