

**BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE NAGAS 1839-1880**

**BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE NAGAS 1839-1880**

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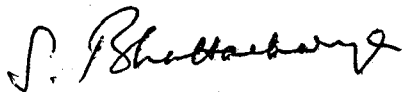
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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "British Policy Towards the Nagas, 1839-1880", submitted by Gina Shangkham is in fulfilment of eight credits out of the twenty four credits for the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
Supervisor

  
Chairman

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## PREFACE

The period of my study covers the years from 1839 to 1880, i.e., from the time of sending military expeditions to the Naga uprising (1879-1880).

In Chapter I, an attempt has been made to give a picture of the pre-colonial political, social and religious structure of the Nagas. This provides the historical background to the adoption of the various British policies.

The second chapter deals mainly with the three broad phases of British policy - the military expeditions, the non-interference policy and the gradual annexationist policy.

In the third chapter, the various conciliatory policies such as the sending of the Christian missionaries to transform the tribal way of life through the opening of schools, etc. are discussed. The direct role of the government itself in this respect is also examined.

The fourth chapter deals with the various administrative measures adopted since the formation of the Naga Hills District in 1866.

The concluding chapter tries to bring out the extent to which colonial policies sowed the seed of the present Naga problem.

In writing this dissertation, I am indebted to many people for their generous cooperation without which I would have faced many more of difficulties in the completion in my task.

I am highly indebted to the faculty of the Centre for Historical Studies, particularly to Dr K.N. Panikkar, who guided me in the initial stage, Prof S. Bhattacharya, who also gave a lot of guidance and Prof S. Gopal, under whose supervision I have completed my work. Last but not the least to my ex-teacher Sir Lal Dena, who also constantly encouraged me and provided many suggestions at different stages of this study. I extend my sincere thanks to the Library Staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University, National Archives of India, Indian Council of World Affairs, Nehru Memorial Library, Central Secretariat, Archeological Survey of India, National Museum and Central Library, Imphal, Manipur for their generous help and cooperation in the collection of my source materials.

*Gina Shangkham*  
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GINA SHANGKHAM

**CHAPTER - I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

One of the problems which the Government of India is confronting today is the Naga problem and to understand it, one has to study the historical background, the development of the British policies and resultant reactions of the Nagas. But it is not surprising that most of the works so far published deal mostly with the current Naga movement and therefore fail to give a deep insight into the working of British policies towards the Nagas. Alexander Mackenzie's book, "History of the Relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of North East Frontier of Bengal" (Calcutta, 1884), is an authoritative work regarding British policies: However, as a British officer, he tends to be biased in his writing. The object of this dissertation is to point out the main factors underlying British policies from the time they came into contact with the Nagas.



## I - Strategical Importance

"Few Nations bordering upon the British dominion in India are less generally known than those inhabiting the extreme N.E.F. of Bengal, and yet, in a commercial, a statistical or a political point of view, no country of Assam is situated in almost immediate contact with the empires of China and Ava, being separated from each other by a narrow belt of mountainous country, possessed by barbarious tribes of independent savages, and capable of being crossed over in the present state of communication in 10 or 12 days."<sup>1</sup> It is from these mountain ranges that originate the great rivers of Nankin, Cambodia, Ava and Assam and appear, designed by nature as the great highways of commerce between the nations of ultra-Gangetic Asia.<sup>2</sup> It was through this part of India that incursions in the past had been made by the Burmese. Its immediate neighbours - Naga Hills, Sikkim, Bhutan, N.E.F.A., Manipur and Mizo hills, etc. act as protecting walls against the foreign attacks.

Politically speaking, no part of a country is less important than others. Yet the most important

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1. John M' Cosh, Topography of Assam, 1975 (1st Pub., 1837), p.132.

2. Ibid.

strategical regions are the frontiers or the border areas of a country through which the outside encroachments can be and had been attempted and which are very much sensitive too. Since nature has been kind to the sub-continent - India, by bestowing upon her a good geographical boundary or protection especially in the south and the north by the waters of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea and the Great Himalaya respectively, her difficult problem is to guard the north-west and north-eastern region with all her possessions - wealth, would have attracted the attention of the Government of India (in the free Democratic Republic), but it was only after the debacle during the Indo-China War of 1962 that Assam began to have claimed or received due attention in military as well as in economic matters. It is true that the Indian leaders showed great perception in political matters to this border state, yet, by and large it took a war to realise how remote, vulnerable and helpless, Assam could be if taken for granted or neglected. However, the British understood the importance of this region from the time of its occupation, due to the rich economic benefits that they knew they could derive. Meanwhile one has to take

into account the importance of Burma for the British commercial interests that they showed in the first half of the 18th century. In fact, the Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) was fought out due to the fear of the growing Anglo-French rivalry in commercial interests in the east.<sup>3</sup> Later on Burma fell a prey to the British colonists in the process of exploiting the country. The British also were conscious of the necessity of developing closer political relation with the neighbouring border kingdoms - Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, which became protected allies in that process.<sup>4</sup>

Geographically, the Naga hills lie on the north-eastern frontiers of the British India and as such, it needed special skill or tactics to secure peace as a frontier area. As the British took care to prevent Russian influence from entering India through the north west frontier, they needed to check the power of Burma on the north east. Secondly, internally they had to check their raids committed on their subjects in Assam. Third, in order to protect their tea-gardens on the Upper Assam, or in order to protect the low lands

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3. S.K. Bakshi, British Diplomacy and Administration in India, 1807-13, Delhi, 1971, p. 132.

4. Bishwaswar Prasad, Foundation of India's Foreign Policy, 1860-82, Delhi, 1962, p. 79.

from the Naga raids, the British government had to follow different types of policies suited to the circumstances and positions.

To begin with, it is necessary to know who these Nagas are, and how and why the term 'Naga' is applied to them.

It is still a mystery and no literature is available to reveal the origin of the derivation of this term 'Naga'. Yet, there are theories as to its source, meaning and scope.

According to some philologists the word 'Naga' originated from a Sanskrit word 'Nagam' meaning 'snake-race'. But this cannot be accepted. The Nagas, instead of worshipping the 'Snake-God', kill and eat snakes. Moreover, snake-worshippers were not even called by this term.

The second theory evolved by J.H. Hutton is that it is merely a European lengthening of the Assamese 'Noga' (pronounced as 'Naga') meaning 'naked' - applied to all the hill tribes. However, the Nagas were not the only people who were naked.

The term 'Naga' according to the third theory is that it is derived from the word 'Nagna' meaning

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5. J.H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1969, p. 5.

'mountaineer', 'mountainous' or 'inaccessible place'. Though it is true that the Nagas live in such places, why should it necessarily be applied to them and not to the other tribes who also live in the similar condition?

Mr Peal formulated another theory according to which the word 'Naga' is derived from the root word 'Nag' or 'Nok' meaning 'people'.<sup>6</sup> This has more weight because while the non-Nagas were known by their own names, the Nagas were known by the simple word 'people' by others.<sup>7</sup> E.A. Gait also thought that this term derived from the word 'Nok' means 'dao' in Ao language and 'ka' means 'to have'. Hence, the word 'Naga' may be derived from 'Nok-ka' to indicate a man with a dao.<sup>8</sup> The Cacharis called the hill people 'Nahagra' meaning 'warrior' or 'fighter'. The Assamese pronounced it as 'Nugha' or 'Noga'. Hence, it was anglicized as 'Naga' to denote the characteristic of the warrior.<sup>9</sup> Elwin too thought that the word was

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6. Ibid.

7. M. Horam, Naga Polity, Delhi, 1975, p.24.

8. P.T. Philip, The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland, Gauhati, 1976, p. 5.

9. Ibid.

derived from 'Nok' or 'people' according to some Tibeto-Burman language.

However, there are a good number of tribes in the world having differences in social, political and religious structures but this particular term is applied only to this race. It cannot be due to their religious or social set up. Therefore the only acceptable theory is that the term Nagas was applied by others to mean people of a particular race.

Ethnically, the Nagas are an Indo-Mongoloid folk, divided over a number of major tribes, speaking unintelligible languages and dialects.<sup>10</sup> Linguistically, they belong to the Tibeto-Burman group.<sup>11</sup>

The Nagas are not confined to the State of Nagaland alone but are found in different states and Union Territories of India - Manipur, Assam, North East Frontier Agency and a foreign country - Burma. There are more than forty Naga tribes; such as, Ao, Lotha, Sema, Rengma, Angami, Chakkesang, Zema, Liangnai, Rongmai, Konyak, Khiemiam, Yimchunger, Sangtam, Phom, Chang, Pochurry (in Nagaland), Mao, Poumai, Tangkhul, Anal, Maring, Lankang, Mbn, Thangal, Marram (in Manipur),

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10. M. Aleshiba, A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland, Jorhat (Assam), 1970, p. 1.

11. G.A. Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India: Tibeto-Burman Family, Vol. III, Part II, Delhi, 1967 (Re-printed), p. 193.

Para, Sira, Nok, Solo, Panyo, Kayo, Macham, Aran, Lungkhai, Haimi, Jaro, Pingu, Chinip, Lainou, Moyon, Monshang (in Burma), Nokte and others (in Arunachal).<sup>12</sup>

They inhabit the remote mountainous region which extended from the Patkai range in the north to the Thangdut in the south and from the Assam Frontier in the west to the Chindwin river in the east.<sup>13</sup> The lasting impact of the British rule is the division of these people politically. In other words, the disunified form of Government prevailing in the pre-colonial period remained unaltered. The concept of 'Naga Nation' was absent in those days, and in fact, they were constantly engaged in warfare, headhunting and inter-tribal and blood feuds. Perhaps these political differences among themselves facilitated alien domination. Yet, one cannot deny the fact that 'oneness' was felt when they were confronted with the British for instance in the war of 1879-80. Had the British tried to unite these people under one political organization, the 'Naga Problem' of today, would never have arisen. Anyway, one cannot blame the British entirely for their

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12. Nagaland Prayer Fellowship, Kohima, Nagaland, dated 10th July 1979.

13. Ibid. See map on page 168.

lack of initiation because they had vested interests in commercial gain. In fact, in order to secure peace in their territories, the policy of 'divide and suppress' was followed in practice. Therefore, they did not intend to organise a political oneness among these people but left the tribes to themselves till they gained political consciousness as a result of the alien control.

The Nagaland State of today contains only a few of the Naga tribes mentioned earlier and is the significant development of the process of changes that originated since 1866 with the formation of the new district for the first time under the name of the 'Naga Hills District'. This included only a few Naga inhabited areas and the Kuki villages.

The present state lies between 25° and 27°4' north and 93°20' and 95°15' east and has an area of 6,366 sq. miles,<sup>14</sup> or 16,527 sq. km. with a population of 5,16,449 (according to 1971 census) and consists of seven dialects. It is bounded on the south by Manipur, east by Burma, west by Assam and north by Arunachal Pradesh.\*

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14. Nagaland is born, Government of Nagaland, Kohima, Calcutta, 1963, p. 121.

\* See map on page 167.



The Naga hills consist of a few plain areas and most of hilly tracts and mountains rising from 900 to 1200 metres above sea level and intersected by numerous streams and rivers which flow from the mountain on all sides. The most outstanding hills between the Kaliani Sargati and Dhaneswari rivers between 2000 to 3000 ft. in height, covered with dense forest, the Barrail range of mountains extending from Cachar in a north-east early direction through the district joining the Patkai range.<sup>15</sup> The highest mountain is Sermati in Tuensang District which rises to 3,840 metres above the sea level and the highest peak is Japfu about 3014 metres or 9,890 ft. in height and is in Kohima District.<sup>16</sup>

There are no rivers navigable by boat throughout the year. The Doyang and the Dhaneswari (Dhansiri) and the Jamuna are navigable only during the rainy season. The Doyang river which forms the eastern boundary flows from south to north through the Lotha and Angami inhabited areas and joins the Dhanseri river. This is the only important river for its navigability for a

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15. W.W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol. II, Delhi, 1975 (Reprinted), p. 174.

16. H. Bareh, The Gazetteer of India, Nagaland, Kohima District, Calcutta, 1970, p. 1.

few miles. Its tributaries on the west bank are Rengmapani or Zulera, the Zalu and the Siju. The Dhaneswari river from the Barail hills to its confluence with the Doyang runs in a north easterly direction at first and then a northerly direction through the centre of the heavy forest and the Nambar, Deopani and the Diphupani rivers as its tributaries.<sup>17</sup>

No Naga village lies near the river. However, the river water is utilized for irrigation. The Naga hills possesses some important minerals like coal, chalk, chromium, nickel and cobalt bearing magnetic high grade limestone in the Rengma hills (in the first two cases) and limestone along the banks of the Nambar river.<sup>18</sup> These minerals are not yet exploited still today. There are also some hot springs of which the Nambar is the most important.

The extensive forests (92,800 sq. miles) were not economically utilized before 1870. However, in that year, the Forest Department took a step forward and decided to exploit the resources of the Nambar forest.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the forest products - bees, wax, several dyes,

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17. Ibid., p. 175.

18. Ibid., p. 176.

19. Ibid.

a variety of cinnamon, several kinds of fibre, creepers, etc. were utilized by the Mikir and Naga tribes.<sup>20</sup>

In the densely forested hills are found a number of different types of animals from the biggest to the smallest and birds of all types. The rivers are also rich in fish. However, no trade on wild skin animals was carried out in the 19th century. Indigenous tea also grows all along the low northern slopes at the foot of the Barail.<sup>21</sup>

Political, Social and Religious organizations of the Nagas in pre-colonial period

In an understanding of the political, social and religious organizations of the Nagas in the pre-colonial period, the knowledge of their political relationship with their neighbours is essential. However, due to the absence of literature on the side of the Nagas, it is not possible to conclude plainly that they were dependent or independent politically on the state level. Again, the term 'Naga' had been very loosely used for the tribes, some of which do not in reality belong to it or for that matter in those earlier days. As such

20. Ibid.

21. Asoso Yonuo, The Rising Nagas, Delhi, 1974, p. 5.

the chronicles of the Ahoms who ruled Assam since the early 13th century do not give us a clear cut idea as to which particular tribes of the Nagas who were involved in the conflicts or had good relations with the Ahoms.<sup>22</sup> They were referred to simply as 'Nagas' - the village or area of their habitation being attached to their names.<sup>23</sup> So, the most reliable sources would be the reports of the British officials, who came into direct contact with these tribes as they found them at that time. In fact, much would be based upon such reports, articles or contemporary books.

From the available sources, it is clear that only the tribes bordering on the plains had direct relation with the outsiders - the Ahoms. But such relationship appears to have been a combination of enmity and friendship "with the raids as well as peaceful alliances" from time to time.<sup>24</sup> The Nagas having no political organization naturally fell an easy victim to the more powerful neighbour to whom they paid tributes in the form of mithuns and other commodities.<sup>25</sup> In return

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22. M. Alenchiba, Op. cit., p. 29.

23. Ibid.

24. Asoso Yunuo, Op. cit., p. 56.

25. Ibid.

they were granted revenue-free lands and fishing waters on the understanding that they would not commit any predatory raids in the plains.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the Ahoms maintained such relationship in order to secure peace on the frontiers, but it did not necessarily mean that the Nagas were under the Ahoms. It was rather a diplomatic relationship. E.A. Gait asserted that the Ahoms never absorbed them and it was not the policy of the British either to absorb them into their territory.<sup>27</sup>

The Ahom policy towards the hill tribes as summarised by N.K. Basu<sup>28</sup> was to "conciliate these tribes by promising to furnish them their necessaries as far as possible. If they indulge in wanton pillages, pursue and capture the miscreants, but never over-step the limits." Such policy was successful as was also testified by the Mogul Chronicler Shihabuddin Talish, who accompanied Mir Jumla in his expedition in 1662-63. A similar policy was also followed by the British government as we shall see in the subsequent chapters.

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26. Ibid.

27. E.A. Gait, History of Assam, Calcutta, 1967, p. 366.

28. Basu, N.K., Assam in the Ahom Age 1228-1828 (Being Political, Economical and Socio-Cultural Studies), Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 1970, p. 145.

The success of such policy also acknowledged that the Ahoms being realistic and practical, did not allow their friendly approach and conciliatory measures to pass off as signs of weakness, rather did undertake the coercive measures whenever necessary.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the non-existence of the caste prejudice among the Ahoms also contributed to the success of the policy. The tribes on the other hand, would not desire to interfere in the affairs of the Ahoms who left them completely free to their own way of life. The report of Captain Brodie too proves that the "Assam Government found it more convenient to conciliate the Nagas by presents than to overawe them by coercion."<sup>30</sup>

Regarding the Nagas bordering Cachar, Manipur and Burma, it is difficult to assert that they were ruled by these neighbouring countries. Robinson<sup>31</sup> believed that the Angami Nagas did not have any immediate communication with the Kacharis except through some inter-

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29. Ibid., p. 146.

30. A letter from Captain Brodie, the Principal Assistant to Governor-General's Agent, to Captain Jenkins, Agent to the Governor-General, N.E.F., from selection of papers Hill Tracts between Assam and Burma, Delhi, 1978, p. 287.

31. Robinson, W., A Descriptive Account of Assam, London, 1841, p. 388.

mediaries - the Kacharis and some of the Nagas living in the lowest hills. The Manipur Raja invaded their villages in 1834 but did not annex their country. Then the question arises "What about their political status prior to 1834?". The Nagas inhabiting the north-eastern part of Manipur too, were outside the purview of the latter and it is also asserted by the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.<sup>32</sup> Though the British Officers had different opinions as to Manipuri's authority over the above people, most of them agreed that the latter had no authority over them. The Nagas inhabiting the northern part of Manipur came under the rule of it only in 1891 with the annexation to the British empire and this goes even for the tribes as a whole. In the same way, the Burma-bordered Nagas remained isolated and independent.<sup>33</sup>

Now coming to the political organisation of the Nagas, it is clear that they were not united under a particular form of government. In fact, each village

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32. A letter from S.O.B.Ridsdale C.S. Secy. to the C.C. of Assam, to T.H. Thornton, Esq., D.C.L., Off. Secy. to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Progs., January 1877, No. 89, pp. 556.

33. R. Grant Brown, Burma as I saw it, 1889-1917, London, 1926, p. 18.

not to speak of each tribe, was independent. Though, one cannot deny the fact that some tribes formed a confederacy under a powerful chief for mutual defence, internally they were independent. As such, the political structure ranged from the autocracy in the case of the Konyaks and the Semas, to the purest democracy in the case of the Angamis<sup>34</sup> but all at village level.

To supplement the prevalence of the different forms of government among the Nagas, it is also essential to study the then existing practices. The most important of all the practices was head-hunting. It was this practice which led them to commit outrages among themselves finally leading to continual feuds. Blood once shed must be avenged and this had led to its continuity from generation to generation.

The practice of head-hunting has a three-fold function - political, social and religious. Politically, a man who possessed more heads was considered the most powerful, strongest and bravest of all who then could be elected as the chief or the leader of the clan or the village. Socially, it was difficult for a man to get a wife if he did not bring at least

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34. Encyclopaedia Britanica, USA, Vol.15, 1965, p. 1147.



one head, in other words, he was looked down by the society as a coward. He could not wear the special cowry as a sign of his bravery or maturity. It was a desire for personal excellence in society. Every Naga village was a self-contained unit and a reservoir of a 'soul force' which the Ao Nagas call 'Aren' and which was thought to make crops flourish and increase the children and animals.<sup>35</sup> They believed that 'Aren' was contained in the head and was regarded as a little figure which one could see in another person's eye.<sup>36</sup> Naturally to increase the supply of 'aren' for the welfare of village was to obtain as many heads as possible. By doing so, more 'aren', it was believed, could be added to the village reservoir. In other words, indirectly it was a sort of religious practice to ensure the increase of wealth. It was this intense need for 'aren' that caused the Nagas to take great risks involved in head-hunting. This practice created tension and fear among themselves and very much influenced their way of living. To defend themselves from their enemies, the villages were therefore, perched on

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35. J.P. Mills, "The Head Hunters of Assam" (Illustrated), Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, Vol. XXXII, 1935, p. 418.

36. Ibid.

a hill top, isolated from and hostile from its closest neighbour.<sup>37</sup> It was mainly for defensive purposes that they usually had only two main gates which were opened only twice a day in the morning for the people to go to their fields and in the evening for them to come in. Then another important measure was, the building of "Bachelors' Dormitory" or "Guard House" near the gates, which was kept under watch. According to the circumstances and locations or positions of the site of the villages, different tribes had different methods of defending their villages from outside and sudden attack. Thus the Angamis used masonry walls while hedges of living cane were used by Konyake.<sup>38</sup> The Lothas on the other hand, built outer and inner defence lines - the former being usually a ditch full of panjis.<sup>39</sup> A rough wooden plank was used to cross this ditch during the day and was removed at night or during war. The inner defence consisted of thick bamboos and sticks with panjis interspersed but where the hill slopes were steep,

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37. M. Hbram, Op.cit., p. 61.

38. Ibid., p. 62.

39. Ibid.

it was not necessary. The precaution was taken in such a way that even paths leading upto the village were narrow and covered on both sides by heavy and thorny creepers. In this way, the enemies could enter the village only in a single file.<sup>40</sup>

Now coming to their political organization, it is essential to note that like other tribes in the world, every Naga village was ruled by a chieftain though in the case of the Angamis such post was not worth the name. The post was therefore either hereditary or acquired or the organization was either autocratic or democratic. It is difficult to point out why such differences existed among the same ethnic group, but suffice it to state that circumstances led them to such.

It is important to note that their villages were administered by a chief and a council of elders both dependent upon each other. The chief was and is still known as 'Awunga' by the Tangkhuls, 'Kemovo' by the Angamis, 'Sosangs' by the Aos, 'Ekyungs' by the Lothas, 'Akukau' by the Semas, 'Kedange' or 'Ang' by the Konyaks, etc.<sup>41</sup> The chieftainship in the last two tribes was hereditary while in the case of the former ones, it was not.

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40. Ibid., pp. 62-3.

41. Ibid., p. 82.

In the democratic case, election was necessary based on personal qualities such as good physique, dominating personality, eloquence of speech, bravery on the battle field, etc. in order to command love and respect from the people as he was to be the model for all.<sup>42</sup> However, he was liable to removal from the post if he failed in his duties. In the case of the Angamis such post was held sometimes only for a meeting, or just a head-hunting campaign or a single battle field.<sup>43</sup> In the case of the Rengmas, the post was hereditary in the family of the man who originally founded the village.<sup>44</sup> The most suitable man of the clan could become the chief by force of character. In the case of the Angamis too, J.H. Hutton stated that in some cases chieftainship or Pehumaship was hereditary.<sup>45</sup> At the same time such headship depended on anything more than the influence, wealth and intelligence of the heir to retain the post.<sup>46</sup> In other words, unless the heir apparent possessed the essential qualities, the post was likely to go to anyone

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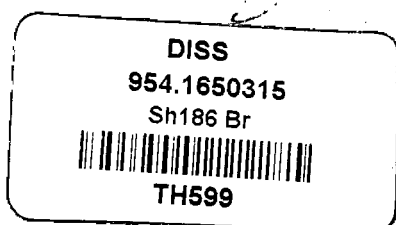
42. Ibid., p. 75.

43. Ibid., p. 80.

44. J.P. Mills, The Lotha Nagas, MacMillan & Co., Ltd., St. Martin's Street, London, 1922, p. 96.

45. J.H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas, Op.cit., p. 142.

46. Ibid.



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who would be found fit. Butler believed that the authority or title of the chief of a village was hereditary. He added that though generally there were two chiefs (Kemovo-clan leaders) their authority was nominal whose orders were obeyed only in accord with the wishes and convenience of the community.<sup>47</sup> Such chieftainship was found convenient and was therefore recognised by the British administrators when the tribes came under their control and appointed them as gaonburas. Whatever the reason, the Angamis were democratic in every sense of the term because all the political proceedings were carried out according to the public opinion. To quote Butler, "Everyman follows the dictates of his own will, a form of the purest democracy, which it is very difficult to conceive of as existing even for a single day, and yet that it does exist here is an undeniable fact."<sup>48</sup>

In each village, among the Aos, the council of elders called Tatars took full charge of the administration of the village - the originally established king's powers being centered round this council.<sup>49</sup>

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47. Butler, Travels and Adventures in Assam, London, 1855, p. 146.

48. Hutton, Op.cit., p. 143.

49. Tajenyuba Ao, Ao Naga Customary Laws, Mokokchung, 1957, p. 10.

An Ao village was a republic having a defined territory and an unwritten constitution.<sup>50</sup> The Council of Tatars was the guardian of the village republic. According to Tajenyuba, originally they had a monarchical form of government, but due to some circumstances and conditions such as the aristocratic policy of a tyranny and high handedness of the ruler, some sort of democratic feelings of liberty, equality and fraternity<sup>51</sup> came into existence. Some villages acknowledged the suzerainty of a powerful village by means of Tepu Acha\* in fear of external invasions, but, nonetheless, they were sovereign in their internal affairs.<sup>52</sup> The society centered round this Council of Tatars which held the legislative, executive and judicial powers. Though democratic in election system, no member of the council could be re-elected as it was against their customary laws. As in the case of the other tribes, each clan in the village had to be represented.<sup>53</sup> How far this democratic was practised in their political structure will be clear from the following process. This Council

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50. Ibid., p. 9.

51. Ibid., p. 10.

\* Literally, it means 'calling father' but in the real sense of the term, it was a calling name of the conquerer by the conquered people.

52. Ibid., p. 38.

53. Ibid., p. 39.

of Tatars as mentioned above possessed three-fold powers, but in matters of utmost importance, public consent was sought, though they were at the same time empowered to take any decision. In order to discuss the various implications, a village conference consisting of the middle aged men from the age of thirty, was held. It is important to note that in political matters an Arichusangr\* never stood as a unit but in executive matters an Arichu was no less important and in fact, the churzen (Capt. of the Arichu) was recognised to be an organic importance.<sup>54</sup> To sum up, the Council of Tatars was responsible for the administration of the village based upon the will and wishes of the people in conformity to the customary laws. In this way, the term democracy can be very well applied which in practice was government of the people, for the people and by the people.

In the case of Kabuis, every village had its hereditary officers, namely the Kul-Lapka, the Lulaka and Lampu.<sup>55</sup> The chief was a man of outstanding character

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\* It's member of a social institution, Arichu or "Bachelor's Dormitory" who was considered as a full-fledged member for a public career.

54. Ibid., p. 41.

55. George Watt, "The Aboriginal Tribes of Manipur", Journal of the Anthropological Institute, Vol.xvi, 1887, pp. 346-70, quoted by Elwin, V., in The Nagas in the 19th Century, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1969, p. 456.

and influence, both in wealth and in courage. However, that was not usually the case - each village being like that of the Aos, a sort of miniature republic based upon the strict observation of the natural laws.<sup>56</sup> The council of elders unlike the Aos, or the other Naga tribes, sat only when a crime was committed, which was settled by it.

Though the Konyaks appeared to the outsiders as different from the other neighbouring Nagas in their political organization, they did not actually form a distinct political unit, because though some villages were comprised within confederations under the leadership of a powerful chief, very often such relations fluctuated.<sup>57</sup> Generally, each village was a political unit in the sense, for instance, the villages of the Thandu group ruled by the powerful chiefs, faced the outside world as united communities, on the other hand, in Thenkoh villages the individual morungs often acted independently without the consultation of other villages.<sup>58</sup> Again, Wakching was ruled by a village council consisting of a chief - a shadowy figure and ten morung officials known as niengba. This village council was empowered

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56. Ibid.

57. Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf, The Konyak Nagas: An Indian Frontier Tribe, USA, 1969, p. 40.

58. Ibid., p. 41.

p 30



to settle disputes, punish the offenders, breakers of taboos concerning the community as a whole<sup>59</sup> as in the case of the other democratic political practices of the Nagas. As has just been mentioned above, though most villages appeared to be autonomous units, there existed networks of alliances and patronage linking several villages. These alliances were made for mutual defence especially for the weaker villages in which case tribute was levied.<sup>60</sup>

However, in Thenkoh group, no social distinction could be detected outwardly though in actual case there existed much differences among the chief, the privileged group or the aristocratic class and the commoners either in dress or ornaments. On the other hand, in Thendu village, there was a great gap between the powerful chief and his privileged kinsmen from the commoners who owed him allegiance and free labour and approached him only in a respectful manner.<sup>61</sup> Again, it must be noted that in a village like Wakching, the members of the chiefly clans enjoyed few tangible privileges while the chief of a large Thendu village 'wielded the arbitrary power of a true autocratic'.<sup>62</sup>

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59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., p. 42.

61. Ibid., p. 52.

62. Ibid.

As in a monarchy, a Konyak chieftainship was and is still hereditary and such post could be preserved only through pure noble blood. In other words, only sons born out of the marriage of a great (Ang) (chief) and a woman of great Ang rank were entitled to succeed their fathers. In the case of the Semas, generally, the eldest son succeeded the father on his death though the interludes of brothers and uncles were taken as temporary and not affecting general succession.<sup>63</sup> The tribute or due in the form of labour was demanded from the subjects which was shared between the chief and his brother or nephew and sometimes to a distant relative, descendants of the original chief's brothers or a subordinate co-founder of the village.<sup>64</sup> The duties of the chief were to direct his people in war, to decide either by himself or in consultation with his elders called Chochomi\* all questions relating to his own and neighbouring villages.<sup>65</sup> The elders had to be consulted in the settlement of disputes within the village, for, such men possessed the better knowledge of the customary laws

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63. Hutton, The Sema Nagas, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1968 (2nd edition), pp. 148-9.

64. Ibid., p. 149.

\* It means in the first place, a man who is pre-eminent, who is being employed by the chief to help in managing public affairs. He acts as an errand for the chief and a deputy, when the chief is elsewhere or otherwise employed.

65. Ibid., p. 150.

who could therefore decide the points. The chief had also to decide what land was to be cultivated in each successive year. It was necessary to cultivate the land where the whole village could get enough plots, for, such would help to guard against the animals and birds, and secondly joint cultivation was the only method which offered safety to the individuals working in the fields against the head-hunting raids.<sup>66</sup> It was also the duty of the chief to safeguard the village in times of danger, to entertain strangers and to take the lead in all the social matters.<sup>67</sup> He did not only have power over village administration politically, but religiously too, he was empowered to give warning to most gennas according to the customary laws. So it was important for the Sema chief to have the knowledge to give such warning of gennas in the proper manner or else he was not to take up the post of the chief, while in the Angami tribe such a job was performed by the Kemovo, who was more or less hereditary priest but not a secular one.<sup>68</sup> It is important to note here that this sort of duty (of warning genna) among the Semas was also performed by a priest called 'awon' with

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66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., p. 151.

the chief assuming the leadership while the 'awon' performed the ceremonial acts. To this 'awon' was given a day's free labour by the people for his service in the first sowing and another during harvest.<sup>69</sup> This awon-ship was not hereditary among the Semas, but it was so among the Angamis.

Social structure:

Generally, the largest corporate social unit among the Nagas was the village especially in the case of the Konyaks,<sup>70</sup> Semas,<sup>71</sup> Aos<sup>72</sup> while the real social unit in the case of the Angamis was the clan which was so distinct from the village that it formed a village in itself, very often fortified within the village.<sup>73</sup> This does not mean that among the above mentioned tribes excluding the Angamis, the clan system as a social unit was absent. In fact, every Naga social structure centered round the clan. Again each village was divided

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69. Ibid.

70. Ch. Von Furer-Hainendorf, Op.cit., p. 40.

71. Hutton, Op.cit., p. 121.

72. J.P. Mills, The Ao Nagas, MacMillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1973, p. 176.

73. J.H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas, MacMillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1969, p. 109.

- morung

into groups called 'kheis' which had a "Bachelors' House" or Guard House, which still exists today though in a limited usage.

In this lived every boy from a certain age till he set up his own house when he got married. It is called 'Champo' by the Lothas, 'Arichu' by the Aos, 'Apuki' by the Semas, 'Longshim' by the Tangkhuls, 'Thehu' by the Angamis, 'Ban' by the Wakching village of the Konyak tribe and so on. It is generally known as morung by most of the writers - the word possibly being an Assamese origin. The morung was used as a guard house as well as for political, social, religious and cultural purposes. In fact, no social function in the village could be arranged or managed without the help of its members who were given all sorts of tasks - heavy, light duties and responsibilities according to the number of years they spent in this institution.<sup>74</sup>

It was a training centre for the boys of the village who learnt all useful lessons necessary for life. It was there that they received invaluable lessons in leadership, their history, culture, folklore, songs and dances of their village. In the absence of the academic schools, this institution served as a training school in the arts

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74. M. Horam, Op.cit., p. 66.

of life and war, and a club for entertainment and fun.<sup>75</sup>  
A similar institution was also established for the unmarried girls but a separate building was not constructed for them. The house of a trustworthy old couple or a widow of the village was used.

The Nagas considered the morung to be a very important and powerful institution. However, with the coming of Christianity its importance was considerably reduced, for, the missionaries regarded this institution as heathenish.

The Naga villages consist of Khels which have a number of exogamous clans. Marriage within the clan is not permitted (but in some tribes like the Konyaks and Semas it is not the case). The girls and the boys are given full freedom in choosing their life long partners, and their marriage is negotiated by their parents. The marriage price is given by the parents of the boy and the girl in such forms as paddy, money and corn, or in some cases paddy field in order to start a new family, depending upon the social status of the families concerned. Among the Lothas and Semas, marriage is based on the price system, i.e. the bride price was demanded from the boy's parents depending on his social status.<sup>76</sup>

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75. Ibid., p. 67.

76. Asoso Yunoo, Op. cit., p. 12.

Though polygamy was not prohibited by custom, it seldom prevailed but it was practised by the Konyak chief, 'Ang'.

Descent and inheritance are generally in the male line since their society is patrilineal. The sons get equal property on the death of the father but the parental house goes to the youngest son who is to look after the parents. It must be remembered that this is not the case in all the Naga tribes. In some tribes like the Tangkhuls, the parental house goes to the eldest son as soon as he marries while a new one is built for the parents and the unmarried children and so on.<sup>77</sup>

#### Religious Set-up

Generally, the religion of the tribes is known as animism though it differs from tribe to tribe in the religious practices or performances. The Nagas, like other tribes, had no fixed place of worship nor did they worship the idols. But the natural forces like, sun, moon, wind, rain, trees, streams, stones and hills were regarded as something supernatural and so they worshipped them. They believed in spirits - bad and

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77. M. Hiram, Op. cit., p. 61.

good. Some tribes like the Angamis, Aos, Konyaks and Semas, believed in one Supreme God. 'Ukepenopfu' was the supreme benevolent God of the Angamis.<sup>78</sup> They believed that he was the creator of the living beings rather than of the universe. The Aos believed that 'Lichaba' or 'Lungtisingba' was the creator of the world<sup>79</sup> and 'Mozing' or 'Mojing) as the god of judgement from whom nothing could be concealed.<sup>80</sup> The Konyaks called the supreme God 'Gawang' which meant 'Earth Sky',<sup>81</sup> and 'Zangban' by the village of Niannu meaning 'Sky Earth'. Though the emphasis was different, both reflected the idea of a universal deity comprising or dominating both the spheres of the world.<sup>82</sup> To them the name 'Gawang' signified not the spiritual essence of the universe but a deity of highly personal character associated with the sky more than with the earth.<sup>83</sup>

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78. J.H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas, Op. cit., p. 180.

79. J.P. Mills, The Ao Nagas, Op. cit., p. 200.

80. P.T. Philips, Op. cit., p. 39.

81. Ch. Von Furer Hainendorf, The Konyak Nagas, Op. cit., p. 99.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.



They invoked in their daily life and considered him as the guardian of the moral order and oaths. The spirits which the Semas revered were of three groups - the 'Alhou' was regarded as a usually beneficent but a somewhat remote creator, yet a Supreme God.<sup>84</sup> The spirits of the sky, the 'Kungumi' who they believed have relations with mortal beings, was the second group.<sup>85</sup> The third group was Tughami, the spirits who were in close touch with man - the spirits of the earth which inhabit the earth - spirits of occultist, often deliberately harmful, beneficent only when propitiated.<sup>86</sup> The Lothas, though believed in spirits and deities, did not seem to believe in the one Supreme God.

The tribes generally regard illness as a punishment for the evil acts, caused by the evil spirits. Therefore, sacrifices were to be made to appease such evil spirits.<sup>87</sup>

The Nagas also worshipped the spirits of their forefathers in the belief that their spirits were always hovering around, desirous of adding more spirits to their

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84. J.H. Hutton, The Sema Nagas, Op. cit., p. 191.

85. Ibid., p. 192.

86. Ibid.

87. P.T. Philips, Op. cit., p. 40.

spirit world. They believed also that the ancestral spirits influenced the wealth of the descendants and so their spirits had to be appeased for prosperity.

J.P. Mills stated that the Naga religion "is a system of ceremonies". It is, in fact. Avoidance of forbidden acts on prohibited days called 'gennas' are very important as the breaking of this, they believed would bring a curse.<sup>88</sup> Such gennas were declared during the operations such as jhuming, sowing and harvesting as well as on occasions like natural calamities or emergencies like storm, earthquake, heavy rain, unnatural death, etc. They were observed also on the other occasions such as fishing, hunting and building houses. The social and religious activities, therefore centered round the observation of these gennas. These gennas were observed sometimes by an individual, the family members and the whole villagers depending upon the circumstances.

The Nagas had some idea about life after death. Some of them had the idea that 'man has seven existences on this earth and that he then was lost or absorbed.'<sup>89</sup>

Usually, the Nagas buried their dead, but the Aos, Changs, Konyaks and Phoms keep their dead on a bamboo

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88. Ibid., p. 41.

89. P.T. Philip, Op. cit., p. 43.

platform outside the house "where the sun and the rain prepare the body to complete natural cycles", according to Furer Haimendorf. After decomposition the heads were separated from the bodies and were buried later with ceremonies. Some of the Naga tribes smoked the dead bodies for about two months after which they were kept in wooden caskets and then put in the family granary.<sup>90</sup>

The funerals were always accompanied by killing cows and pigs or dogs according to the wealth and status of the deceased, to feed friends and relatives. Secondly, it was believed that the departed soul would be accompanied by the spirits of the animals killed, to the land of the dead. Whatever their belief in the natural objects the Nagas were not altogether ignorant about the existence of a Supreme Being, though at the same time one cannot deny the fact that they believed in the existence of good and bad spirits in the universe. Their social and social life was very much associated with their beliefs in nature. In other words, the three organisations were interrelated in the formation of the very existence of their customary laws.

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90. Ibid.

**CHAPTER - II**  
**POLICY IN THE MAKING**

## POLICY IN THE MAKING

Though the British <sup>East India</sup> Company had conquered Bengal in 1757, they did not intend to extend their territory to its north-eastern region till the next century. This is very clear from the fact that inspite of the golden opportunity to annex Assam when an appeal of Gaurinath for help during the civil war was complied with in the person of Captain Welsh, who not only suppressed and drove away the enemies - the Moamarias\* and Barkandazer<sup>+</sup> but also restored law and order in the country. But Welsh was recalled by the Calcutta authority in 1794. The Company rendered help in order to gain knowledge of the unknown country or "From motives of humanity and from a wish to be better informed of the interior state of Assam, its commerce, etc."<sup>1</sup> However, the success of the expedition was not followed up, instead the troops were recalled on the ground that the non-interference policy was the key-note of the day thus leaving the country to its fate

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\* Mattaks (strong) is another name for Moamarias. They, according to Gait, E.A. (A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1963, p. 60), consisted "mainly of persons of low social rank, such as Doms, Morans, Kacharis, Haris and Chutiyas...." "who "denied the supremacy of the Brahmans".

+ They were the mercenaries of the heir apparent to the throne of Darrang from Bengal.

1. Barpujari, H.K., (Genl. ed.), Political History of Assam, 1826-1919, Vol. I, Nabajiban Press, Calcutta, 1977, p. 3.

after getting all the information about its people, wealth, etc. Secondly, the economic importance of the country at that time was not yet realized and as such the need to occupy or annex it did not arise. It was only in 1823 that the tea plant was discovered followed by the plantations and exploitation of the commercial potential. The withdrawal of the troops from Assam can be considered as a failure to act as a paramount power which later on resulted in the drain of finances in the subsequent outbreak of the first Anglo-Burmese war which could have been avoided had they established their control or annexed it. In other words, the policy of non-interference did not prove advantageous to them in subsequent years. It was this policy that kept them from interfering in the Ahom-Burmese conflict (1817-1825) inspite of the inhuman treatment of the Burmese upon the Ahoms in the following statement that "the British Government was not accustomed to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign states,"<sup>2</sup> according to the Governor-General, Sir John Shore. They tried to wash their hands in regard to the affairs of the north-eastern region mainly because their interest was not affected, or in other words, they remained only as an observer waiting for an opportunity.

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2. E.A. Gait, Op. cit., p. 233.

The prevailing policy was sure to be abandoned due to the increasing growth of the different imperialistic powers. First, the increasing interest of Russia in the Near and Middle East was a threat to the British power in India. Second, the defeat of the Napoleonic France was not the defeat of the French altogether in the east. In fact, the enmity between the two powers widened. Realising that the French were active in the east (Burma), the Company had to take effective measures to prevent them from establishing their hold in that area which would be a menace to their power in India. Third, after their withdrawal from Assam, Burma was emboldened and established her control over the whole north-eastern region - Manipur, Assam, Cachar, etc. and was designing to conquer even Bengal which naturally perturbed the authorities in Calcutta. That was clear from the Burmese occupation of the island of Shahpuri which was then under the British possession and it was in November 1823 that they perceived their (Burmese) design to invade the British territory.<sup>3</sup> They felt that "any power which might advance along the Brahmaputra into central and eastern Bengal was a potential threat,"<sup>4</sup> to them. Therefore the determination

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3. Barpujari, H.K., Op. cit., p. 5.

4. Barooah, N.K., David Scott in North-East India, 1802-1831: A Study in British Paternalism, Delhi, 1970, p. 63.

to resist the Burmese necessitated the encouragement of the Assamese and the frontier tribes to oust the foreign yoke. Accordingly, the north eastern Rajas were won over one after another starting with Cachar by means of agreements in the course of which the need for restoring the rightful claimant to the throne of Assam was also felt.<sup>5</sup> In this way, there was no alternative left except to declare war against Ava. With the defeat of the Burmese, the country came under the Company's influence.

With the occupation of Assam and realization of its economic importance by Robert Bruce, who was the first British Officer to set foot in the eastern part of Assam, even when it was under the Burmese control. Scott, the Governor-General's Agent, in the N.E.F., sent some specimens of the tea plant to the Superintendent of the Botanical Garden at Calcutta where they were pronounced to be of the same family as that of China though not the same species.<sup>6</sup> This discovery of tea was taken up earnestly by the Governor-General (W. Bentinck), who at once deputed Captain Jenkins to

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5. Barpujari, H.K., Op. cit., p. 6.

6. Robinson, W., A Descriptive Account of Assam, Delhi, 1975 (Rept.), p. 136.



report upon the resources of the country in 1832.<sup>7</sup> Encouraged by this, the Charter Act of 1833 allowed for the first time the Europeans on a large scale to hold land in India on a long-term lease or with free-hold rights thus paving the way to colonial capitalist exploitation of Assam.<sup>8</sup> This facilitated the export of British capital into India with the increasing prospect of tea-growing in Assam. In addition to tea, the discovery of other minerals like coal, oil, etc. encouraged the British colonization of Assam.

At first, the Bengal Tea Association consisting of a joint enterprise of European and Indian capitalists of Calcutta was formed in 1838.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously the leading London capitalists too wanted to avail themselves of the opportunity ultimately leading to the merger of the two parallel moves into the formation of the Assam Company in 1839.<sup>10</sup> During the next twenty years, as many as 95 Europeans visited Assam as members of the Company. Within a short period, the tea plantation yielded a good amount - the total acreage under

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7. Ibid., p. 137.

8. Amalendu Guha, "Colonisation of Assam, Years of Transitional Crisis, 1825-40", The Economic and Social History Review, vol.5, 1968, p. 138.

9. Ibid., p. 140.

10 Ibid.

tea plants (mature and immature) increased from 2311 acres in 1841 to about 8000 acres by 1859 - the output arising from 29,367 lbs. to more than 1.2 million lbs. by 1859.<sup>11</sup>

Tempted and encouraged by the wealth of Assam, the British Company started improving transport and communication. By 1852 tea accounted for more than half the total export earnings of Sibsagar. Labour was obtained by forcing the Cachari peasants to work in the tea gardens to earn sufficient cash for their land revenue dues and for some other purposes. Despite the low payment, they had to work there due to the growing monetisation of the economy.<sup>12</sup> The farmers were also induced for the similar reason, to grow poppy even at the cost of other useful crops instead of employing them in the tea industries.<sup>13</sup>

The Statistical Account of Assam shows the growth and yield of tea in different districts. For instance, in Nowgong the tea plantation started in 1854 and by 1871, the estimated yield was about 303,000 lbs and

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11. Amalendu Guha, "Colonization of Assam: Second Phase", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.114, No.1-4, 1967, p. 282.

12. Ibid., p. 297.

13. Ibid., p. 298.

the net profits realised after deducting the cost of production and rate to be not less than from £ 4,000 to £ 5,000.<sup>14</sup> In Lakhimpur the yield by 1874 was 1,811,920 lbs, in 112 gardens occupying 89,370 acres of land.<sup>15</sup> In Sibsagar by the end of the above year, the yield was 4,528,329 lbs. in an area of 22,573 acres.<sup>16</sup> In Darrang the yield by 1874 was returned at 3,856 acres the outturn amounting to 1,008,077 lbs.<sup>17</sup> and in Kamrup, the yield was 321,962 lbs. from 24 plantations occupying an area of 2,687 acres by 1874.<sup>18</sup> The cultivation was carried on in almost all the districts by the European capital.

The preceding account is just to point out how Assam was commercially important to the British right from the early 1820s. Besides this, the general foreign policy of the British Government changed with the coming of the Whigs to power in 1830s to maintaining and extending "Great Britain's power not only in Europe but all over the world...to protect and extend British imperial

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14. Hunter, W.W., A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol.I, Delhi, 1975 (Rept.), pp. 202-3.

15. Ibid., p. 390.

16. Ibid., p. 263.

17. Ibid., p. 146.

18. Ibid., p. 60.

and trading interests" and "...to enforce international agreements for the abolition of the slave trade."<sup>19</sup> It was on this basis that their policy in the north-east India was based and carried out. It was in the course of exploiting the wealth of Assam that they came in direct contact with the immediate hill tribes including the Nagas who committed raids every/now and then in their territory. Now the question arises why and how the Naga tribes raid the plains of Assam and Kachar. Was it for economic reason?

The Nagas, as we have seen in the Introduction, were head-hunters who did risk their lives in order to achieve the coveted but customary social status. Second, though they lived in inaccessible mountains, they had commercial intercourse with their immediate neighbours - the plainsmen. However, the barter system (which was the prevailing system) often proved unfavourable to them and this naturally infuriated them. Warlike as they were, they were prone to take revenge in the form of raids upon the plains. It must also be remembered that this act of raiding was connected with the long existing practice of head-hunting. Besides this, they were economically hard pressed and when unable to

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19. Hussay, W.D., British History 1815-1939, Cambridge at the University Press, 1971, p. 47.

procure their provision with willingness from the plainsmen (who were then the British subjects) they took them by force. Third, they also carried on slave trade which was against the Company's policy. In this way, the Naga tribes unconsciously attracted the attention of the British Company. Fourth, the desire to open up direct communications within the north-eastern countries in order to reach the inaccessible mountains was one of the most important and immediate reasons, why and how they came into direct contact with the tribes. It was in the course of executing this policy that these tribes started to encounter the foreigners with resentment. It was therefore inevitable as well as unavoidable for the Company to come into contact with these people as the former wanted to secure peace in their immediate frontiers whose inhabitants constantly raided their subjects. Thus we see that the occupation of the plain areas by the Company led to the interference of the frontier tribes whose country was annexed in course of time.

The British could make some pretext or other to remain passive as long as their interests were not at stake. This is very clear in their dealing with these

these tribes too, who created some tension and insecurity for the British economic and political progress in Assam. They formulated their policies towards these people according to the circumstances. Thus, we see that the policies followed by the British authorities from Fort William varied from tribe to tribe and from time to time. In the case of Nagas, there were three broad phases in the policy - (1) the policy of sending military expeditions (1839-1850), the policy of non-interference (1851-1865) and the policy of subjugation (1866-1880\*).

The main underlying reason behind these policies was to stop the Naga raids upon the plains of Assam, Cachar and Manipur - a threat to the British economic interests. In the beginning they tried to stop the Naga outrages in their territory by sending punitive expeditions into their hills with sufficient force but the result was unexpectedly a failure. On the contrary, it produced jealousy and suspicion culminating in endless wars of retaliation and revenge.<sup>20</sup> Second, when

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\* It is important to note that this policy does not end in this period but as the field of my study covers upto this, I have just specied this year.

20. Barpujari, H.K., "Early British Christian-Missions in the Naga Hills: An Assessment of their activities", Journal of Indian History, 48(2), August 1970, p.427.

the non-interference policy proved a failure, they switched over to the policy of subjugation by creating for the first time the 'Naga Hill District' with Samaguting (an Angami village near the plains) as the headquarters, from where the gradual annexation of the rest of the Naga villages commenced.

I

Military Expeditions (1839-1850)

The direct contact with the Nagas especially the Angamis took place only in 1832 when Captain Jenkins and Pemberton with the Manipuri troops and coolies marched through their country from Imphal (Manipur) with the object of opening communication between Manipur and Assam.<sup>21</sup> It is stated that it was done in the interest of Raja Gambhir Singh of Manipur<sup>22</sup> who wanted to strengthen his hand against Burma by intimate trade with Assam. Similar policy was also followed towards the Khasis by David Scott to open communication between the remote districts of the British eastern frontier and the more southern province of Sylhet and Cachar.<sup>23</sup> However, it was proposed to

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21. Foreign (F.C) Dept., Note on the Angamee Nagas by A.W. Russel, Under Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Progs., 19 January 1855, No.129, para 3, p. 339.

22. The Pioneer, 24 March 1870, Appended in A. Mackenzie's History of the Relation with the Government with the Hill Tribes of North-East Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884, p. 556.

23. Mackenzie, A., ibid., p. 221.

reach the inaccessible places in order to serve their own purposes and indirectly preparing the way to subjugate these hillmen. The expeditionary party, however, met strong opposition from the Nagas (Angamis) and made their mission unsuccessful. On the other hand, the Nagas on the outskirts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur were easily subdued.<sup>24</sup> In the meantime emboldened by the presence of the British, Gambhir Singh (of Manipur) stormed the Angami Naga villages in 1834 with the ambition of expanding his kingdom.<sup>25</sup> But it was not in accordance with the British ideas, because this would endanger his neighbour Purander Singh, who was just reinstated over Upper Assam so a treaty was concluded with him implicitly allowing him to annex the hills but forbade him from descending into the plains of Assam.<sup>26</sup>

In 1835, when the Nagas committed raids, the British left the task of suppressing them to Tularam of North Cachar and Manipur, because the Naga Hills were not only economically not viable but also inaccessible

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24. Asoso Yunuo, The Rising Nagas, Delhi, 1974, p. 73.

25. Ibid.

26. Mackenzie, A., Op. cit., p. 102.



to them. However, Tularam admitted his non-existent authority while the Manipur Raja accepted the task.<sup>27</sup> This entrusting the task to the above mentioned powers shows the ignorance of the authorities at Fort William about the geographical and political situations of the north-eastern region.<sup>28</sup>

The outrages continued till it became imperative on the part of the British to send an expedition under a European Officer to be aided by a Manipuri detachment to capture the offenders. However, owing to the anticipation of a war with Burma, the idea was given up transferring the exposed frontier to the responsibility of Assam authorities<sup>29</sup> since the Superintendent of Cachar was not in a position to shoulder the responsibility. A small Cachar Levy was raised and then North Cachar was transferred from Dacca to the Nowgong District on 5 January 1839, in order to control the Nagas more effectively.<sup>30</sup> It was from this district that the real task of sending the military expeditions was undertaken.

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27. Foreign (F.C.) Dept., Progs. 19 January 1855, No.129, Op.cit., paras 4-5, p. 338.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Asoso Yunuo, Op. cit., p. 76.

So far the British knew every little about the Nagas - their economy, culture, polity and motives of their raids into the plain areas. Some thought it might be due to Cachari attempt to enslave them while others imputed it to the restless spirit of the Angamis, who were fond of predatory incursions, and still others felt that it might be due to the scarcity of provisions in their mountains compelling them to come down for supplies and when not given willingly, carried them off with violence.<sup>31</sup>

To obtain correct information on all the above points, to take up proper action against the offenders, to suppress their raids, to subjugate them and above all to explore the sources of the hills, punitive expeditions were sent into the Naga hills from 1839 onwards. The first of these was commended by E.R. Grange with a detachment of the 1st Sebundis, the Assam Light Infantry, 50 men of Cachari Levy and a party of Shan Police Militia.\* He discovered that the causes of the raids were mainly economical. However, unable to punish the offenders, he was bound to come to terms with the Naga chiefs for the future security.<sup>32</sup>

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31. Foreign (F.C) Dept., Progs. 19 January 1855, No.129, Op. cit., para 7, p. 340.

\* These were mainly raised in order to safeguard the frontiers.

32. Foreign (F.C) Dept., Progs. 19 January 1855, No.129, Op. cit., para 9, p. 341.

Grange was deputed for a second time, to select a site for a post on the hills and to set up a market on the frontier "to promote friendly and commercial intercourse". Again, he failed to achieve the objectives of the expedition. However, Captain Brodie (Principal Assistant at Sibsagar) succeeded in bringing all the refractory numerous hillmen of the eastern Nagas under complete obedience to the British in 1841.<sup>33</sup> In the same year, the next expedition was sent under the command of Captain Bigge who succeeded in making some agreements with most of the leading communities<sup>34</sup> on whose requests a salt depot was opened at Dimapur, a road was to be constructed from the plains to Samaguting, and the Nagas were to pay a nominal tribute. In order to lighten the burden of repressing the Naga raids, a boundary line was demarcated in 1841-42 between the Naga hills and Manipur (- this will be explained in Chapter IV).

In 1844, Brown Wood was sent to collect the first annual tribute but he was not only flatly refused but also was attacked. This was followed by the attack on the

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33. Major F. Jenkins' letter to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Political Department, from Hill Tracts between Assam and Burma, Op.cit., p.290.

34. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 108.

Shan Detachment at Lunkee by the Nagas. Another expedition was again undertaken under Captain Eld and Mr Wood, who burnt some parts of Beremah and Kohima to ashes following the refusal to surrender the offenders.<sup>35</sup>

At this juncture the need to occupy the Angami country was felt, because they still carried on their raids and would not give up the offenders too. Second, the reports showed that Manipur was helping one Naga clan against the other. However, the British Government did not desire to annex their country.<sup>36</sup> Being thus left with the only alternative of sending another mission, Captain Butler was deputed into the hills in 1845.<sup>37</sup> The objectives were as usual to conciliate the tribes, to map the tract of the country and to open communications.<sup>38</sup> From this first expedition, Butler came to the conclusion that the yearly expeditions were useless and finally opted for a permanent post at Samaguting, for, according to him, only such

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35. Tajenyuba, Do, Anglo-Naga Affairs, Mokokchung, 1958, pp. 12-13.

36. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 108.

37. Butler John, Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, London, 1855, pp. 12-13.

38. Ibid., p. 12.

could give effective checking to the inter-tribal feuds, but the Agent (Jenkins) was all for the customary expeditions.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, Captain Butler was once again deputed to demand and inflict punishment upon the offenders who attacked the military post at Hasang Hajoo. (North Cachar).<sup>40</sup> In spite of the strong resistance by the Nagas, he succeeded in making some agreements on promises of paying tributes and to abstain from wars amongst themselves.<sup>41</sup> The other results of his tour were the opening of communication between Mohung Dijua and Samaguting, a stockade and go-down at Dimapur, a market at Samaguting, and the appointment of a Suzawal named Bhogchand at the last mentioned named site with authority over the whole of the Angami tribes.<sup>42</sup> The British thus avoided a direct occupation by themselves and entrusted instead the charge to an Indian.

The encroachment on their country might have contributed to the continuation of the raids and it was

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39. Foreign (F.C) Dept., Progs., 19 January 1855, No. 129, para 32, p. 355.

40. Ibid., para 29, p. 352.

41. Ibid., para 30, p. 353.

42. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 109.

in 1848 that a murder case committed by the Beremah village at Hasang Hajoo was reported. This act indicated that the policy followed hitherto, was defective.<sup>43</sup> It was then followed by another murder on the frontier. Perceiving the futility of the attempts made so far, the government at last went even to the extent of rewarding Rs.100/- for the capture of offenders, but all in vain. In 1849, when the news was reported to the government about the death of Bhogchand due to his interference in the inter-tribal feuds, the Agent reacted violently and declared that in order to recoup their influence, they must systematically burn down their granaries and crops to enforce them to surrender the murderers. Though the government was averse to such extreme actions, the Agent was at the same time fully authorized to act as circumstances would create. Accordingly, Lt. Vincent was deputed to avenge Bhogchand's death in December 1849.<sup>44</sup> Finding it impossible to defeat the Nagas, a stronger force was sent and it captured Mozomah and burnt a part of Konomah.<sup>45</sup> This intensified the wrath of the Nagas (including the

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43. Foreign (F.C.) Dept., Progs., 19 January 1855, No. Op.cit., para 32, p. 355.

44. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 110.

45. Alenchiba Ao, A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland, Jorhat, 1970, p. 58.

Mozomah clans) who then leagued together under the leadership of Khonomah village (the most powerful Angami village) against the British. These people were called "Konomah defiance" by the British because they refused to respect the colonial policy and were reluctant to yield under any terms.<sup>46</sup> However, they were attacked and captured the Konomah fort by the British force on 10 December 1850. Again in 1851, another battle was fought at Kekrimah resulting in the defeat of the Nagas.

Though the British force succeeded in defeating these tribes in battles, they could not put an end to the frontier or inter-tribal feuds. It was only the want of combination among the tribes and also their primitive weapons that brought victory to the British.

The causes of the uprisings were "the inability of the Government officials to dispense justice which alienated the feelings of the Nagas towards the British Government, the irregular visits which thereby hampered any purpose of building up stable contacts with the Nagas, the desire of the tribes to carry out the plunders and revenge"<sup>47</sup> the failure to solve the economic

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46. Tajenyuba Ao, Op.cit., p. 37.

47. Barih, H., Nagaland District Gazetteer, Kohima, Calcutta, 1970, p. 30.

problems of the tribes which was one of the main causes of raids or the want of understanding their problems and above all the failure to adopt a proper policy while dealing with these tribes. However, the Nagas never seemed to understand the effort of preventing the feuds among themselves. They therefore differed in their outlook towards the policy of the British.

From what has been explained above, we find that the yearly expeditions into the Naga hills to prevent or stop their raids met with repeated failures. These expeditions instead aroused their suspicion and irritated them all the more in their social and political life while the sending of the Christian missionaries into the border areas, i.e. into the eastern Naga country, created anti-British feelings. The underlying reason for their failure was their lack of genuine interests in the Nagas but only the device to protect the lowlands and the economically strategical areas disturbed by the Nagas.

## II

### Non-interference Policy (1851-1865)

Despite the defeat of the Nagas, the British failed to establish peaceful relations with them. In fact,



they were in a dilemma as to whether they should have them completely free or subdue them. The Agent was all for their withdrawal because according to him this would safeguard their military reputation though he feared at the same time that such sudden withdrawal might lead to the destruction of the friendly Nagas (from one of the Mozomah clans) unless the Manipuris were dissuaded from aiding the rest of the hostile Nagas.<sup>48</sup> Second, he viewed that no defensive posts could possibly prevent the Nagas from committing raids for, to them, every mountain "was a highway and no forest, however dense impossible."<sup>49</sup> Lastly, he stated that though the Nagas were anxious for traffic gain, they had shown their interests in the beneficial trade which, according to him, would keep them from committing raids, so as an experiment he suggested retaining the post at Mozomah for one year.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Captain Butler, the Principal Assistant at Nowgong, was all for the immediate and complete abandonment of the hills on the ground that the interference in the inter-tribal feuds had proved disastrous and a complete failure

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48. Foreign (F.C) Dept., Progs., 19 January 1855, No.129, Op.cit., para 46, p. 362.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

and that since the friendly Nagas were restored to their village after defeating their enemies, the policy of complete abandonment could solve the situation.<sup>51</sup> This was contrary to Lt. Vincent's (Junior Assistant) opinion. He wanted to retain the Naga hills. It was obvious to the British officers that they had failed to achieve their objective by sending the expeditions which proved all failures and brought a great loss to their treasury and men. Finally, after full considerations of several proposals, the course recommended by Captain Butler was adopted by the President-in-Council. The troops were finally ordered to withdraw to Dimapur, leaving the friendly Mozomah clans to defend itself since it refused to settle down in the British territory in the plains.<sup>52</sup>

The then Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie approved such withdrawal from the hills and preferred to confine them to their own frontiers. He minuted on 20 February 1851:

I concur in the conclusion to which the Hon'ble President-in-Council has come respecting the relations to be maintained with the Angami Nagas. I consider that His Honour has judged wisely in

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51. Ibid., para 47, pp. 363-4.

52. Ibid., para 48, p. 364.

directing the withdrawal of the force which has been sent and of the post which has been established in advance in that country.<sup>53</sup>

He was convinced that the British Government could not profit economically as the hills were unproductive. Since their main object was only to terminate the incursions committed by the tribes, he was of the opinion that this could be achieved by confining themselves to the establishment of effective defence on the line of frontiers. He went on,

As it is impolitic to contemplate the permanent possession of these hills, so it seems to me impolitic to sanction temporary occupation of them.<sup>54</sup>

One of the reasons leading to the adoption of the non-interference policy was to show that they had "no wish for territorial aggrandisement and no design on the independence of the Naga tribes".<sup>55</sup> He was against the meddling in their inter-tribal feuds but felt that trade should be encouraged as long as they were peaceful and rigidly exclude them from all communication either to sell or buy any article if they became turbulent or troublesome.<sup>56</sup> According to him, such policy would make them understand that they could be dealt easily.

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53. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 113.

54. Ibid., p. 114.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., p. 115.

With regard to Manipur in connection with the Nagas, the Governor-General considered it

expedient to remind the Raja of Manipur that the existence of his state depends on a word from the Government of India, that it will not suffer his subjects, either openly or secretly, to aid and abet the design of the enemies with the government and that it does not at once control its subjects and prevent the recurrence to any unfriendly act, the word on which the existence of his state cannot be spoken and its existence will be put to an end.<sup>57</sup>

From this minute, it will be seen that the Naga hills were regarded as outside British territory. This is clear from the statement that they (British) did not want to impress the Nagas that they were after territorial expansion. Second, had the Naga hills been economically productive, the question of retaining it or abandoning it, would never have arisen inspite of the heavy expenditure incurred on the expeditions.

The British had also come to believe generally that the Nagas understood the value of trade and money, therefore they were to be encouraged to pursue it. They realised that it was far better than burning their villages and slaughtering them in battle. Moreover, they thought that the commercial interests would keep them from committing raids. But the exhaustion of the

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57. Ibid.

British forces and treasury in the long Afghan wars - causing greater danger on the north-west, and the anticipation of war with Burma were also some of the important factors that compelled them to adopt the non-interference policy from 1851 onwards. When they had no alternative, they decided to remain on the defensive and bring them to reason by friendly intercourse and remove hostilities. Henceforth the role of the Government was that of conciliation through non-interference in their affairs, at the same time expeditions were to be sent if found necessary. This indicated that they were bent on to suppress or prevent their raids and subjugate them by slow but by any means.

So, according to the order of the Government, the troops were withdrawn, Dimapur abandoned, and Barpathar became most advanced guard. The Officer-incharge of Cachar was strictly advised to look upon the Angamis "as persons living beyond the jurisdiction of the British government."<sup>58</sup> In this way, the Nagas were left to themselves to manage their own affairs once again. However, the policy proved a failure because the tribes continued committing raids\* as anticipated and in 1851

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58. Ibid.

\* Raids were carried on as a result of blood feuds, for acquisition of firearms and to retaliate British encroachment on their territory.

itself, 22 Naga raids were reported to have been committed in which 55 persons were killed, 10 wounded and 113 carried off into captivity.<sup>59</sup> The Bhutias also raided the Bengal Duar a number of times between 1837 and 1864.<sup>60</sup> In the meantime the ambitious Manipur government taking advantage of the absence of the British in the Naga hills invaded the Angami Naga hills in 1854.<sup>61</sup> True to their confirmed policy, the British turned down the appeal of the Angami Nagas for protection against their invaders, in return for complete submission, on the ground that their country was outside British territory and Manipur being an independent state could not be questioned about its action.<sup>62</sup> Instead of rendering help to these helpless tribes, a line of frontier posts was set up strengthening and linking the Military guard at Golaghat and the outposts at Mohungdija, Barpathar and Jamaguri,<sup>63</sup> which proved so ineffective that the local officials almost despairingly proposed to abandon North Cachar itself. The Court of Directors perceiving that such policy enhanced the tribal raids, prepared to

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59. Asoso Yunuo, Op.cit., p. 85.

60. Ibid.

61. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 115.

62. Foreign (F.C) Dept., Progs. 19 January 1855, No.129, Op.cit., para 68, p. 374.

63. Barpujari, H.K., Problems of the Hill Tribes of North East Frontier, 1843-72, Calcutta, 1929, pp.62-3.

set up colonies of Kookies by offering rent free grants to occupy the no-man's lands and thus using the self-reliant races as buffers.<sup>64</sup> But this too proved a failure for at least 19 raids were committed by the Nagas between 1854-65 in which 132 British subjects were killed, 75 captured and 25 wounded.<sup>65</sup> The experiment to enlist the Angami Nagas in the military force also proved futile,<sup>66</sup> still the supreme government was firm in its non-interference policy.

Similar policy was also followed towards the rest of the Nagas - the Assam bordered Nagas. Though the policy originally was one of 'active control' and 'vigorous intervention' which is clear from the increase of the Lakhimpur Militia in 1847 to 160 sepoys, by reducing the strength of the Assam Militia for the protection of the south-east and eastern frontiers.<sup>67</sup> In 1852, the Sibsagar Militia replaced the Assam Militia to guard the Naga frontiers and to relieve the local corps from local duties.<sup>68</sup> In 1854, Captain Halroyed, the Principal

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64. Home Department (Political), a letter from the Commissioner of Assam (Col. Hopkinson) to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated Cherrapunji, the 30 October 1865, Progs., June 1866, No.16, para 23, p.5.

65. Ibid.

66. Barpujari, H.K., Op.cit., p.63.

67. Ibid., pp. 63-4.

68. Ibid., p. 64.

Assistant at Sibsagar settled disputes among the Nagas, but in 1856, he was forbidden to do so in the affairs of the Borduarias and Namsangias on the ground that the non-interference policy was being adopted towards all the Nagas.<sup>69</sup> However, the Nagas, far from stopping their raids continued their usual customary outrages and roamed about the country with the pride that they had cleared away the outsiders. In other words, the policy was regarded by the Nagas as a sign of the weakness of the Government. It was in fact an experiment to test the Nagas' response as well as a trap to bring them under control, because they knew very well that the tribes would certainly go back to their old traditional practices of head-hunting, the root cause of the inter-tribal feuds.

### III

#### Policy of the Gradual Subjugation (1866-1880)

The revolt of 1857 brought great changes in policies in India but not for the better. While before this event, the British tried rather half-heartedly and hesitatingly to modernize India, they now began to follow reactionary policies and this is true in the case of the Nagas who continually committed raids on the plains thereby affecting

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69. Ibid.



the tea plantations one of which was reported in 1862 by Major Agnew, the Officiating Agent, which according to him should be stopped for the interests of the tea planters.<sup>70</sup>

In 1862, the Commissioner of Assam reported that it was incredible to the government that atrocities should be carried on and that they (British) be powerless to protect their subjects from the tribal aggressions.<sup>71</sup> He was of the opinion that a particular course of policy would not solve the frontier troubles but rather "there must be a ready adaption of expedients to suit the ever varying circumstances, and sometimes must employ coercion pure and simple, sometimes blockades, very often a judicious system of subsidizing, will keep the tribes quiet for a long while, but still the surest foundation on which to build our control over them will be their fear of us. It is not coercion that has often failed us, but the failure to coerce."<sup>72</sup> The new Lt. Governor (Sir Cecil Beadon) of Bengal (1862-71) was against the non-inference policy on the ground that in near future the European tea plantations should extend

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70. Ibid., p. 65.

71. Mackenzie, A., Op. cit., p. 116.

72. Home Department (Political), Progs. 16 June 1866, No.16, Op.cit., para 4, p.

towards the Naga hills. According to him the proposal to recede before the tribes and fall back whenever they chose to annoy them, was one which he never entertained for a moment, and considered it to be unsound in itself and impracticable to pursue.<sup>73</sup> He therefore, supported the proposal recommended by the Officiating Agent that an officer should be placed under the orders of the Principal Assistant at Nowgong, Dimapur and or by other convenient location who would establish a good relationship with the tribal chiefs so as to create interests in them to stop the raids committed by their own people, at the same time giving them presents to win their allegiance.<sup>74</sup> The officer was to be authorized to settle disputes but not meddle in the inter-tribal feuds. The new Agent (Haughton) was however against the occupation of the Naga hills or bring them under the British administration, but was instead in favour of giving them protection against outside aggressions.<sup>75</sup>

The Commissioner of Assam (Col. Hopkinson) reviewed the position in regard to North Cachar and the Nagas. Though averse to direct control of the country (Naga hills), he pointed out that the very prevalence of demo-

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73. Ibid.

74. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 116.

75. Barpujari, H.K., Op.cit., p. 65.

cratic nature of the tribal arrangements among the Angamis, their inter-clan and inter-tribal feuds were obstacles towards the success of the policy of conciliation as proposed by the government.<sup>76</sup> He therefore suggested that Samaguting should be re-occupied as the headquarters of the British and that Lt. Gregory be appointed for the post.<sup>77</sup> This was strongly supported by the Lt. Governor (Sir Cecil Beadon) of Bengal who proposed the abolition of Asalu as a sub-division to distribute a part of which to the surrounding districts to constitute the remainder, lying on the bank of the Dhaneswari together with the considerable stretch of Naga country to form a separate district to be named as the 'Naga Hills District' and to be administered by Lt. Gregory as the Deputy Commissioner.<sup>78</sup> According to him, the Angami Nagas were not independent as held by the Nagas themselves.<sup>79</sup> He asserted that according to the treaty concluded between Burma and Manipur, it was recognized that

the Patkai and the Burreil ranges of hills running in a continuous line from the sources of the Deehing in the extreme east of Assam to

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76. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 118.

77. Foreign Dept. (Political), Office Precis., Progs., August 1877, No.127, p. 3.

78. Ibid.

79. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 118.

those of the Dhansiri in North Cachar as the boundary between those countries and while the wild tribes who inhabit the southern slopes of these ranges are subject to Burma and Manipur, those inhabit the northern slopes are subject to the British government. These latter, including the Angami Nagas, are independent in the sense that the British government has left them, except at occasional intervals, entirely to themselves, but they have not enjoyed or acquired political or territorial independence and it is clearly open to the government in point of right, as it is incumbent on it in good policy to exercise its sovereign power by giving them benefit of settled administration.<sup>80</sup>

In this way, the British officers, knowing their powerful influence in this region, could claim or disclaim the Naga hills according to their convenience. Earlier at the time of adopting the non-interference policy they regarded these very hills as outside their territory but as they gained strength especially after the 1857 event, and finding their economically strategic areas in Assam were insecure, they claimed that the very hill tract was within their territory.

The Government of India approved the proposal of the Commissioner of Assam with these orders:

Lt. Gregory may take up the proposed position at Samaguting and do his best by tact and good management, supported by a moderate display of physical force, to bring that portion of the hill tract adjacent to the plains into order.<sup>81</sup>

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80. Ibid.

81. Home Department (Public), Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, to the Government of Bengal, dated Simla, the 7th June, 1866, Progs., 16 June 1866, No.15, p.1.

According to the orders of Lt. Gregory was "to protect the lowlands from incursions", remain within the line of action, to conciliate the leading men and if the latter failed, he was authorized to take punitive measures.<sup>82</sup> Blockades and passes were to be used<sup>50</sup> as to exclude the offending villages from the bazars when necessary; roads were to be constructed in a simple and inexpensive manner just sufficient for the opening of the country. And above all, the plans must be carried out without much cost to the British treasury in the process.<sup>83</sup>

The new policy thus evolved was that of conciliation and gradual occupation of the country, though the Supreme Government seemed to be averse to its annexation.

However, in 1866, the orders came into effect, and with it began a new policy eventually resulting in the gradual pacification, subjugation and occupation of Samaguting at first and finally the whole of the Naga hills for, the one opened the door for the other. Therefore, the formation of the new district was an important epoch in the history of the Anglo-Naga relations.

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82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

According to the order of the government of India, the Naga hills District was formed and Samaguting re-occupied as its headquarters by Lt. Gregory with administrative jurisdiction over a small portion of the Angami country, the Rengma Nagas in the Mikir Hills<sup>84</sup> and the Kookie colony. The creation of the new district was motivated solely for the interests of the government. Manipur was forbidden to have anything to do with the Nagas except with the offenders within their own state. Passes were to be issued to the Nagas, their weapons to be left at the headquarters whenever they went down to the plains.<sup>85</sup> A system of receiving residential delegates from all important clans to act as interpreters and messengers with a small stipends was introduced.<sup>86</sup> (see Chapter IV).

Similar policy was also followed towards the other Assam frontier Nagas. In 1866 an order was issued that the Nagas were to leave their weapons at the Guard House at Gelliki before visiting the British territory.<sup>87</sup> However, such policies could not stop the Naga raids and in

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84. Foreign Department (Political), Major T.B. Michell, Political Officer, Naga Hills, to C.J. Lyall, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Progs., August 1882, No. 218, para 2, p. 8.

85. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 120.

86. Foreign Department (Political), Official Note, Progs., December 1870, Nos. 28-31.

87. Ibid.

1867 itself an Assamese village was attacked. Disputes arose between the tribes and the tea-planters due to the claim made beyond the Naga territory.<sup>88</sup> In order to safeguard the tea-planters therefore, the government introduced "Inner Line Regulation" which allowed them to settle down upto certain frontiers beyond which they were forbidden to move.<sup>89</sup>

At the very outset of the change of policy, the Nagas committed raids upon the Mikir village in January 1866, but the offending village (Razapemah) was burnt to ashes by the Deputy Commissioner.<sup>90</sup> Again, another raid was committed in June by the Nagas whose village was also burnt and the people distributed.<sup>91</sup> In the following year the boundary was demarcated between the British territory and Manipur finally retaining the 1841-42 lines in 1872.<sup>92</sup> The Kookie colonies on the Sangting were included in the Naga Hills District - "a measure rendered necessary by their having commenced a course of active hostiles against certain Naga villages."<sup>93</sup>

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88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 122.

91. Ibid.

92. Foreign Department (Political A), A letter from the Special Commissioner of Assam and Manipur Boundary, to the Jr. secy. to the Govt. of Bengal, Progs., March 1872, No.80, para 64.

93. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 123.

Adhering to their policy, no annexation was made except the village which attacked a Mikir village mentioned above. The occupation of Samaguting, it was reported proved on the whole "a decided success",<sup>94</sup> because the Angami Naga raids seemed to have ceased though their blood-feuds still continued.<sup>95</sup>

After the first step, i.e. the occupation of Samaguting, the need for interfering in the inter-tribal feuds was felt, as Captain Butler pointed out that the non-interference in their affairs could lead them to serious difficulties, namely the incurrence of enmity and illfeeling with the tribes, contrary to the decision of the Government of India.<sup>96</sup> Sir G. Campbell, the Lt. Governor, after weighing the pros and cons as to whether to take direct administration of the Naga hills, came to the conclusion that the only successful plan in dealing with the Nagas was "to bring about gradually the establishment of political control and influence without any assertion of actual government".<sup>97</sup> The initial policy of displaying force was advocated once again by him and

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94. Foreign Department (Political), Progs., August 1877, No.127, p.3.

95. Ibid.

96. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 124.

97. Ibid.



proposed further that the Political Agent (formerly called the Deputy Commissioner) was to occupy the central site of the Naga hills.<sup>98</sup> Extensive explorations of the hills were undertaken in order to have a clear-cut line of boundary which was finally approved of by the Supreme Government<sup>99</sup> and which were in fact carried out from 1872 onwards. The tribes, however, put up a strong resistance against the survey parties resulting in the murder of British officials and their coolies in the Lotha area.

In the meantime Assam was separated from Bengal Province for better administration under a Chief Commissioner (C.C.) of Assam on the 6th February 1874, the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Naga Hills, Cachar and Goalpara.<sup>100</sup>

With the transfer of power from the Lt. Governor of Bengal to the C.C. of Assam, there followed a change in policies especially towards the Nagas. Captain Johnstone took over two Naga villages under protection on payment

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98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100 Report on the administration of the Province of Assam for the years 1874-75 and 1876-76, Shillong, 1877, p.24.

of revenue, on the ground that such was in consistent with honour, justice and sound policy.<sup>101</sup> This was approved by the C.C. of Assam and the Government of India on the ground that the Political Agent could not let women and children to be killed before his eyes and that such policy was necessary to maintain peace within his scope. At the same time he was warned to take such action only when it was worth protecting in the interests of the British.<sup>102</sup> The Political Agent was, therefore, ordered not to accept revenue from the independent villages unless it was necessary.<sup>103</sup>

In the same year, another village sought and was taken over for protection. It was considered to be the beginning of voluntary submission. Why did the Nagas volunteer to submit? This can be explained in different ways. One may be that not all the villages were strong enough to resist their enemies. The inter-tribal feuds on the head-hunting practice being still the order of the day, created insecurity and tension among the weaker Nagas. Naturally, when the British showed their powerful authority, these tribes sought protection even at the

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101. Foreign Department (Political), Progs., August 1877, No.127, Op.cit., p. 4.

102. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

103. Ibid., p. 5.

cost of paying revenues and losing their political independence. Second, the Nagas who had been under the British protection could carry on trade without any difficulties. So, the voluntary submission could be out of social and economic necessities.

Besides the hostilities of the Nagas arising out of the exploration of the hills, Nagas resumed their raids and inter-tribal blood-feuds, killing 334 persons between 1874-75 itself, followed by another upon the Kachari villages. Realising their precarious position, the British Officials felt the immediate necessity of sending an expedition to exact the offenders, which was carried out in 1877-78, defeating the Nagas and compelling them to submit the following items:

- a. That they should pay a fine of Rs.50/-;
- b. That they should restore the arms and accoutrements of 3 constables who have been waylaid and also the contents of the plundered bag; and
- c. That they should surrender four of their firearms.<sup>104</sup>

After destroying the offending villages, the C.C. of Assam proposed to shift the headquarters to Kohima, on the ground that it commands the principal Angami villages and the Manipur frontier; at the same time

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104: Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 131.

it was also believed that the area was fertile enough to get provision.<sup>105</sup> So it was occupied on the 4th November 1878 as a new headquarters to control the Angami Nagas, while Wakha was made a sub-divisional station to control the Lothas.<sup>106</sup> The Government of India approved in the following statement:

The plan advocated by Colonel Keating contemplates the extension of our authority village by village, over the whole tract between our present border and the longitude specified, not only for the purpose of placing beyond reach of danger, the village which we already protect, but upon the principle that we should undertake gradually to subdue and settle down all the wild tribes.<sup>107</sup>

However, the occupation did not solve the problem, instead it sharpened and enhanced the resentment and opposition of the Nagas. It was in 1879 that such feelings were exhibited in the form of an uprising or the war of Naga independence against the alien rule. This was inevitable but not anticipated, for the British government was of the opinion that no serious difficulties would arise. The Nagas resented against the tax-payment and the presence of the British officials with their forces

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105. Foreign Department (Political), Progs., August 1877, Nos. 120-132, K.W. No:3.

106. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 132.

107. Ibid.

aroused their feelings so deeply that they could no longer be considered as the masters of their own land and finally resolved to fight out. They formed a league and staged a final insurrection against the foreigners - attacking the post at Pephima first.<sup>108</sup> The then Political Agent, Damant was killed on the 13th October 1879, when he visited Konomah village unprepared and unsuspected before going to the Hatigoria areas.<sup>109</sup> The news of Damant's death was despatched to different and surrounding directions - Kohima, Wakha, Samaguting, Manipur, etc. In the meantime, the Khonomah, Jotsemah, Chutonamah khel of Kohima and several others besieged Kohimah where in a rough stockade all the inhabitants were collected. The Nagas nearly succeeded in compelling the British to surrender when the news of Johnstone's arrival shattered their hopes and activities. The British forces destroyed Phesema, Chutonamah khel of Kohima, Cheswegima, Chedema, Kekrima and Veswema. Despite the numerous military police forces with the superior weapons, the British could not defeat the Nagas easily who then retreated to Chakka fort. In the meantime, a group of independent-loving Nagas from Konomah, stealthily

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108. Tajenyuba Ao, Op.cit., p. 69.

109. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p.136.

managed to go down the tea-plantation through the Barak river valley and killed the manager, looted the garden killing a number of coolies, in January 1880 and returned home without being attacked. In spite of the strengthening of the frontier posts, guerilla warfare broke out in Papolongmei and Nichuguard.

Finding themselves in a precarious situation without provision, the Nagas surrendered on the 27th March 1880 and the Chakka fort on the following day.<sup>110</sup> Thus, we see that, in spite of the forces with superior and modern weapons, the British took at least four months to compel the Nagas to surrender. The result or the impact of their gallantry was severe. They had to surrender their arms without compensation, their villages were demolished, their terrace cultivation confiscated and their clans dispersed. Henceforth, they became virtually British subjects with the incorporation of their country into the British empire. Thus, we see that the three broad policies explained above, were in fact stepping-stones leading to the extension of the British empire over the Naga hills.

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110. Ibid., p. 138.

**CHAPTER - III**

**THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN**

## THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

The establishment of the imperial power over the north-eastern frontier of India greatly facilitated the expansion of the Christian missionary movement in this region. Finding it necessary to pacify the hill tribes through the welfare programme<sup>1</sup> (first in the case of the Garos) the British Officers sought the aid of the Christian missionaries whose activities it was believed would be cooperative, and that was the reason why the missionaries were sent to the areas where the British direct control was still absent. As it often happened, the cross following the flag, it was not so in the case of the Nagas, because it was in the uncontrolled Naga inhabited areas, the missionaries were invited. They were concerned mainly in proselytising and philanthropic activities which transformed the Naga life and for that matter almost all the north-eastern hill tribes of India. It is they who deserve a special mention in the modernisation of these people. According to the western concept of those days, these tribes were uncivilized, wild, savage

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1. Barooah, N.K., David Scott in the North-East India 1802-1831: A study in British Paternalism, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1970, p. 177.



and uncultured, but this idea has very little weight today. What is civilization? It differs from place to place, from people to people and from time to time. These tribes could not certainly be considered uncivilized as they were not less civilized than the so-called civilized race. Even some British officials recognized this.

The western people thought they should take up the task of humanizing these tribes and invited and used the missionaries as instruments to fervent<sup>m</sup> their political control.

Initially the activity of these missionaries was confined to proselytising, but they soon realized as in the case of the other places that education would accelerate the pace of the spread of the gospel. Preaching the gospel was therefore as essential as spreading education. In fact the two were considered indispensable to each other, henceforth, they became not only preachers and translators but also publishers and educators. "The credit for introducing the modern system of education in India goes to the Christian missionaries," writes Pathak.<sup>2</sup> Though the period

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2. Pathak, S.M., American Missionaries and Hinduism (A Study of their contacts from 1813 to 1910), Delhi, 1967, p.55. See also Bose, "The Missionaries Involvement in the higher Education in India in the 19th Century" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), University of Kansas, 1971.

under study is brief, nevertheless, it is very significant in the sense that it was the period in which the British officials and the missionaries sowed the seed of western education through the activities of missionaries among the hillmen including the Nagas of this region.

It is true that the Nagas did not have a written script of their own though it is believed that they did possess such a script once. Today, they use the Roman script, introduced by the missionaries for them and for the whole of the tribal community in north-eastern India in the 19th century. Prior to the advent of the missionaries, education as such did not exist. However, informal education was imparted from generation to generation from time immemorial through the social institution generally known as 'Morung' about which it has already been explained in the introductory chapter. To sum up, it was a training institution for one's future life, though it was looked down by the missionaries as a heathen oriented system and discouraged its usage. In this way, the missionaries failed to correlate the new faith with their religion and social practices of the Nagas and in fact preached in an entirely different and new way. However, today

we find most of the tribals converted to Christianity. It is because the Nagas considered anything foreign as modernization. Besides this, there are some similarities in the belief of one Supreme God which the Nagas could easily digest as they too believe more or less in the existence of one creator. On the other hand, the British officials though initially invited them to work among these hillmen, their attitude was not as pleasant as we may think. In fact there had been opposition both from the government as well as from the indigenous people which created problems for the missionaries to carry on their work.

I

Missionary Agency

The Christian missionaries who were entrusted with the task of spreading the doctrine of Christianity, surprisingly did not intend to come to Assam in the early 19th century. It was instead, the Political Officer, David Scott, who first initiated the idea of a mission in this region. He was one of W. Carey's\* pupils and later on was sent by the British Government to deal with the trouble on the Garo frontier. Greatly influenced

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\* He was the first British Missionary who arrived in Calcutta in 1793, but he was forbidden to preach in British territory and finally, took refuge in Serampore, where he was offered protection by the Danish Government.

by Carey and having full belief in the missionary activities, he was convinced that nothing could be more effective and more lasting and beneficent for the Garos than the "spiritual force of the principles of Christianity."<sup>3</sup> To this course he worked heart and soul to procure the missionaries even at his own personal expenses as is clear from his letter to M.B. Baylay, Secretary to the Government of Bengal:

I am satisfied that nothing permanently good can be obtained by other means, I would greatly prefer two or more Moravian missionaries who along with religion would teach the useful arts. If the government would insure them subsistence only, I would be willing to take on myself the expense.<sup>4</sup>

Another British Political Officer, who subsequently shared the view of David Scott, was Francis Jenkins, the Commissioner and Agent to the Governor-General of Bengal in Assam. It was he who invited the missionaries among the Nagas after realising the benefits which the Garos received out of the missionary activities. If David Scott was the pioneer of the missionary cause for the Garos, F. Jenkins was for the Nagas. After understanding the tribal ways of life, he came to the conclusion that only Christianity would humanize the rude ways of

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4. Carey W., The Garo Jungle Book, Tura Book Room, Tura, Garo Hills, Assam, 1966 (Rept.), p. 39.

life which is clear from the following statement he made

the tribes on the Assam frontier should be brought within the scope of missionary activities as early as possible as the influence of persons skilled in the languages of these tribes and devoting all their time and attention to humanize these rude races could not fail of being useful to us and to them.<sup>5</sup>

But it must be remembered that the brain behind this proposal was David C.A. Bruce, the British Officer who was incharge of the experimental tea plantations in Sadiya. In fact, he persuaded F. Jenkins and the British Officers in Calcutta in 1834 to invite the missionaries to Sadiya to open up schools for tribal peoples.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the American missionaries who had interests among the Shans, were invited by Jenkins to work among the heathens or non-Christian tribes of this region with promises of possible assistance.<sup>7</sup> This was followed by the invitation of William Pearce of the Baptist Mission Society (English) and Trevelyan, the Company Officer in Calcutta.<sup>8</sup> The reasons why the American Baptist Mission Society\* was invited were:

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5. M. Alemchiba Ao, Op.cit., p. 153.

6. Downs, F.S., The Mighty Works of God, Gauhati, 1971, p.16.

7. Asoso Yanuo, Op.cit., p. 113.

8. Downs, F.S., Op.cit., p. 17.

\* This society had been intending to go to China from Burma and in fact had its headquarters there.

Sadiya would be excellent for work among the Shan peoples inhabiting Central Asia including China.

Second, communication could be improved by constructing road from Sadiya to Northern Burma and China.

Third, the knowledge of one language, it was thought would smoothen the work as it is clear from Trevelyan's letter:

The Shan language which is near akin to the Burmese and the Siamese, and belongs to the Chinese family furnishing a ready means to intercourse with perhaps a greater number of people than any other language in the world except Chinese itself.<sup>9</sup>

However, these hopes were found to be disappointing as the Shan language was unintelligible to this people.

The missionaries accepted the invitation with enthusiasm and immediately appointed Nathan Brown to open a centre with Oliver T. Cutter at Sadiya where the British Company established its headquarters.<sup>10</sup> On arriving at this place, by boat on the 23rd March 1836,<sup>11</sup> they were disappointed to know that the Shan language was unintelligible to this people. In the meantime, two other missionaries were deputed for this mission, but misfortune befell upon one of them. Despite the difficulties and disappointments, the missionaries

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9. Quoted by Downs, F.S., from The Baptist Missionary Magazine, XVI, p. 17.

10. Asoso Yanuo, Op.cit., pp. 113-4.

11. Ibid., p. 114.

carried on their work. Translation of simple books started and a school for the first time was opened for Assamese speaking people in which Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter were involved without books, teachers<sup>12</sup> and with limited financial resources. Their work was, however, hampered by the attack of the Khamptis upon the British. It was then decided to move to Jeypore where the British military post was again established, in May 1839.<sup>13</sup> The tribes including the Nagas continually harassed them hampering their activities. In this way, the first contact with the Namsangia Nagas was established from the Namsang village located today in the Tirap Division of NEFA.

Rev. Mills Brownson established a Naga Mission School at Jeypore to which Bruce made a donation of Rs.100 for producing spelling books; and Captain Hanay, the local commander too encouraged him.<sup>14</sup> The Naga children were persuaded to learn the three 'R's and the gospel. He asked for a grant of Rs.100 per month from the Agent of the Governor-General, towards the maintenance of the school as the government granted financial aid to the mission school in the Garo Hills.

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12. Ibid. 13. Philips, P.T., Op.cit., p. 50.

15. Rev. Bengt I. Anderson, We Live in Naga Hills, California, 1978, p. 37.

However the Government, considering it improper to give direct aid to the mission, forgetting perhaps that it had made grants in 1829 to the Garo missions with fair results; but made grants shown in the Agent's contingency bill "for objects of practical utility connected with the improvement of the Naga country, and spend with the view of leading its population into habits of industry".<sup>15</sup> The government supported such activities of the missionaries because they would enhance the British policy of pacifying the Naga tribes without assuming political administrative control over them.<sup>16</sup> So, we find that the government officers' aid amounted to Rs.1,890 between 1838 and 1840.<sup>17</sup> The school opened only by the first month of 1840 and it could not remain permanently due to the difficulties and misfortunes which befell upon the missionaries once again jeopardising their work among the Nagas till the arrival of Rev. E.W. Clark to the Sibsagar mission in 1871 between which the Nagas remained without schools.

The missionaries then confined themselves to the plains and did not spread widely as their financial

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15. Mackenzie, A., Op.cit., p. 92.

16. Downs, F.S., Op.cit., p. 23.

17. Ibid.



resources were limited. The famous Orphan Institution of Nowgong, assisted by the British officers had to be closed down in 1843. It was due to the depression in America, the sepoy Mutiny and the American Civil war that the mission in far away places like Assam could not be maintained. Besides the above mentioned problems, the division of the Baptist Churches into northern and southern churches in America contributed much to its failure.<sup>18</sup> In fact, they proposed to give up the Assam mission. The Home Board was not very keen in establishing schools on the ground that the duty of the missionaries should be only preaching<sup>19</sup> forgetting their so far existing opinion that education was the most important factor in the whole process of conversion, at the same time, after the formulation of the Education Despatch of 1854\* which provided grants-in-aid system which should help the missionary activities, remained silent in this case. It might be due to the fear that their (missionaries) activities would incur displeasure of the hillmen since the latter were yet to understand fully the good intentions of the foreigners.

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18. Ibid., p. 40. It was only the northern church that helped the Assam Mission but due to the reduction of donations, the aid to foreign mission was impossible.

19. Ibid., p. 41.

\* N: Bose feels that the missionaries must have their influence in the formulation of the Education

Though the missionaries had abandoned Jeypore and the work among the Nagas coming to a standstill, yet a few of them got converted from time to time in the Assam plains.<sup>20</sup> The first Christian Naga was a Konyak, baptised on the 12th September 1847,<sup>21</sup> followed by an Ao in 1851, and another in 1852. The second one became a member of the Sibsagar Church while the third that of Nowgong.<sup>22</sup> In the meantime, the Garos responded to the opportunities provided to them. The Konyak Nagas too were not slow to avail themselves of the opportunity and this is clear from the response of two of them, who were baptised in Sibsagar in 1855, but who were exterminated by their own co-villagers for the sake of peace and order. In this way, the progressive work could not be carried out. However, it is important to bear in mind that the British Government followed two different types of policies towards the Nagas as a whole - sending military expeditions towards the Angami country and the missionaries to the Assam bordered Nagas - the main object being to subjugate them by any means. In

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Despatch, because the missionaries like J.C. Marshman, Alexander Duff, H.H. Wilson were invited by the Select Committee among whom Duff was the most influential person. He was considered even in government circles as an authority on Indian affairs. He was there to conduct all the possibilities in order to win the hearts of his countrymen for the missionary work in India. See N.Bose, op.cit., p.34.

20. Philip, P.T., Op.cit., pp.52-3.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

other words, they tried to pacify and subjugate them in the name of Christianity as well as at the point of a gun. This was perhaps the Angamis being the most warlike of all the Nagas, it was expedient and imperative on the part of the British government to conduct the expedition directly by themselves since such undertakings needed military force; while in the case of the other Assam bordered Nagas it was believed it could be easier for the missionaries. It was rather a diplomatic policy in a sense that they did not want to get into trouble unnecessarily with the tribesmen and it was logic enough to entrust the work to the missionaries.

The evangelisation of the Nagas was once again started by Rev. E.W. Clark and Godhula Brown, an Assamese evangelist in 1871. The former was a missionary who came to Sibsagar in 1869 and worked among the tea-garden labourers in Assam during which he became interested in the Nagas, who frequented the Sibsagar bazar.<sup>23</sup> The success among the Garos convinced him that the time had come to resume the work among the Nagas. Though he himself was unable to start the work Godhula was already there to share his interests and in fact had started to learn their language.

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23. Downs, F.S., Op.cit., p. 34.

With Clark's permission Godhula made an exploratory visit to the Naga hills in October 1871. It was followed by the conversion of a number of Nagas in late 1872 thus laying the foundation of the Church in Naga Hills (the Ao area at that time was outside the Naga Hills District, but it was included into it only in 1889). The British government was very careful in dealing with the Nagas who were still outside the political controlled area and this created problems and tension for the missionaries who had then had to seek permission to work among them. The initial attitude of the British officials, i.e. to encourage their missionary activities by this time was reversed and the relation between them became strained. Why did such attitude prevail among the British officials then? (This will be explained in the second section of this Chapter.) Being a zealous missionary, Clark approached Lt. Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam for establishing a permanent mission among the Nagas on the Sibsagar frontier.<sup>24</sup> However, the mission was sanctioned reluctantly with strict orders that their main and only duty was to be confined to preaching and in no other commercial or imperialistic activities which would create conflict with the British domination in India. In other words, he was to carry

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24. Asoso Yunuo, op.cit., p. 115.

his own mission only in conformity to the British colonial policy, at the same time without expecting any protection from the government.<sup>25</sup> Rev. Clark despite the discouragement from the government, started his mission. Leaving aside the anti-missionary attitude of the British officials, the Christian missionaries had to face a lot of problems from the non-Christian Nagas. It was not a surprise for a missionary to have come to such situation. As was therefore inevitable and anticipated, there grew bitter differences between the Christians and the non-Christians. Finally the former were separated from the latter and formed a new village called Molungyinsen (New Molung).<sup>26</sup> Still, this separation did not end the hostility, it instead enhanced. In this way, the Christians had to live without any protection till the Ao area was annexed into the Naga Hills District.<sup>27</sup> In spite of the difficulties and problems faced by the Christians, some of the Nagas got converted into the new religion and so, another centre at Merang-Kong was added to the former.<sup>28</sup>

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25. Downs, F.S., Op.cit., p. 65.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

The number of the Christians was very small even by 1880 i.e., 47 only. But, whenever possible, the missionaries tried to establish schools with the Assamese teachers mostly from Sibsagar.

Other centres were also opened up at Kohima and Wokha. But the Angami Nagas in the former place were not won over to the new faith till 1885 although C.D.King had started to work among them since the occupation of the site as the British headquarters in 1878.<sup>29</sup> The proposal to open a centre at Lotha area since 1876 could not be implemented till 1886.<sup>30</sup> Thus we find that the politically occupied the Angami and the Lotha areas were the last to hear and accept the new faith. From the above fact, it is clear that the British government had a well-planned policy in order to avoid unnecessary trouble with the Nagas. In other words, they did not want to incur the wrath of these tribesmen (who were already suspicious of the British encroachment) by sending the missionaries who were entrusted only in proselytization. It is well known to them that to disturb their traditional way of life by bringing new religion could prove a disaster on both sides.

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29. Philip, P.T., Op.cit., p. 62.

30. Ibid.

The missionaries were the pioneers of western education as well as in evangelization despite financial and other shortcomings. They were the first agency to open schools for the tribesmen of this region. Yet, it is important to bear in mind that it was through the British government's policy that they could start their missionary activities. In this regard, they were therefore the agents of the government who played a very important role in pacifying and subjugating the tribes. However, due to the financial problems, the school at Mapungchuhit started in March 1875, had to be closed down in the same year in December. It was in 1854 that women's education was taken up seriously for the first time in the Education Despatch of 1854, which emphasized that "the moral tone of the people will be augmented" if India's women were educated.<sup>31</sup> The Despatch therefore recommended that

the government should reward the individual Indians and the voluntary agencies who supported girls' education, and give such facts great publicity in order to let the people know the desire of the government.<sup>32</sup>

Following its policy the government approved grants-in-aid to schools open for girls to the extent of Rs.1,589.<sup>33</sup>

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31. N. Bose, Op.cit., p. 280.

32. Ibid. Quoted from Education Despatch 1854, Clause 83.

33. Ibid., p. 40.

But in the case of the Nagas it was a missionary - Mrs Clark who opened a school for girls at Molung in March 1878, Zillion an Assamese preacher and his wife.<sup>34</sup>

(There is, however, no record showing government's grants-in-aid being implemented to this institution.) Besides them, Rev. and Mrs Rivenburg too started their missionary activities in the Naga hills in January 1885 and contributed invaluable aid to the Ao Nagas by writing an 'Ao Dictionary, Ao Prima, a Catechism, a life of Joseph, a hymn book and translation of the gospels of Sts. Mathew and John.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to the introduction of the Christian religion as well as education among the Nagas by the missionaries, we find that the progress of education undertaken by the government was unsatisfactory even by 1880, i.e. 14 years after the political occupation of parts of the Naga Hills in 1866. It was because their primary policy towards India as a whole was to control it not through the establishment of schools, because they did not want her to become an independent country.<sup>36</sup> In other words, through schooling, the

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34. Philip, P.T., Op.cit., p. 59.

35. Ibid.

36. Martin Cornoy, Education as Cultural Imperialism, New York, 1974, p. 81.



imperial power attempted to colonize people for roles that suited them. Yet, they were not the pioneers in this field, but the missionaries. Their policy towards the north-east Indian tribes was similar to that of the Africans, i.e., to westernize or according to them to civilize them<sup>37</sup> because they were considered to be wild, savage hords and it was hoped to bring them to progressive world through Christianity and education. Yet, the reports show that there were only two schools in the year 1879-80 with 26 pupils.<sup>38</sup> This shows their insignificant effort and indifference towards these people in the field of education.

However, whatever the effort they made in the establishment of schools, they seemed to be very careful to ensure that the tribals were not influenced by the plains people through the introduction of language or education by pointing out that with the knowledge of the language of the plains people they acquired "all sorts of chicanery and trickery" as well as the "absurd prejudice about caste".<sup>39</sup> They wanted the Angami Nagas to have a knowledge of Assamese just sufficient to conduct their trade for, they felt that the

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37. Ibid., p. 125.

38. Assam Education Report, 1877-78 to 1878-79, p.2.

39. Foreign Department, a letter from the Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 14th September 1866, Political Dept. Progs., December 1866, No.137-140, para 108, p.17.

tribes could learn nothing morally or intellectually from them who were but little more civilized than them.<sup>40</sup> So, English was to be used among the Nagas. At the same time, it is important to note that the aim of the colonizer was to impose its language to suit its own administration. Charles Grant, the Company Director (1797-1818) advocated the use of English education which later on got materialised during the Governor-Generalship of William Bentinck under the strong support of Macaulay. Grant wanted English to be the language of administration, courts, revenue and the basis for the teaching of European culture and science and the Christian religion.<sup>41</sup>

The progress of education in the Naga hills was very slow. Firstly, the East India Company was primarily concerned with commercial interests and was not in any way keen on the education of the people of India, let alone the Nagas. As such they were not promoters of culture and learning. Even after the Crown's assumption of the country, there was hardly any change in the educational field, and in fact, the Despatch of 1859 reaffirmed the Educational Despatch of 1854, the Company's legacy, without introducing any change. The Despatch of 1854 maintained

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40. Ibid., para 109.

41. Martin Cornoy, Op.cit., p. 97.

the religious neutrality but the missionaries received their wishes like receiving grants-in-aid system, English as the medium of instruction, freedom to teach religious faith as an optional subject, promotion of private efforts in the higher education and universities, based on the model of London University.

Secondly, the financial shortcomings and the religious observations of the tribesmen, led to the irregularities of the students in the schools. The need of the children in the fields in times cultivation and harvesting, rain, diseases, religious and social festivals along and followed by the observations of gennas often hampered the students' career. Besides, the ignorance of the tribals about the value of western education (which still prevails among some of them) was one of the reasons why the foreign efforts were not fully responded to.

Third, the inability of the government due to the dearth of teachers. Though there had been a lot of talks and resolutions regarding the establishment of schools in the Naga hills since 1866, it was reported that the first school was opened only at the beginning of 1877-78 at Barpathar which is on the road from Gauhati to Samaguting but outside the Naga Hills District. It was again an Assamese school contrary to

their policy of introducing English Education. This was followed by the opening of another school at the headquarters - Samaguting, at the close of the above mentioned year. The teacher was procured by the Political Agent and was paid Rs.30/- out of which Rs.8/- was paid by the government and the rest by private subscriptions.<sup>42</sup> The school was attended by 43 pupils only and those too were mainly policemen of whom 4 were girls.<sup>43</sup> The Political Agent desperately tried to create interests among the children by promising to give Re.1/- per month, per child, as had been done by the missionaries for attending the school, still the response was very poor, though some of the parents promised to send their children. Then the proposal to open another school took years.

The above schools did not increase in number for a long time. In fact, the school at Samaguting was closed down due to the want of funds<sup>44</sup> as well as due to the higher classes of Bengali and Assamese teachers. The administrative report for the year 1881-9, shows that there were only 3 schools - a Vernacular School

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42. Assam Education Report, 1877-78 to 1878-79, op.cit., p.8.

43. Ibid.

44. Foreign Department, Report on the Administration of the District of the Naga Hills, for the years ending 31st March 1878, Progs., December 1878, Nos. 35-60.

at Barpathar, an aided school at Kohima, established by Rev. King, an American missionary where 19 boys attended and the third one was a praiseworthy institution at Konomah conducted by a sepoy of the 42nd Regiment who instructed the Nagas in Assamese and was encouraged by Captain Abotte, where 16 pupils attended.<sup>45</sup> However, it was closed down because he could not get enough aid or stipend the reasons of which were unknown according to the Deputy Commissioner.<sup>46</sup> Yet, one cannot brush aside the provisions of the 1854 Education Despatch permitting the introduction of the grants-in-aid system and its failure of application for the Nagas.

Thus we see how little the British government made the effort to encourage the education of these people. On the other hand, the missionaries like in other parts of India, were the pioneers in this field in this region too inspite of the lack of the aid of the government both in finance and security. In fact, they worked independently among the Nagas who were still outside the Naga Hills District and it was there that the seed of religion and education was sown by them.

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45. Foreign Department (A Political E), Progs., September 1882, No B6, para 16.

46. Assam Education Report, Op.cit., p.48.

Though it cannot be denied that these Christian missionaries attacked the indigenous religions such as Hinduism and animistic beliefs of these simple tribes, yet, their activities need to be appreciated because of their firm belief in what they did and for which reason they ventured boldly into the remote areas of this region, while the government officials dared not to do so.

## II

### The attitude of the Government towards the missionaries

It has been mentioned above that the task of pacifying and humanizing the tribesmen of this region was entrusted upon the missionaries initially, yet we find such policy later on changed while acknowledging at the same time that they were only the agents of the Government. So the questions arise "what was their attitude towards the missionaries? How far were they, the agents of the government?"

The missionary societies in Europe, America, New Zealand, Australia, etc. were not supported by their governments, but were independent and ran their own missions with the help of the collections in their

countries.<sup>47</sup> They did not however, dare to venture unless some kind of protection was provided. In this way, they had to depend upon the support of the government where they intended to start their mission.

Dr. Carey had to seek the protection of the Danish Government since he was not permitted by the British government to work within its territory in 1793.<sup>48</sup>

A year before this, the East India Company Directors and the Court of Directors strongly opposed the proposal of the inclusion of religion in India on the ground that the missionaries would be dangerous and destructive to the Company's interests. It was quite obvious, as the two bodies had entirely different missions - the missionaries that of proselytising while the government for the expansion of the economic and political power in the world. The Company, therefore refused to let the missionaries enter in any part of the country belonging to her or even to her allies.<sup>49</sup> This opposition continued till the first decade of the nineteenth century. In other words, the missionaries could not be taken as the agents of the government upto the above mentioned period.

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47. Rev. Austin John, "Beginning of Christian Work in the Hill Areas of North-East Indian Region", A Common Perspective for North East India, Calcutta, 1967, p. 247.

48. Ibid., p. 243.

49. Ibid.

The Charter Act of 1813 permitted indirectly the missionaries to work among the Indians to impart useful knowledge including religion and moral improvement.<sup>50</sup> The missionaries resented always the association of the Christian Government with the religious testimonials and institutions of the Indians, especially their collection of the pilgrim tax and the management of the temples and mosques, though they did not dare to desist it openly.<sup>51</sup>

The Charter Act of 1833 clearly allowed their proselytization by creating three Bishopries in India at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras<sup>52</sup> the main object of which was to preserve and confirm the foundation of the British rule in India. In other words, conversion of the natives into Christianity would lead them to genuine obedience to the British Government since both would follow the same religion. Analysing the policy of the Government, Parry Charles (President of the Board of Control), in 1807, stated:

There appear to be two principal objections to the scheme of converting the natives to the faith of the gospel, first, the attempt might produce convulsion, and secondly that if successful, the natives would be less

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50. Sen Gupta, K.P., Christian Missionaries in Bengal, 1793-1833, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1971, p. 55.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., p. 57.



easily government and more ready to shake off our authority than before.<sup>53</sup>

Earlier in 1805, Buchanan also expressed his opinion that "a Christian policy ever looks to the Christian religion for the perpetuating of empire."<sup>54</sup> The missionaries too had the full belief that "it was God's will that the dominion of India should be undertaken."<sup>55</sup> The British Officials like Lord Hastings, Amherst, etc. appreciated the activities of the missionaries especially towards their translations and educational work.<sup>56</sup> But Lord Bentinck was more cautious towards them especially after the Vellore Mutiny.<sup>57</sup> Lord Northbrook in his speech on the occasion of the meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society in Exeter Hall spoke highly of the missionary activities in the East. He praised their society for sending learned missionaries to India. According to him, it was because they had to "deal with old religion and with educated men of high intellectual culture, subtle in reasoning and accustomed to the philosophy of the ancients."<sup>58</sup> Yet

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53. Correspondence on Missions in India, Parry and Grant to Dundas, June 18, 1807, quoted by K.P. Sen Gupta, Ibid.

54. Buchanan, C. "Memoir of the expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India", quoted by K.P. Sen Gupta, Ibid., p. 58.

55. Ibid., p. 52.

56. Ibid., p. 56.

57. Ibid.

58. The Englishman, Calcutta, dated 30th May 1879.

there were much differences between the two bodies - the missionaries and the government towards their activities, attitudes in executing their policies.

After providing them all the facilities in the Charter Acts 1813 and 1833, and the Education Despatch of 1854, 1859, etc., it sounds as if the two bodies worked side by side on favourable terms.

The missionary activities were openly criticised in "the Englishman" newspaper, dated 20th May 1879, which blamed the evangelists in the following statement:

It was on account of the missionaries that we undertook the Abyssinnian expedition. The information given by missionaries, and the fret which thus caused in Zululand, have been the present trouble.<sup>59</sup>

The paper did reveal the humanitarian activities done by the missionaries who "stood between the less developed races and the cruelty and callous greed of white traders."<sup>60</sup> However, all these good deeds were marred by their open criticism and attack on the native laws in the case of the Zululand where they took shelter. It also exposed their anti-British government attitude. According to the paper, the missionaries created problems for themselves and by themselves.

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59. Ibid., May 20, Tuesday 1879, p. 4.

60. Ibid.

At first, the English Baptist missionaries started their evangelization in Assam through an Indian (Bengali) preacher Krishna Chandra. It is b<sup>i</sup>believed that with the help and inspiration of this man that the New Testament in Khesi in the Bengali script was translated by W. Carey.<sup>61</sup> However, from 1838 onwards, the American Baptist missionaries took over the field on the invitation of the Political Official (as has been mentioned earlier) with the superfluous hope of uplifting the tribesmen through the evangelical activities - the main object behind was similar to that of the policy permitting the missionaries to work in India. Yet, they (the British government) were not fully cooperative especially in regard to the Nagas. But a school for the Garos was opened by the missionaries on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Assam on the government's aid.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the government refused to give direct aid to the American Baptist Missionaries who had started to open schools in the Naga villages, but allowed to include the grant to them in the Governor-General's Agent's Contingency Bill. Bronson, who too started the work independently did not receive the government's cooperation and also even from the local

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61. Rev. Austin John, Op.cit., p. 244.

62. Bhattacharjee J.B., The Garos and the English, New Delhi, 1978, p.222.

officers who felt that his work would antagonise the tribals.<sup>63</sup> It was circumstances that led the government to such an attitude. In other words, it was the suspicious attitude of the Nagas towards the white men that prompted the government to be very careful. It was again on the same grounds that when the converts who were exposed to their heathen friends, were not given protection.<sup>64</sup> While this was not the case with the Garos as it is clear from one of the missionaries' letter:

The entrance into the Naga Hills was in many respects different from that of the Garos. The greatest difficulty which the missionaries had to face was perhaps over-consciousness on the part of the government officers, as they were opposed to the missionaries...and the officers feared any (institution) of white people into the hills might cause disruption and tribal war.<sup>65</sup>

Clark himself was quite certain that if any serious war befell, the missionaries would be forbidden to enter Assam. Yet, we cannot deny the effective activities left by the missionaries which are still remembered and cherished by the tribals themselves.

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63. Rev. Austin John, Op.cit., p. 245.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

III

Response of the Nagas

That the Nagas did not easily respond to the preaching of the new faith is known from the fact that no conversion took place among the Nagas who came into direct contact with the missionaries in the village, Namsang, in 1839. It was rather a surprise to find a new convert in the Assam valley from 1847 onwards (i.e. after the missionaries had left Naga hills).

The new faith which seems to be quite different from the tribal belief did not at first attract the Nagas. It might be due to the prejudice they had towards the white men who were looked upon as agents of the British government. The fear of disruption of their social and political set up was also one of the causes for the dislike of the foreigners. They, therefore, never favoured the entry of a white man into their village. In spite of the good wishes or intentions of the missionaries, the tribals looked upon them with contempt and suspicion. That was why Bronson was opposed and suspected. Godhula was also taken as a spy of the company when he went to proclaim the new religion and was ordered to be sent off.<sup>66</sup> The non-christians of Dekahaimong or

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66. Philip P.T., Op.cit., p. 63.

Mohungyinchen did not want Clark for a similar reason, taking him as the agent of the British. They even ill-treated or killed their own fellows who were then Christians. They were afraid of the new religion in case it created confusion in the minds of the people and turn the village upside down. It was quite evident because the Christians would no longer share the burden of the customary or religious activities.

The Angami country or the politically controlled area was the last one to receive the missionaries because the government as we have seen above, did not favour their entrance. When King built a house and a school practically at his own expense, the government ordered him to vacate the site. In the face of opposition from the government Samaguting was the first place to host a Christian Missionary in 1879, yet the last among other villages to accept the new faith. However, when some of the Angamis became Christians they were ridiculed by their own fellows and were nicknamed 'Yehova' and 'Mikrako', meaning buried without the traditional Angami ceremonies.<sup>67</sup> This sort of difficulty was faced by almost all the early Christians.

Why did the Nagas take time to accept the new faith?

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67. Ibid., p. 85.

Christianity as presented to the Nagas, according to William Carlson Smith, was "little more than the adoption of another set of taboos".<sup>68</sup> The Nagas, who had from time immemorial been used to drinking and opium eating found a great problem in giving up all of a sudden what they were habituated to because it was prohibited by the missionaries. These restrictions, created tensions in their daily life and often led to reversions to their old ways of life. Secondly, the new religion was not free from superstitions in the sense that it stressed or acknowledged the idea of punishment and reward in hell and heaven. Third, war and head-hunting were the order of the day when Christianity infiltrated the hills. However, the new religion did not allow such activities as well as appreciate the social practice attained out of head-hunting (which has been explained in the first chapter). Four, the example set by the high ranking British Officers in India who were the sons of the nobility often claimed native women or leaving their country, and this was one of the greatest obstacles to the spreading of the Gospel.<sup>69</sup>

The disregard of the social practice like the Morung system by the missionaries and their complete aversion

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68. Ibid., p. 65.

69. Ibid., p. 66.

towards the traditional religious practices with the beliefs in spirits, were also some of the reasons why the non-Christians could not tolerate the new religion. The above mentioned newspaper clearly revealed why the tribals showed antagonistic attitude towards the missionaries and suggested a positive approach, that they (missionaries) should give the impression that the "Missionary god is as good as another", and in this way the tribes might not object to their evangelization,<sup>70</sup> instead of looking down on their beliefs and openly criticising them. Fifth, the acceptance of the new religion by some Nagas created divisions among the people as in Zululand. In the latter case, the converts no longer belonged to the native, but to a missionary, or in other words, the King had lost every villager who embraced Christianity implying that he was not bound to be tried by the Zulu jurist, according to the Zulu laws.<sup>71</sup> He was ostracised by his people. On the other hand, the convert pitied the other non-Christians as he thought they were all lost children and vice versa. The convert or the Christian could seek protection only from the missionary, who in turn, was himself under the English protection. Similar

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70. The Englishman, May 20, 1879, Op.cit.

71. Ibid.



problems arose among the Nagas too. A statement made by an untutored King depicted the attitude of the native rulers, "I will have no missionaries because you will soon send a consul to protect, and then soldiers to protect the Residents".<sup>72</sup> A black King too did not like to receive a divided allegiance and new laws to be introduced by a preacher. He knew very well that the missionary with a tall hat and a white necktie with a hymn book was no other person than an incarnation of a hostile fate.<sup>73</sup> The government blamed the missionaries for their daring activities while acknowledging that "European races are fated to encroach on and finally annihilate races of less robust natives and less sturdy civilisation."<sup>74</sup> However, it was felt that religion should not be used as the "occasion of aggression".<sup>75</sup> Six, the Nagas being free from social inequality did not find the need right away to embrace it as was with the other caste Hindus. On the other hand, some of the Nagas accepted the new faith perhaps due to the loving concern or charity shown by the missionaries which they had not experienced from others.

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72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

By becoming Christians they were at least psychologically free from the fear of the evil spirits. They no longer were bound to observe the gennas and finally free from the heavy expenses on sacrifices and feasts.<sup>76</sup> Some of them accepted the faith for personal bargain for instance, some thought that by becoming a Christian one would be free from sickness or become rich. This means, they did not understand the real value of becoming Christians.

The number of Christians under study is very small and that too mostly the Ao Nagas. In 1872, there were only 24 Christians, 21 in 1876, 10 in 1878 and 17 in 1880.<sup>77</sup> But it was a consolation to find that once they embraced the religion they remained faithful to it inspite of the opposition and persecution by their own fellow Nagas, and perhaps their example enlightened their non-Christians who too finally followed their footsteps. Today, more than half per cent of the Nagas are Christians, though the political control of the British government had ceased since 1947, the evangelization still continues, whether it is considered as a colonial legacy or not, we cannot overlook the tremendous transformation in religion and education, brought and instilled by the missionaries to these tribes.

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76. Bishop of Chotanagpur, Christianity and the Tribal Problem", A Common Perspective for North-East India, Op.cit., p. 238.

77. Philip, Op.cit., p. 68.

**CHAPTER - IV**  
**CONSOLIDATION**

## CONSOLIDATION

It is true that the consolidation of colonial control over the whole of Naga hills did not take place during the period under study (1839-1880), but the process began to take shape with the formation of the Naga Hills District (1866). Again, the administration over the whole hill territory too never incorporated with British India. In fact, the district consisting of a few Naga areas inhabited by the Angamis, Rengmas, Lothas, Kukis, etc., which constituted an "Unadministered" Area was regarded as a part of the Province of Assam under East India (Law and Regulations) Act, 1870. It was regarded as a 'Backward Tract' in 1918 and an 'Excluded Area' in 1936 with the administrative head - the Governor, who was given discretionary powers. So, the consolidation of British rule over the Nagas was slow but steady. The effective control over the few areas of the hills was carried out in 1881 only after the surrender of the Nagas, who revolted against the alien rule in 1879-80. The gradual expansion of the British territory thus can be traced back to 1866. As a back-

ground to this administration in 1881, it is essential to study the system of administration thus introduced.

I

Administration.

The non-interference policy (1851-65) having failed, the British government was left with the alternative of taking over the Naga hills. But their policy was one of gradual occupation, for, they too were faced with difficulties and problems, at the same time knowing the negative effect upon the tribesmen if sudden annexation was undertaken. Though the Naga Hills District was created in 1866, the administration was confined to only a small area especially over Samaguting, the Rengmas and Takaphan Nagas inhabiting the hills between the Dhensiri river and the Nowgong District, as well as over the Kukies of the Longting Colony<sup>1</sup> and was to be under Lt. Gregory, the Deputy Commissioner (D.C.) with Samaguting as headquarters. He was empowered to exercise direct control only over Samaguting and to take any decision according to circumstances. He was to exact a small tribute of Rs.2/- per house from Samaguting or eight days' labour and declare a general amnesty of all old offenders

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1. Foreign Political Department, Progs., 1866  
December, No.138, p. 6.

against the British, and as regards the Razapemah village (which committed a raid on a Mikir village recently) the D.C. was to stop the offenders from coming into the British territory while the rest of the Nagas were to be allowed on deposition of their weapons and taking a pass from him.<sup>2</sup>

According to the orders, "the D.C. or Political Agent for the Naga Hills should hold a position analogous to that of the Court of Sessions under the Code of Criminal Procedure and act as a Court of Appeal in civil cases. The Judicial Commissioner of Assam should exercise the powers of the High Court in respect to Naga Cases."<sup>3</sup> When any request for redress was made to him, he was to act only as a magistrate "through the medium of his court which is under the trammels of resolution laws".<sup>4</sup> He was to be empowered as a Political Agent (P.A.) so as to enable him to negotiate with and control the tribes without any reference to laws, or regulations.<sup>5</sup> The Bengal Police or ministerial officers should on no account be permitted to interfere.

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2. Ibid., p. 5.

3. Ibid., p. 6.

4. Ibid. (Memorandum for the future administration of the Angami Naga Hills), p. 22.

5. Ibid., p. 22.

As in the case of the Syntengs regarding civil procedure, the Nagas were also to have a panchayat which would consist of gaonburas, headman and sirdars whose functions should be similar to that of the Dolloys and Pathars<sup>6</sup> (officers). The Naga Panchayat was to be responsible for their village police while the function of the police was to be mainly one of repressing the disturbances.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the British administration did not bring a total reform to the then existing Naga village organisation where the Council of elders (see Chapter I for reference) was responsible for the welfare of the whole village.

The Panchayat was to try all the criminal offences except of heinous character or persons outside their jurisdiction. They could also try all civil cases but the proceedings should be only viva voce and without record.<sup>8</sup> Above the Panchayat, a council at the headquarters was to be established over which the Political Agent's assistant was to preside.

In heinous cases, the P.A. was empowered to convict and pass sanctions, acquit or discharge the prisoner and remand for further investigation on the

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

English record drawn up by the assistant but in case of the absence of the assistant the P.A. should hold a session trial on the presentment or indictment to call up any criminal trial case and decide it himself or reverse or modify the decision of the council. The assistant had no power over the judicial functions except as a president of the Naga Council, but he was to be empowered over revenue and police matters with the authority from the P.A.<sup>9</sup>

With the separation of the Assam Province from the Bengal Province in 1874, the Commissioner of Assam occupied a special position over the administration of police and justice, assisted by the P.A. and his assistant, the mouzadars, gaonburas, peumahs (Naga chiefs) and houshas (Kuki chiefs) or headmen of Khels, or such other classes of officer as the Governor-General might appoint according to the circumstances subject to the exceptions, restrictions and rules which would be enforced only in the villages and communities under the direct administration of the P.A.<sup>10</sup>

The police of the Naga Hills was to consist of (1) Regular police, subject to Act V of 1861 and Rural Police consisting of mouzadars, gaonburas, peumahs,

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9. Ibid.

10 Home Judicial Dept., Progs., April 1874, No.147 (Rules for administration of justice and police in the Naga Hills Agency), paras.1-2.



houshas and other village authorities recognised as such by the P.A. with their subordinate village authorities.<sup>11</sup> Though the control of police was vested in the P.A., he was to act only under the orders of the C.C. of Assam.<sup>12</sup> The Penal Code and Act V of 1861 were to be applied to the Regular Police in case of misconduct while fines and imprisonment were to be imposed upon the Rural Police for any offences, awardable under the Penal Code which were to be decided by the P.A. or other officers duly authorized.<sup>13</sup> An appeal could be made by the entrusted bodies (mouzadars, peumahs, houshas and other chief village authorities) in police matters to the P.A., but the C.C. of Assam could call for the proceedings to modify or reverse any order as he considered proper.<sup>14</sup>

The ordinary duties of police were to arrest all criminals and repress all disturbances within their respective jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup> When unable to arrest the offenders, they could appeal for help to the Regular Police, who were in turn bound to be assisted by the inhabitants of the Naga Hills, which were under the administrative control of the P.A.<sup>16</sup>

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11. Ibid., para. 3.

12. Ibid., para. 4.

13. Ibid., para. 5.

14. Ibid., para. 8.

15. Ibid., paras. 13-14.

16. Ibid., para. 15.

In the case of the criminal justice also, the administration was entrusted to the P.A., his assistant and the mouzadars, houshas, peumahs or other chief village authorities of the different communities empowering the former to pass a sentence of death or imprisonment for a term of limited years (7 years) while the local authorities could try a case to the extent of Rs.50/- only in which case too, the P.A. was to be consulted. The P.A. had full authority over the local bodies. Their position and status were to be recognized by him and regarding their power over crimes too, the P.A.'s orders were necessary.<sup>17</sup> These local bodies could not try a case in connection with their relatives, a non-resident of their jurisdiction and when the case was against the state.<sup>18</sup> They were not to decide any cases save in an open darbar, in the presence of at least three witnesses and the complainant and the accused.<sup>19</sup> Appeals could be made to the P.A. or his assistant within 8 days from the day of the last decision.<sup>20</sup> However, the final decision was to be taken by the C.C. of Assam almost in all the cases.

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17. Ibid., paras.16-17

18. Ibid., para.19.

19. Ibid., para.20.

20. Ibid.

As in the other cases, the civil administration was entrusted to the C.C., the P.A., his assistant, the mouzadars, peumahs, houshas and other chief village authorities.<sup>21</sup> The local bodies (the above mentioned authorities - mouzas, peumahs, houshas, etc.) had to get recognition from the P.A., who could then try cases without limit except in the cases of their relatives, non-resident of their jurisdiction; and such had to be held in open darbar in the presence of the parties concerned and at least three respective witnesses as in the above cases; and the proceeding was to be viva voce.<sup>22</sup> The mode of trying the case or proceeding in this branch too was more or less similar to the above mentioned cases. Finally, the courts of the C.C., the P.A. and his assistant were to be guided by the spirit but not be bound by the latter of the code of civil procedure.<sup>23</sup>

From what has been explained above, we find that the traditional political administration has undergone some changes in practice, though it is believed that these local bodies were given full power as mentioned above. Their activities were very greatly limited and

21. Ibid., para. 25.

22. Ibid., paras. 26-28.

23. Ibid., para. 37.

nothing could be done unless it had been approved by the P.A. whose power was again restricted by the C.C. of Assam. It was in fact, a transplant of an alien sphere upon the traditional political structure. However, on the whole, it was the aim or the policy of the government to let the tribes govern themselves, of course, on the village level only.

### Revenue

The Nagas for a long time had not paid revenue to anyone. Only presents were exchanged with the Ahoms and these were considered to be tribute by the latter. The Angami Nagas, paid nothing to any neighbouring country. But with the encroachment of the alien powers the system of administration especially the payment of revenue in cash was for the first time introduced. The "Statistical Account of Assam" by W.W. Hunter taken upto 1877, does not mention clearly the number of villages which paid revenue to the British, as the D.C. of the Naga Hills District found it difficult to do so.<sup>24</sup> However, he roughly estimated the number of villages at 241 - 8 Assamese villages, 3 Aitoniya, 23 Cachari villages, 90 Mikir and 9 Rengma villages.<sup>25</sup> According to the

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24. Hunter, W.W., A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol.II, Delhi, 1975 (1st printed in 1878), p.198.

25. Ibid.

government order, a houstax was collected from Samaguting since the formation of the new district in 1866, while in the other villages, the tax was levied at different periods varying between 1874 and 1876.<sup>26</sup> The D.C. stated that those villages were induced to pay partly to save themselves from oft-repeated oppressions from their more powerful neighbours and also on account of the ease, comfort and security of their samaguting brethren.<sup>27</sup> This voluntary submission was looked upon by the British officers as an important civilizing effect achieved by them in the course of their mixing with the tribes, but it was mainly out of necessity for security against their enemies rather than anything else, because it was only the smaller villages which sought British protection.

As in other districts, a house tax of Rs.2/- per house was realised from the Naga Hills District, while in Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and the Garo Hills District, (revenues on land and minerals) were collected in addition to the house-tax.<sup>28</sup> But the land revenue

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26. Ibid., p. 198.

27. Ibid.

28. Report on the administration of the Province of Assam for the Years 1874-75 and 1875-76, Shillong, printed at the Assam Secretariat Press, 1877, p.51.

was also collected from two villages of the Naga Hills District.<sup>29</sup> These taxes were not paid direct to the government,<sup>30</sup> but the settlement was made with the head of the village, who submitted each year to the D.C. or the Sub-Divisional Officer (S.D.O), a list of the number of houses in his village, accounting for all casualties since the previous assessment,<sup>31</sup> a system similar to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District. As regard to this rate of revenue to be assessed with the effective control over the Nagas, the C.C. opined that in the first instance, "the measure was important rather from a political point of view and insisted on it as a public and well understood symbol of obedience rather than a valuable contribution to the revenue."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, inspite of the imbalance in taxes collected and the expenditure the District was maintained and controlled as is clear from the following table:<sup>33</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Revenue collected</u>			<u>Civil expenditure</u>	
	£	S	D	£	S
1867-68	41	17	0	4,969	0
1869-70	639	18	0	6,920	0
1870-71	496	12	0	6,485	18
1875-76	627	12	0	7,188	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1805</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24,863</b>	<b>6</b>

29. Hunter W.W., Op.cit., p. 197.

30. Ibid., p. 192.

31. Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the years 1874-75 and 1875-76, Op.cit., p. 52.

32. Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the years 1881-82, Shillong, 1883, p. 23.

33. Hunter W.W., Op.cit., p. 197.

The land tax was annually settled under the Assam Settlement Rules, the system of measurement being the same as in Assam proper.<sup>34</sup> This assessment was realised from 1869-70 amounting to £ 55 9S or 5S 8½d. each by 193 Proprietors.<sup>35</sup> However, the amount in the following year was lesser. It was only £ 43 14S,<sup>36</sup> while the house tax went on increasing as is seen from the following table:<sup>37</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>House tax</u>
1867-68	£ 19 16S OD
1868-70	£373 5S OD
1870-71	£429 18S OD
Total	<u>£822 19S OD</u>

The house tax continued to increase especially after 1874 because more and more Naga villages sought the protection of the British government against their more powerful neighbours even at the risk of paying taxes. However, this new system of paying taxes to the government was resented by the Nagas who then felt that they were no longer the masters in their own land and this resentment was manifested in their revolt in 1879-80. Though the weak villages were protected against

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34. Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the years 1874-75 and 1875-76, Op.cit. Part II, p.52.

35. Hunter W.W., Op.cit., p. 197.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

their enemies, their traditional political structure was to some extent disturbed, for instance, the old political, social and religious practices through the head-hunting were no longer appreciated by the alien power. Their political disunity among themselves was strengthened to a great extent by creating division among the tribes during the boundary demarcation.

### Communication

Communications were very poor in the Naga Hills and to make the hills more accessible or to smoothen the running of the administration, or in other words, to prevent the tribal raids amongst themselves and upon the plainsmen, and above all, for better transport of supplies of provisions for the forces stationed in the hills, it was felt necessary to undertake the construction of roads. So it was proposed to open a line of communication from Samaguting to Dimapur at the total cost of Rs.4,000/- on land and water communication between Dimapur and Golaghat and, from the former place to Samaguting at the total cost of Rs.8,550/-<sup>37</sup>. However, they tried to curtail the expenses<sup>38</sup> in order to make a large saving, for which reason, the roads

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37. (Administrative Report), Foreign Department, Progs., December 1866, No.138, Op.cit., para 40, p.7.

38. (Administrative Report), Foreign Department, Progs., September 1876, No.143, p. 186.



were mainly of bridle paths. The communication between Kohima and Golaghat by early 1880 was much improved chiefly due to the visit of His Excellency the Commander in-chief in November 1881 who permitted a company of sappers and a wing of the 23rd Pioneers to be employed on the hill portion of the road.<sup>39</sup> Besides the above mentioned road, communication in different parts - Golaghat to Wokha, Wokha to Kohima, Kohima to Mao, on the Manipur frontier was also in the full swing by the early 1880s though this road had been intended since the early 1830s.

#### Frontier Policy

Before the full subjugation of the Nagas in 1880, there were few troops stationed in the district. However, with the effective control, these forces increased as a precautionary measure against any recurrence of further raids and revolts as faced recently in 1879-80. For the protection of the plains portions of the district, three earthworks garrisoned by the frontier police were formed at Aisacherra, Jaipur, and Baladhan, which were connected by a path regularly patrolled by parties in charge of the several posts.<sup>40</sup> The frontier

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39. (Administrative Report), Foreign Department, Progs., September 1882, No.136, para 21, p.7.

40. Assam General Administrative Report for the year 1880-81 and 1881-82, Shillong, 1882, p.18.

police was stationed with instructions to signal, and in order to communicate in a better and in a very short space of time, arrangements were made.<sup>41</sup> The old means of employing the non-Nagas - the Kukis, was continued consisting of 100 Kukis for patrolling the outposts. This was added to and strengthened by the establishment of a European Officer in the hills.<sup>42</sup> The police outposts were stationed at different parts of the district, viz., Wokha, Karuphema, Piphema, Pherima, Samaguting, Nichu Guard, Dimapur, Borpathar, Henima, Viswama, Nerhema and Kohima, the police numbering 462 in all.<sup>43</sup> It was intended eventually to establish a strong attachments in order to bring hom to the people the reality of the British control.<sup>44</sup>

The duties of the police were almost purely military<sup>45</sup> (with raiders) and it had been proved so in the event of Kohima. In this way, the British government tried to control the hill tribes through armed police forces.

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41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. (Administrative Report), Foreign Department, Progs., September 1882, No. 138, Op. cit., para 19, p. 6.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

### Inner Line Regulation

With the rapid expansion of the cultivation along the frontier areas of Assam, there arose problems and difficulties and after 1869; the commercial extension led to the encroachment of the tea planters upon the hill forests of the tribes. In spite of the payment of the land revenue to the Naga chiefs in some cases, the problem remained unsolved.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime in 1872-73, the statute 32 and 33, vic., Cap. 3, which gave power of summary legislation for backward tracts to the Executive government was extended to Assam.<sup>47</sup> The foremost plan of this was to pass regulations for the frontier districts.

Besides the problems that arose between the tea planters and the tribes, it was found that there was pressing necessity of bringing under more stringent control the commercial relations of the British subjects with the tribes living outside the jurisdiction. So, the government decided to take special powers and buy out special rules.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly a regulation was drawn up by the Lt. Governor and was approved by the G.G.-in-Council. This regulation empowered the Lt. Governor to prescribe and modify a line to be called "The Inner Line" in each or any of the districts affected,

46. Asoso Yonuo, Op.cit., p. 94.

47. Mackenzie A., Op.cit., p. 55.

48. Ibid.

beyond which no British subjects of certain classes or foreign residents could pass without a licence<sup>49</sup> issued by the D.C.<sup>50</sup> The pass or licence was subject to conditions. Rules were laid down regarding trade, the possession of land beyond the line and others. It also provided for the preservation of elephants at the same time authorized the government to lay down rules for their capture.

However, this did not solve the problem as it was difficult to define the actual boundary of the British possessions, since the so called Inner Line did neither indicate the territorial frontier nor classify the sovereignty of the territory beyond the limits of the British administered areas.<sup>51</sup> As such the Inner Line Regulation was laid down along the borders of the Brahmaputra valley. The tea planters were forbidden from acquiring land beyond this line either from the Assam Government or from the local tribal chiefs. This regulation was defined merely for purposes of jurisdiction. The active control of the district officer need not necessarily extend upto the boundary but no further extension beyond the line was permitted.<sup>52</sup> The tribes

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49. Assam Administrative Report, 1874-75 and 1875-76, Part IIB, Op.cit., p. 3.

50. Ibid., p. 56.

51. Asoso Yonuo, Op. cit., p. 94.

52. Mackenzie A., Op. cit., p. 89.

beyond the line were left independent to manage their own affairs without much interference by the frontier officers in their political administration except to establish a personal influence for good upon the chiefs and the tribes.<sup>53</sup>

This Inner Line Regulation was extended to Cachar, Lakhimpur and Darrang Districts, out of necessity. In this way, the government provided safeguards for its subjects against the tribes as a precautionary measure to prevent the raids of the tribes and repress and finally subjugate them in the long run. Unfortunately the line drawn was neglected and brought unrestricted relations between the plainsmen of Assam and the tribes including the Nagas. This often led to the frequent quarrels and disturbances in connection with the traffic in rubber, tea, etc.<sup>54</sup> In spite of the above mentioned problems, the Inner Line became the fixed international, not internal boundary of the Naga Hills. Henceforth, the tea planters paid compensation to the Nagas for the land occupied beyond the line and in spite of the frequent violation, it continued to be in force.<sup>55</sup>

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53. Ibid., pp. 89-90.

54. Asoso Yonuo, Op. cit., p. 95.

55. Ibid.

Boundary Demarcation

The British had very little knowledge of the geography, polity and economic condition of the Naga hills at the time of the conquest of Assam in 1826. The Treaty of Yandaboo concluded on the 22nd February 1826 did not clearly demarcate the boundaries between Assam and Burma, and Naga Hills and Assam or Burma, but merely asserted that "His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from future interferences with the principality of Assam and its dependencies," according to the 3-article of the treaty.<sup>56</sup> Nor was the boundary between the Naga hills and Manipur State properly demarcated (i.e. at the time of the change of policies). However, later on they asserted that according to the above mentioned treaty, the whole of the Naga hills was annexed into their territory. This very statement, of course, bore very little weight at the time of the formulation of the policy of the non-interference. In this way, the Naga hills had been the victims of alien rule which tried in all respects to manipulate them to suit its convenient policies. In other words, the distribution of the Naga tribes had its root cause in the conquest of Assam by the British followed by the demarcation of the

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56. Bose M.L., Historical and Constitutional Documents of North East India, Delhi, 1979, pp. 61-62.

boundaries running from the south to the north extremity. The boundary line which passes through the densely forested hills, streams, trees and river with Nagaland, Manipur, Mizo hill on one side and the Kachin, Naga hills and Chin Hills on the other, was arbitrary drawn by the British company in 1826. The boundary commission which was appointed after two years did not actually demarcate which therefore became merely an imaginary boundary. It was done to suit their own convenience without considering the sentiments, the actual political or social aspects of the frontier people. This inconsideration on the part of the British did not create any necessity to change with the annexation of the Burma in 1885 into the British territory. Again, in 1937, when Burma was separated from India, the need for the adjustment of boundary was not felt. Today, these people make use of these jungle borders from both countries as their bases and as traffic to Bangla Desh and China - fighting for self independence. The two governments find difficulty in suppressing such spirit at the same time cannot deny the fact that after all they were ethnically one.

Coming to the demarcation of boundary between Manipur and the Naga hills, the year 1841-42, has to be taken into account. It was in this year that such division of the division in the two states started.

The British knew that the Angami Nagas were the most warlike of all the tribes, who committed raids upon the British territories in the plains and Manipur. In order to suppress such outrages, the British found it expedient to share the task with the Government of Manipur as it is clear from J.F. Brown's (Special Commissioner for Assam and Manipur boundary) statement in 1871:

It was intended thereby to distribute between the Manipur State and the British Government the work of raid repression, in other words, the latter undertook the duty of preventing raids committed by Nagas living in the North of the line, whilst it threw on Manipur the burden of carrying out a similar task in the country south of it.<sup>57</sup>

This line eventually became a territorial limit because Brown found it expedient to retain the line, for the raids in North Cachar by the Nagas ceased for many years since the time of the demarcation of the boundary.<sup>58</sup> In other words, due to the effective and positive results, the line was retained for 30 years. It was demarcated by Gordon and Bigge and was followed despite the opposition from the Manipur Government. However, in 1871, it was thoroughly investigated on the spot whether there was any compensation to be made over to the State

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57. Foreign Political Department, Progs., March 1872, No.80 (para.28), pp. 54-5.

58. Ibid., p. 55.



of Manipur for the villages included into the British territory. But Mr. Brown (the Boundary Commissioner) pointed out that such compensation was not necessary as the Major Tungai (from Manipur State), could not give him a satisfactory answer as to whether the villages north of the 1841-42 line belonged to Manipur.<sup>59</sup> In this way the British officials overawed the power of the Manipur government. Mr Brown too came to the conclusion from the information gathered that though the Manipur government realised tribute from the Naga villages north of the line, it was not permanent. As regards to the five Naga villages called Sapvoma cluster they were excluded from the Naga Hills District as J.F. Brown suggested to which it was in agreement with His Excellency in Council, who too found it expedient to exclude them from their neighbouring tribes.<sup>60</sup>

As regards the unexplored country to the east of the Naga Hills District, they were left to themselves except for a friendly intercourse with the chiefs, distributing presents and giving friendly advice to settle the disputes by the D.C.<sup>61</sup> The Nagas living on the south-east of the Naga Hills District or the north east of Manipur, i.e. upto the Lanier river, were claimed by the Manipur

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59. Ibid. (Paras.52-54), p. 57.

60. Ibid. No.116 (paras.8-12), p.118.

61. Ibid., p. 119 (para.16).

authorities,<sup>62</sup> but the surveyors found it baseless. The Secretary to the G.C. of Assam informed the Secretary to the Government of India, that with regard to the claim put forward by the Manipuri Durbar, he opined that the latter's claim was merely a 'sweeping expression' and that to the inhabitants of that part (25° North latitude and 95° E longitude) had 'more connection with Burma than with Manipoor'.<sup>63</sup> The impression they got was that ever if there was any relationship it ceased before the coming of the British to that part. The Manipuri officers, who accompanied the expeditionary party expressed their view that they knew nothing of this tribe and wished to have no communication with them.<sup>64</sup> Yet, the Manipur Durbar asserted its ownership over this region. However, after a long persuasion they accepted the line demarcated which included the tribal villages which they supposed were more or less under the former's possession.<sup>65</sup> The former was denied of the territories unsurveyed. It was therefore only natural that these tribes continued their old relationship passing from one country to other country without visa (pass). To the Government of India was confronted with the resultant impact of this boundary demarcation

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62. Foreign Political Dept. Progs., January 1877, No.89, p.55 (para I).

63. Ibid., p.56.

64. Ibid., No.90 (para.8), p.48.

65. Foreign Political Dept., Progs., May 1878, No.328, p. 285.

for the tribes found difficulty to accept the fact that they were politically divided but geographically and ethnically and perhaps economically they are all one. They therefore cared little and communicated with each other for marriage or economic relations without the slightest thought of the existence of the boundary.<sup>66</sup> As such, they never felt the necessity of going through the formalities of passport, visa, etc. the impression of which the British government knew would arouse the wrath of the tribes which they earnestly wished to avoid at any cost.<sup>67</sup> The policy of non-interference in the internal tribal affairs followed towards these tribes by the British government was still followed in independent India.

## II

### Nature and character of Administration

In order to achieve their aim of bringing the Naga tribes under their control gradually, they (British) realised the positive result of utilising the natives as mediators between them and the mass. They also understood the existing political structure which recognised the Khel leaderships of the villages. They

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66. ASOSO YONUO, Op.cit., p. 331.

67. Ibid.

had more or less formed the idea they should not bring a total change to their traditional customs which would mean disaster to their own policies. So, besides the military and police forces that were stationed in the hills, they recognised the clan leadership through them they could indirectly subjugate the people. Through these leaders or delegates or representatives, the government hoped to end the inter-clan and inter-tribal feuds which had from time immemorial been in existence. This new system evolved would be credited to Lt. Gregory, the first D.C. of the newly created district in November 1868.<sup>68</sup> The object of this system is to receive the representatives or delegates from the different important Naga tribes who would aid the government to stop the existing feuds and check the recurrences among themselves.<sup>69</sup> Later on, they acted as interpreters, the escorts and were even included in the Intelligence Department of the Political Agent. They not only proved good interpreters but also literally helped in getting supplies for the coolies who were constructing a road from Samaguting to Wokha.<sup>70</sup>

Finding it necessary and useful, the Government of India approved of it in 1870.<sup>71</sup> In 1872, the reports on

68. Foreign (Political) Dept., Progs., May 1873, Nos.271-74, p.1.

69. Ibid.

70. Foreign (Political A) Dept., Progs., May 1876 (k.w) No.101-103.

71. Ibid.

this working of the system showed satisfactory and the government further declared its continuance. Henceforth the role of the delegates in the subjugation of the tribes became more important and the government of India sanctioned to raise its numbers from 10 to 15 at an extra cost of Rs.50/- per month.<sup>72</sup>

The political Agent of the Naga Hills reported in 1875 that he found the delegates invaluable as ever which is clear from his statements: "I am more than ever convinced that we cannot do better than introduce the plan whenever we advance into a new country of the kind which lies all round our Assam valley."<sup>73</sup> In the initial stage, it seemed as if this sort of system could stop the existing feuds. However notwithstanding this, the assistant Commissioner considered that the delegates were most useful as mediums of communication with the clans they represented and he was of opinion that if such such were discontinued the clans could look upon the discharge of delegates as an act by which all friendly intercourse with the British government would be cut off. He therefore recommended for its continuance and judge their role after a year's experience and take decision accordingly.<sup>74</sup>

The officiating commissioner of Assam, Col. Agnew re-

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72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Foreign (Political A), Dept., Progs., December 1870, Nos. 28-31 (Office Note).

marked that any immediate and perceptible effect to reconcile the tribes through this system would not be expected but that the result could be obtained only after a longer experience.<sup>75</sup> According to the office note such system "strengthens the D.C.'s position in the hills and gives his opportunities of free intercourse with the people. It enables him too to move about in the hills with a feeling of perfect security and with a facility which otherwise he might not enjoy, as porters and suppliers, are, by the assistance of the delegates, easily procurable."<sup>76</sup> It was for these reasons that the officiating officer strongly recommended its continuance for a longer period.

With the introduction of the British rule in the Naga hills, the democratic form of selecting the chiefs among them could not be fully practised since the British supported the chiefs. In other words, it became difficult for the people to oust the head chief thus leading towards the hereditary form, though this is not the case with all the tribes. This sort of practice remains even today but under the "new Indian administration, the village chiefs, though respected and are acting as village

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75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

spokesman, are in reality, mere shadows of their original power<sup>77</sup> puppets in the hands of the existing political practice. The chiefs now are entrusted with road repairing, distributing the post and preparing the rest camps for the touring government officials.<sup>78</sup> Their age long powers are being only a dream of the past while they are now practically dependent upon the government officials in their districts. Though the government tried to win the hearts of the chiefs by giving them special red-cloth, the hereditary powers of the headship have been limited to a large extent. Every case is no longer decided in the village, according to the traditional or customary laws except that they have connection with the minor cases.

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77. M. Hram, Op.cit., p. 76.

78. Ibid.

**CHAPTER - V**

**CONCLUSION**



## CONCLUSION

7 If the 18th century laid the foundation of the British empire in India, the 19th century saw its expansion even to its north eastern corner. The expansionist policies - "The Subsidiary Alliance", "The Doctrine of lapse" towards the Indian States was one major cause of the outbreak of the mutiny in 1857. Surprisingly it was not during the Company's rule in India that the hill tribes on the Assam border were brought into the mainstream of the British empire, though within three decades (1824-54), the whole of the Assam valley was annexed into it by the Company. It was rather after the proclamation of the non-expansionist policy following the mutiny that these tribes were brought under their control. Though the above mentioned policies were not applied fully to this north-eastern region, the annexations of some of them were not justified in the cases like Mattak and Jaintia on moral grounds and this was also admitted by the Home Authorities. Yet, when we discuss the annexation as a whole from the general political point of view, we find that the East India Company had no other alternative left.<sup>1</sup> The annexation of Assam was

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1. Lahiri R.M., Annexation of Assam (1824-1854), General Printers and Publishers Ltd., Calcutta, 1954, p. 224.

justified on the humanitarian point of view, as it was under utter confusion and depression politically, socially and economically due to the maladministration of the Burmese.

Had the British forces retired from that unhappy valley at that stage as did Welsh half a century ago not only the eastern frontier of the British empire would be imperilled, Assam would not have recovered from the blight of mediaeval theocratic rule.<sup>2</sup>

The first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) - the outcome of which was the annexation of a large part of the country, was declared to defend the north eastern frontier of the British empire from the Burmese, who were extending their control westward. It was inevitable and at the same time unavoidable for the two imperialistic powers to come into conflict. On the part of the British it was, as pointed out by Pemberton (former Joint Commissioner in Manipur) in 1835 that a duty as the defence of the north eastern frontier was necessary "with a view to protect our valuable provinces of Rungpoor and Dacca, the possession of which had long been the anxious object of the King of Ava".<sup>3</sup>

The conquest of Assam brought the British government face to face with the surrounding border tribes

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2. Ibid.

3. Pemberton R. Boilean, Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Gauhati, 1966 (1st impression: 1835), supplement p. LXV.

who occasionally raided the plains for plunder as well as pursuing the old customary practice - the head hunting, in which case the Nagas were no exception. In the case of the Nagas as with the Jaintias, it was the British who first penetrated into their hills on the pretext of executing the wishes of the Raja of Manipur by direct communication with Assam for a better trade. The Angami Nagas who were the most warlike of all resented the alien penetration into their hills and naturally put up a strong resistance. This was taken as a legitimate ground for their continuance of their raids. Their hitherto practice in slave trade which had been going on with the Bengali merchants who came up for cotton and which was one of the causes of the raids in their neighbouring countries, could not but attract the attention of the British. In the meantime the strategic importance of Assam was recognised. In order to meet the immediate necessity, i.e. to defend the frontiers from the raids and prevent such outrages, second, to gain more knowledge about the geography, culture and history of the hill tribes, and last, but not the least, to explore the resources of the hills, the military expeditions were sent from 1839 onwards. Had the Angami's shown their easy going way as did the

Sibsagar border tribes, in their first encounter with the expeditionary party under Captains Jenkins and Pemberton, in 1832, the question of sending military forces into their hills would perhaps had not arisen. In other words, the British would not have to incur expenditure by sending so many expeditions unnecessarily. However, we have seen how these expeditions were fruitless, yet, it was through these undertakings that they came to know about the causes of the raids. Whether it was the <sup>aim</sup> of the government to reach the natural frontier or not, it is clear that their main objective was to explore the natural resources of the unknown hills for economic exploitation if found feasible. This is very clear from the fact that after the failure to obtain their objective by sending expeditions (1839-1851), they left the Nagas to themselves by declaring the policy of absolute non-interference. They had come to the conclusion that the hills were economically unproductive as well as unsuitable for their habitation after getting access to these hills. These expeditions were mostly militant in character as in many cases, the villages were burnt to ashes, including their food when <sup>they</sup> failed to get the offenders yet, it was always claimed that the British government followed the policy of peaceful conciliation.

The non-interference policy (1851-1865) adopted following the failure to subdue the Nagas by those military expeditions as mentioned above, too, did not prove fruitful. Though the British officers justified the adoption of such policy on the ground that the tribes managed better when left to themselves, we cannot deny that it was only a pretext. In fact, it is very clear from the Governor General's minute that there were important reasons such as, the economic unproductivity of the hills, second, to preserve their military prestige (which was just regained over the defeat of the Nagas), third, to give the impression that they were not after territorial expansion indicating that they were after all outside the British territory. Yet, we know such pretexts or, claims were overlooked or bypassed when the Crown assumed the administrative control over India and had even proclaimed its non-territorial expansionist policy towards the Indian states that the hill tribes of north eastern region including the Nagas were annexed within the decade. It was so done, according to them, on the humanitarian ground because the Nagas instead of stopping their raids, continued and in fact increased their number amounting to 22 within a few years causing a loss of lives. This was taken as a legitimate pretext to annex

their hills by creating 'Naga Hills District' for the first time in 1866. With this, commenced the exploration of the unknown hills and their gradual annexation into the British India. The shifting of the headquarters from plains (Samaguting) to the more accessible area, the Angamis (Kohima) rendered the adoption of the forward policy an early task in subjugating them but they faced a strong resistance from them in the following year of the transfer of the headquarters.

The British government was very cautious regarding the administration of the Naga areas and did not therefore bring sudden and great changes. In other words, the Supreme Government was reluctant to assume full political control over the hillmen at the same time, unwilling to leave them completely independent. It was for these reasons that the Naga hills were incorporated into their territory little by little without disturbing their customary political structure. The Nagas, on the other hand, became an easy prey for the more powerful government and finally bowed before its feet.

It is true that the administration they introduced in the hill areas was based upon the traditional customs and norms. Every power seemed to be entrusted in the village or local authorities. The power to decide over

the civil and criminal cases were entrusted in the  
above mentioned bodies but the final decision always  
was reserved for the Political Agent or the Chief  
Commissioner of Assam. They no longer enjoyed full  
authority and the supreme power over their own vil-  
lages, as was in the past.) They had become only  
instruments of the alien power to rule their country.  
In other words, their political independence had dis-  
appeared from the scene and they had become the mere  
tools between their people and the foreigners. The  
system of receiving delegates from every important  
communities, who acted as messengers or interpreters  
proved a tremendous advantage for the British. The  
government in turn recognised their posts and gave  
them special red cloth, which is still in practice  
today.

These agents though functioning in some respects  
similar to those of magistrates or petty bureau-  
crats in the plains, are different in character, in  
the sense that they are drawn from the tribes and the  
area which they serve and are essentially intermedia-  
ries between the tribes and the District officer or  
the sub-divisional officer. Among the Garos the  
'Laskars' who are elected by the hereditary nokmas of

each village, the dollais for the Syntfngs, elected by certain clans, 'Sardars' among the Khasis and 'Dobashis' among the Nagas who are proposed by the people do similar function of magisterial and tax-collecting. Among the Lushais, such system was unnecessary as the system of chiefs could serve the purpose. In the Manipur hills, 'Iambus' perform the same function. It was through this system that the tribes were administered indirectly.

The Inner Line Regulation was one of the preventive measures they adopted to maintain peace and order in the frontiers. Though this isolationist policy of the government as well as placing them under unadministered or Partially Excluded areas, have been criticised by many as if it wanted to keep the tribes as "museum piece", we must recognise that the British preserved the tribal identity though we cannot overlook the negative effect on their backwardness through this well-intended policy.

As a part of their conciliatory policy towards these hill tribes and to avoid or prevent the infiltration of the plains culture through religion, the Christian missionaries were invited. In the first place, such necessity arose when the turbulent hill tribes committed more



and more raids upon the British territory. To obviate such activities, the British resorted to two remedial courses - the introduction of Christianity and to raise and strengthen the frontier police. Naga land was considered a fertile soil because it was thoroughly primitive and independent of religious profession. It was a positive remedy to subdue the Nagas in the sense that the tribes were to be taught not only of religious theory, but to educate them by establishing schools and above all through their practical way of uplifting their backwardness. Though their (the British) attitude towards the missionaries seemed to have changed, they still cherished the self-sacrificing activities. Had not the government invited the missionaries at such early stage, perhaps it might be difficult for the officers to do the work of social and religious services to the people. It is surprising, as in the case of other tribes, how the missionaries dared to criticise openly the simple practices of the tribes which were valued more than anything else in the world. To criticise and weaken the social customs of any community or tribe only enhanced the hatred for the aliens and this actually happened among the Nagas. However, they were not permitted

to work among the most turbulent and warlike Angamis because the latter needed a strong military force to subdue them. So in the case of the Angamis, it was only at the point of a gun and not with a cross on one side that brought them to subjugation. In the meantime strong military posts were established in the non-politically controlled frontiers while the forward step was taking place in the Angami, Lotha and other Naga inhabited areas.

Mackenzie had reviewed the frontier policy of the government towards these hill tribes as "one of fair and equitable dealing".<sup>4</sup> He went on to point out that there had been no trace of a policy of 'extermination and repression'.<sup>5</sup> Conciliation was the main duty of the frontier officers. "Conciliate these savages if you can. Be persistent in demanding surrender of murderers, but endeavour so to approach the tribes, that a basis may be opened for friendly intercourse in the future."<sup>6</sup> Though their main task seemed to be a positive approach towards the Nagas, the very fact that the military forces were sent to enact the surrender of the marauders and suppress their raids shows that their policy was

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4. Mackenzie A., Op.cit., p. 53.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 369.

to exterminate their activities. This is justified for they created tension, apprehension not only in the frontiers but also among themselves. Life became a big problem for all and thanks to the intervention of the British that the tribes stopped their outrages. The head-hunting which was the basic cause for tribal feuds began to be disused little by little and to-day its practice is completely given up. It was the policy needed at that time to use force if possible to eradicate such practice. The policy of exacting the surrender of the offenders was to show that they would not tolerate their activities as well as to impress their mighty power over them, though it initiated an aggressive spirit. On the other hand, the payment of annual allowances to the Abors was to initiate a spirit of conciliation. This system was successful in the case of the 'Rajmohal Hills, who had previously been the terror of the surrounding country whom successive military expeditions had failed to subdue, but, who, under the operation of annual payment conditional on good conduct, have remained perfectly quiet and peaceful ever since."<sup>7</sup> Whatever their adoption of policies the government was impelled to secure peace on the frontiers in order to continue its economic exploitation in the plains.

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7. Ibid., p.54.

The tribes of the north eastern India were backward economically because of the British policy of placing them under Excluded or Partially Excluded Areas. But one cannot overlook the positive result, that is the tribes today do not develop unwanted elements through outside culture. Under Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886, Tribal Belts and Blocks were constituted for the preservation of the tribes. Frontier Tracts Regulations were introduced for the tribal areas of the north east region from time to time by the early administrators knowing fully well the special circumstances which demand special laws for the better administration of the tribes.

Keeping in view the above mentioned introduction of administration of the tribes, one cannot but wonder at the distribution of these hillmen especially the Mizos and the Nagas to different States of the Indian Union and a foreign country - Burma. Were the British conscious of such division? Yes. In fact, their policy was to divide and suppress the tribes for the raids committed by them. It is not a surprise, for, their vested interests were not in bringing political unity in the colonies, but to exploit their economy without introducing much progress. So, the origin of the search for identity or the Naga

problem of today, can be traced back to colonial rule. In other words, the British government consciously or unconsciously created the problem for India, today.

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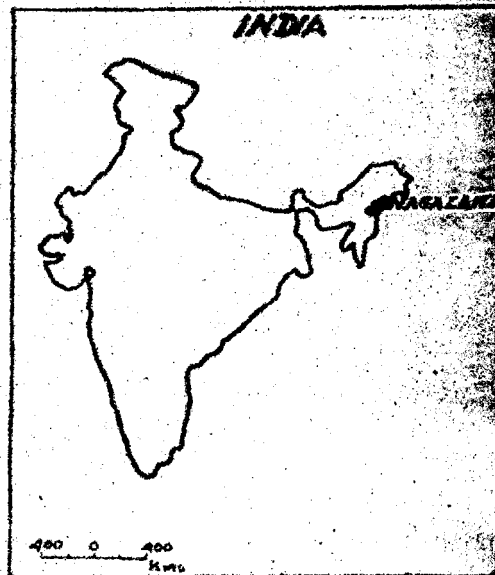
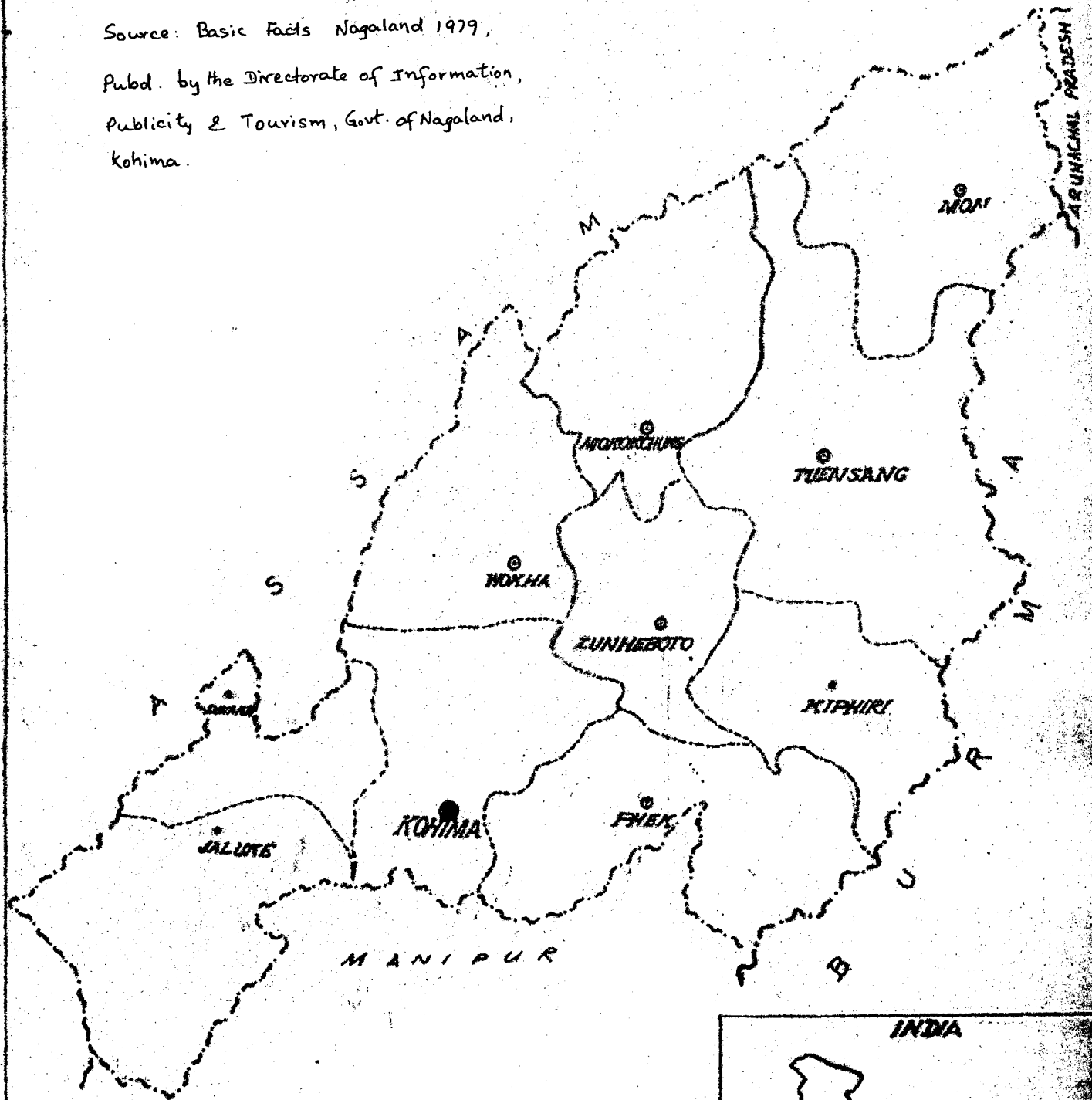
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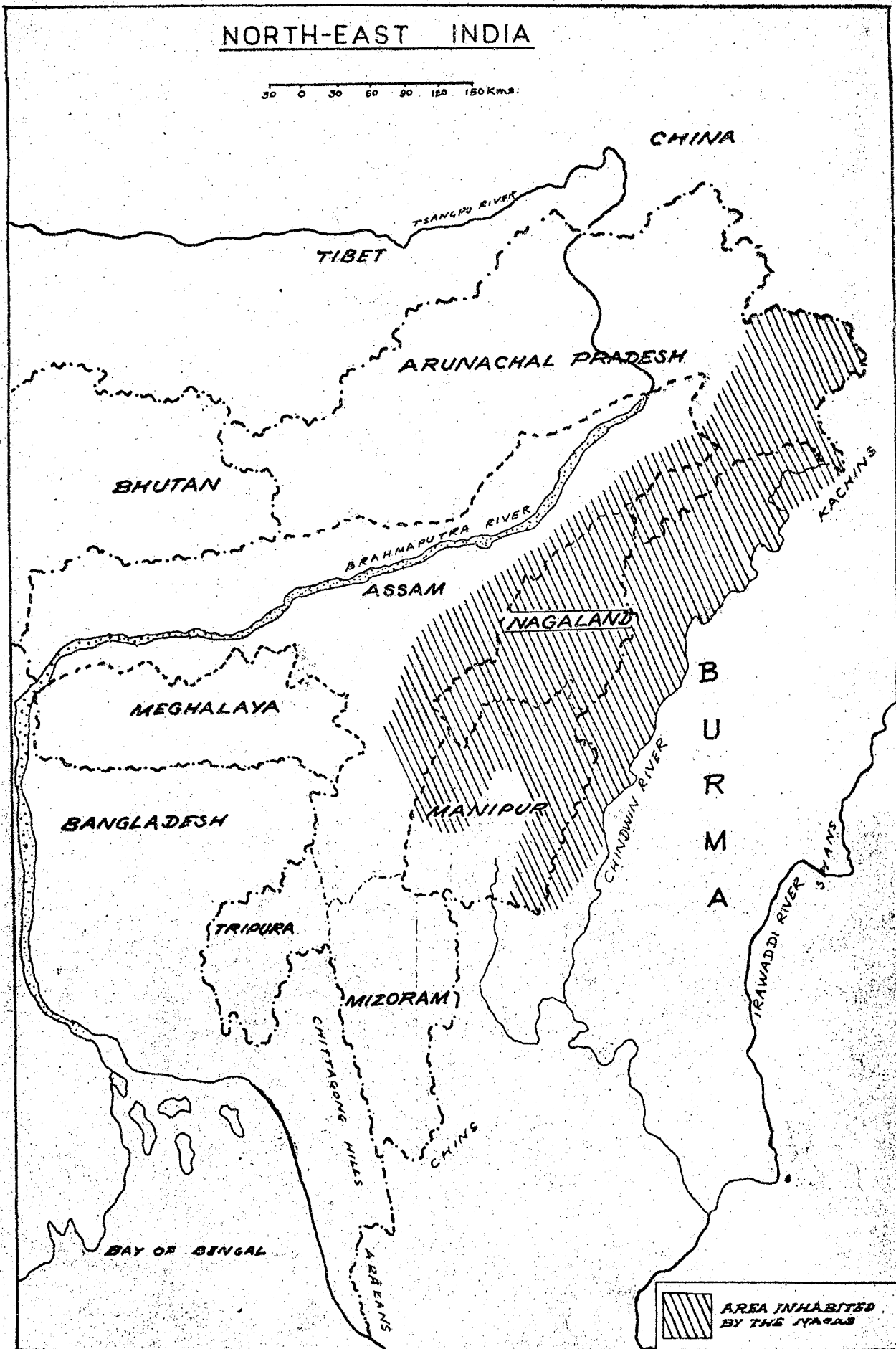
# NAGALAND

Source: Basic Facts Nagaland 1979,  
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Source: Asozo Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, Delhi, 1974, facing page 1.