NAGA POLITICS UNDER COLONIAL RULE
FROM 1832 TO 1947

In 1826, first Anglo-Burmes war British defeat Burma and annexed Assam, the Colonial Government had embarked on consolidating the boundaries of this newly acquired vast territories. In the same year, the treaty of ‘yandabo’ was signed between the British Government and the king of Ava of Burma. According to this treaty Burmese were not supposed to interfere into the affairs of Assam and this treaty had an immense impact on the tribes of North East India. The British became the de facto guardian of the whole region by the terms of peace treaty (Gosh, 1982:81-83).

After attaining power in Assam, Bruiser’s next step was to progressively annexing more borderlands and extending their own boundaries. Among the different tribes of North East Nagas were the most warlike tribe and their topography, history, population and villages were unknown to the British (Yonuo,1974:70-71). There were number of reasons which compelled the British to come into contact with the Nagas and hold their authority over them. Dr. Ashikho has identified five major factors, which influenced the British Government to penetrate into the Naga areas. First was that the top priority to security and safety of Indian borders with focus to secure North East Frontier border because they wanted to control over the Himalayan territories from Tibet to Burma. Naga Hills were on the southern side of the Himalayas north side naturally protected by snow from invaders so the Britishers wanted to have their control over southern area. Secondly, the Nagas frequently raided on the plains of Assam and Manipur which compelled the British to establish their control over the territory of Naga Hills.
In the initial stages, the British adopted the policy of friendship with Nagas but this policy did not bring fruitful results. Then military expeditions were sent at different periods to protect the British subjects from the Naga raids. Third was to establish trade with the king Gambir Singh of Manipur business agreement were made and the Naga territory was adjacent to the Manipur so it was essential for them to control over Naga Hills. In order to enhance trade relation with Manipur British needed to construct a road, which provided direct link from Assam to Manipur and the Naga Hills came on their way, which was the fourth reason. Fifthly, when the king of Manipur wanted to extend his empire over to Naga areas Britisher felt that Gambir Singh would conquest the Naga Hills permanently (Mao, 1992:16-17).

British Naga relations period is divided into three phases first phase is the military expedition that is from 1832 to 1850. Second phase was non-interference to Naga tribes from 1851 to 1865 and the third phase covers the period from 1866 to 1947 in which British establish their direct administrative control over the entire Naga Hills (Mackenzie,2005:101)

In 1832 British made first contact with Nagas when Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton led 700 Manipuri troops with 800 coolies from the Manipur valley to enter the Naga Hills. In this first expedition Captain Jenkin’s army faced resistance from the Angami Nagas. Nagas threw spears, stones and rolled stones and did their “outmost by yelling and intimidation to obstruct their advance” (Kumar,2005:119). Manipur had some control over the southern area of the Naga Hills and in 1833 under the command of Lieutenant Gordon Brown second expedition were carried out. This time king of Manipur Gambir Singh also accompanied them and they marched through the Assam hills but they had to face severe opposition from Angami Nagas in the same year. British had signed a
treaty with Gambir Singh under this agreement king has to provide assistance in the form of troops when required by the British on the eastern front of British territories (Singh, 1972:12). Another factor that brought the “British in confrontation with the Angami Nagas was the death of the ruler of Cachar. His death signaled greater interest of British in Naga affair” in 14 August 1832 they were able to annexed the Cachar territory and in 1835 the forest between Dayang and Dhansiri rivers declared boundary between Assam and Manipur. During this period villages in the north Cachar areas and the Manipur border were constantly suffering from Angami Naga raids because Naga claimed that this territory belonged to them. Hence, the situation went out of control British thought to take help of Tularam a senapati of north Cachar and the king of Manipur because they hade jurisdiction over some part of Naga Hills. But both of them were found to be unfit to deal with this problem Tularam lacked adequate resources and king of Manipur exercised de jure but not the de facto control over the Naga Hills (Singh and Shekhawat, 2009:103)

The below shown table explains expedition of British with Nagas from 1839 to 1850. The major reasons of these expeditions carried by British were the Angami Naga raids on the British subjects and plain areas. British wanted to control Nagas for the effective administration. Three from the ten expeditions that is 1844, 1849 and 1850 did not prove to be successful. The first expedition was carried under the command of Grange in 1839 and rests were carried by different officers. Major developments took place as from 1841 to 1842 boundary line of Manipur was settled and from 1846 to 1847 road was constructed from Mohung Dijooa to Samagooding.
Table 1: Expedition’s from 1839-1850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Name of the officer</th>
<th>Year of expedition</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Successful/ unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Grange (Sub – Assistant)</td>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Angami Hills</td>
<td>To investigate the reason of raids by Angami</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Grange (Sub – Assistant)</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Angami Hills</td>
<td>Peaceful settlement and not to interfere in the internal affair of Naga</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bigge (Lieutenant)</td>
<td>1841-42</td>
<td>Angami Hills &amp; Lotha Village</td>
<td>Settlement of Manipur boundary and to control the slave trade</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Bordie (Capitan)</td>
<td>1842</td>
<td>Ao- area Lotha</td>
<td>To convince the Naga chiefs Not to conduct rade on British territory</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Eid (Capitan)</td>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Angami Hills</td>
<td>To collect the tribute</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Butler (Capitan)</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Angami Hills</td>
<td>To establish permanent military post</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Butler (Capitan)</td>
<td>1846-47</td>
<td>Angami Hills</td>
<td>Opening the road between Mohung Dijoaa to Samagoodting</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Vincent (Lieutenant)</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>Angami Hills</td>
<td>To avenge the death of Bhogchand</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Vincent (Lieutenant)</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Angami Hills</td>
<td>To punish villages which has been concerned in outrage</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Jenkin (Major)</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Naga Fort at Konemah</td>
<td>To relieve Lieutenant Vincent</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The period from 1851 to 1865, was followed by British as a policy of non-intervention in the Naga territory because they thought that it might save their expense and to control the Nagas also created too much trouble for them. Secondly the Naga resistance would be decreased when they thought that there was no interferences in their territory (Ramunny, 1988:12). But this policy of non-interference did not bear any fruitful results because Angami Nagas didn’t stop their raids on the plain areas. During this period number of British subjects was killed and some were
carried off. This compulsion made the British to establish a post in 1866 at Samaguting area, which is now called modern Chumukedimas.

Gradually new roads were constructed with an aim to promote trade relations with the plain areas. Dispensaries and schools were established for the welfare of Naga community. The main purpose of British along with the development was to create a peaceful atmosphere with the Angami Nagas because Angamis were considered as most terrified fighters. With the introduction of markets in plain areas many hill Naga started visiting plain areas for collecting their daily needs.

**Inner line Regulation in 1873**

Two reasons behind the formation of Inner Line Regulation were tea cultivation and not to apply rules and regulation beyond Inner Line. Tea cultivation started flourish from 1869 in Naga Hills. British separate Naga Hills from Assam for the purpose of administration more and more areas come under the tea cultivation. But this created frictions between the tea planters and the Nagas thus in order to prevent disturbance British Government introduced Inner Line Regulation in 1873. The line was laid down along the northeastern and south eastern borders of the Brahmaputra valley. Tea planters were restricted not to plough land beyond the Inner Line. The pass or license was issued by the Deputy Commissioner for those who want to go beyond the Inner Line with a specific purpose. The land which was acquired for tea plantation for this a special compensation was given to the Nagas under this regulation. Nagas were allowed to manage their own affairs and some political interference was done by the British officers with the help of village chief. “thus the Inner Line separated the Hill tracts of the North East from the district administration of Assam awarding special status to people there. This regulation empowered the Government to make summary legislation and also the power to frame
rules for the tribal peoples according to the need and circumstances” (Singh, 2004:34). This line was not a territorial Frontier but limited the administration area. The Inner Line permit was lifted in Manipur state on 18 November 1950. One of the purposes for creating of Inner Line is to alienate warlike Nagas from the British administrative establishment. The alienation was so complete that the Nagas started considering themselves as different from Indians

**The Establishment of the Naga Hills District**;

An effective administration started from the year 1877. In 1878, Chief administrative political unit was established at Kohima with a sub center at Wokha. A local official granted power to intervene in the inter village quarrels and new policy was framed under which 2 rupees annually were collected as a house tax. Naga Hills became a district and in 1881, and new sub center was opened in Mokokchung in 1888 (Elwin, 1961:24).

**Impact of Christianity**

Before the advent of Christianity Nagas were basically Animist. They worship trees, stones, mountains, and evil spirits. They also believed in the sacrifices of animals and human beings. The new religion had a great influence on social, cultural, political, and economic life of Nagas. In the year, 1836 American Baptist missionary Mrs. O. T Cutter, Rev and Mrs. Nathan entered the Naga Hills with a purpose to preach the Bible. But they could not succeed in their mission because the Khamti Nagas raids many times in their place. Another attempt was made in 1840 but it also did not bear fruitful results because of the resistance by the Nagas actually Nagas felt that they are the spies of British. In the name of preaching they collect the information about the areas and the peoples (Shimary,2005:43).
Dr. E. W Clark Baptize missioner came to Sibasgar in 1869 with a purpose to promote Christian religion in the Naga Hills. He started his mission by learning day-to-day life of people there, their languages, customs, and traditions. He gradually got familiar with the Nagas of Sibasgar and when he felt that Nagas were under his confidence and he started preaching the bible. In the year 1872, nine Nagas were first Baptized by him, which happened for the first time. After this, they were asked to go nearby villages and their respective villages to teach the hymns of the bible and construct small chapels. At the initial level, these Baptized Nagas faced many problems especially from the chiefs of the villages and the old men because these Nagas did not easily accept the adjustment of new religion. In the same year on December 18, 1872, more than fifteen Nagas were baptized in a village called Molungyimsen. Clark was a hard working missioner as he approaches the Commissioner of Assam and urged to open him a missionary institution at an Ao Naga area because he wanted to establish a permanent place for his mission to promote Christian religion. His request was accepted and a new and separate Christian village was constructed in Molungyimsen in 1876. This was the first centre of Christian activities in the Naga area. There were many restrictions for the Baptized Nagas in social practices like they could not drink beer specially rice beer which was very popular in Nagas culture and also alcohol was forbidden, they can’t take part in festivals of sacrifices, believes in superstition, bachelor dormitory and practices like head hunting.

Gradually schools were introduced in Naga areas with the initiatives of Clark. He and his wife taught at the school. As discussed earlier that Clark learned the local language like Ao he translates some parts of the bible in to Ao language and distributed it to Ao community. His wife also worked hard in Naga areas she was very much concerned about the equal education opportunity for girls and boys and for this she opened a girl
school. This focuses their concern in those days where they not only preached of bible but imparted education without the discrimination to males and females. Apart from imparting education and religious knowledge medical assistance also started in many places for sick people. Many churches were introduced with the help of missionaries. Clark and his wife spend 39 years in the Naga territory for the promotion of Christianity and education to the Naga people. They were not successful in Angami areas because Angamis were more violent.

C.D King was deputed as deputy commissioner in Kohima many new schools were opened with the help of American missionaries. With the passage of time, schools were also introduced in Angami areas. Those who had finished their study in Christian schools were taken as teachers in the Government primary schools level. Christian conventions were held in many part of the Naga territory. With the introduction of new religion and education old religion, beliefs, values, and old life style start eroding many older people did not support Christian education (Yonuo, 1974:70-71). The idea of the west was transformed through schools, churches and hospitals. If we take a positive aspect of the situation then the life of Nagas became more cultured and civilized. Christian missionaries and British played a vital role in ending the evil practices among the Nagas and by teaching them as to how to live together in peace, love and tolerance with one another as good neighbors.

**Nature of Traditional Naga Polity before British.**

With the introduction of British administration, the nature of political organization of different Naga tribes had changed. Here few Naga tribes have been discussed and their nature of politics at village level. First is Konyaks in this tribe there is kingship system. The Ang is the name of the king and they enjoyed the powers over all the villages that come under
Konyak tribes. Angship is hereditary, the eldest son held power after his father, and he must belong to his first wife. Because Ang was not a single person the strength depends on how much area is under Konyak tribe. Ang had the power to control quarrel if it occurred in two or more villages and he was authorized to send his son to that place for consolidation. The Ang has the power to impose fines on individuals and if he finded that a person has done heinous crime he has the authority to send out the culprit from village. Gradually as the area increased under Konyak tribe, small Angs were established at village level. If in any village Ang was not able to control the conflicts then the elders of that village would take the authority. Nevertheless, with the introduction of British Administration Angs powers decreased they became just nominal heads of the villages.

Putumenden system was prevalent in Ao tribe. It was called the council of elders. Under this system elder persons from the villages were selected to run the administration and look after the affairs of village. From each Khel one or two members took part in the council. It was known as one of the organized system.

In Lotha tribe Ngti system was there where people of each Khel elected their representative from their respective Clan. Then these elected representatives became responsible for the village administration. If we talk about Angami and Chakhesang they are totally different from the above mention tribal administration. In their village, two men and one woman are selected by the village community for this and they elected mostly from elders who are wise people to look upon the village administrator matters. The elected persons were then assigned the duties to women and men for the purpose of cultivation, festivals, and other works of village.
The founder of the village in Sema tribe enjoyed the top position in the village administration. He was called the father or chief head of village and the villagers became Mughemi. Chief had the power to select the people for his assistance if he felt the desire. The main decision making power was held by him. In Sema, any new village if set would by the named after its founder. The chief also provided financial assistance to the needy people during different time. (Gosh, 1982:217-220)

As it is discussed above different tribes of Naga have different political set ups. But with the introduction of British Administration in the territory of Naga many things changed specially the working of political institutions. With the abolition of head hunting practice the chiefs had no power of decision making for example earlier they ordered their tribal men when and where to attack against their counterparts of neighboring villages. Secondly, with the introduction of Gaonbura and Dhobisas this judicial powers also undermined (Franda, 1961,:155).

**Establishing of Gaonburas and Dobashis at the village level.**

Gaonburas was an acting agent between British and the villagers. The provision were made to elect the representative by the village chief or by the people of village. His post was confirmed by Deputy Commissioner or Sub Divisional Officer. The main function of Gaonbura was to collect taxes and in return received 12.5 % of the total amount of taxes. In spite of this, he is also acted as a village police officer and he was authorized with some powers to settle the minor disputes at the village level. He also had authority to impose 50 rupees fine to a culprit.

The second institution established by British was Dobashis. Dobashis were interpreters and their main task was to translate different tribal languages in to Nagamese. They acted as advising agents to District Collector or to Sub Divisional Officer regarding the cultural and traditional
affairs of Nagas. British tried to settle most of the matters or disputes based on cultural or traditions of the tribes. Tax were exempted for some people like Gaonburas, sick, old and those people who served as labor corps in France and the Government employed whose salary was less than 30 rupees (Franke, 2009: 56-58).

**Political formation**

In the First World War near about 5,000 Nagas went to France as a labor corps and it was their first western exposure. Nagas observed that war was fought in the name of countries. “the indirect influence of World War was tremendous. The Naga who went to France brought back horrified accounts as to how the great civilized Nations fought for their ends and interests while Nagas were condemned as barbarous for their head – hunting wars. Second the intercourse among the different Nagas of different tribes in France, far from their homes fostered mutual love, service and a sense of political unity which manifested itself in their verbal resolution that on return their land they would work for friendship and unity among themselves and give up their nasty weaknesses like head- hunting and village feud” (Yonuo, 1974: 70-71).

After returning from war, some educated Nagas with the help of village chiefs decided to establish a political institution in which all the tribes had representation. In 1918, Naga Club was formed in Kohima, which was the first political formation. They start organizing people of different club under this newly established institution. With the passage of time the members of the club started discussing issues pertaining to society and administrative problems. Some of their members were Government officials. In 1923, the first Tribal Council was formed by the Lotha tribe and Ao Naga Tribal Council was formed in 1928. It was dissolved in 1930 but again establish in 1939 (Ramunny, 1988: 12).
Government of India Act, 1919

52 A- (1) The Governor General in Council may, after obtaining an expression of opinion from the local Government and the local legislature affected, by notification , with the sanction of His Majesty previously signified by the Secretary of State in Council, constitute a new governor’s province, or place part of a governor’s province under the administration of deputy governor to be appointed by the Governor General, and may in such case, apply with such modifications as appear necessary or desirable, all or any of the provision of this Act relating to governor’s provinces, or provinces under a Lieutenant-Governor or Chief Commissioner, to any such new province or part of a province.

(2) The Governor General in Council may declare any territory in British India to be ‘Backward Tract’, and may, by notification, with such sanction as aforesaid, direct that this Act shall apply to that territory subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be prescribed in the notification.

Where the Governor- General in Council has, by notification, directed as aforesaid, he may, by the same or subsequent notification, direct that any Act of the Indian legislature shall not apply to the territory in question or any part thereof, or shall apply to the territory or any part thereof subject to such exceptions or modifications as the Governor General thinks fit, or may authorize the Governor in Council to give similar directions as respects any Act of the local legislature (Luthra, , 1974 :41).

In 1912, Assam was placed under Chief Commissioner. Government of India Act 1919 Naga Hills got the status of scheduled District under the Chief Commissionership. Under the Government of India Act 1919 “Naga were declared to be a Backward tract within the province of Assam under
the section 52 (A) (2) of this Act the Governor General of India could decree that any Act passed by the Indian Legislature would not be applied to the Naga Hills district”. On 10, January 1929 member of the Naga Club presented a memorandum to the Simon Commission of India in which memorandum Naga desire a political separation after which British leave India.

“ We the undersigned Nagas of the Naga Club at Kohima, have heard with great regret that our hills were included within the Reform Scheme of India without our knowledge, but as the administration of our hills continued to be in the hands of British officers we did not consider it necessary to raise any protest in past. Now, we learn that you have come to India as representatives of British Government to enquire into the system of working of Government and the growth of education and we beg to submit below our view with the prayer that our hills may be withdrawn from the Reformed Scheme and placed outside the Reforms but directly under the British Government. We never asked for reforms and we do not wish for any reforms.

“Before the British Government conquered our country in 1879-80, we were living in a state of intermittent warfare with Assamese of Assam Valley to the north and west of our country and Manipur to the south. They never conquered us, nor were we ever subjected to their rule. On the other hand we were always a terror to these people. Our country within the administered area consist of more than eight tribes, quite different from one another with quite different languages which cannot be understand by each other, and there were tribes which are not known at present. We have no unity among us and it is only the British Government that is holding us together now.
“Our education at present is poor. The occupation of our country by the British Government being so recent as 1880, we have no chance or opportunity to improve in education and though we can boast of two or three graduates of an Indian University in our country, we have not got one yet who is able to represent all our different tribes or master our languages much less one to represent us in any Council of population. However, our population is very small in comparison with the population of the plains districts in the province and any representation that may be allotted to us in the Council will be negligible and will have no weight whatever. Our language is quite different from those of the plains and we have no social affinities with either Hindus or Muslims. We were being looked down upon by one for our “beef” and the other for our “pork” and by both for our want in education which is not due to any fault of ours.

“Our country is poor; it does not pay its administration. Therefore, if it is continued to be placed under the Reformed Scheme, we are afraid that new heavy taxes will have to be sold and in the long run we shall have no share in the land of our birth and life will be not worth living then. Though our land at present is within the British territory, Government have always recognized our private rights in it, but if we are forced to enter the Council the majority of whose members is sure to belong to other districts we also much fear the introduction of foreign laws and customs supersede our own customary laws which we now enjoy. For the above reasons, we pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachment from other people who are more advanced than us by withdrawing our country from the Reformed Scheme and placing it directly under its own protection. If the British Government, however, wants to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to be mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we
are never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times” (Horam, 38-39).

Naga history was highlighted in the memorandum and it was said that Nagas were never conquered they were never asked for reforms nor did they want any reform. They want to live separate.

**Naga in the Second World War**

Nagas were trained in their ancient weapons like spears and daos. Second World War was new and modern to them because the battle was fought on their land. Nagas help allied forces. The battle was very dangerous it proved to be a destruction of many villages. Allied forces helped them in many ways Charles Pawsey the then Deputy Commissioner of Assam played a vital role after the end of the war he lived in jungle and organized Nagas of different tribes for getting their assistance and provide help to the needy Nagas. “ he saw far into the future and discerned that India would be soon free and he wanted to prepare the Nagas to take their legitimate place. He wanted to form an organization for the Nagas. He established an institution in April, 1945 which was called the ‘Naga Hills District Tribal Council’ the objective of which was to being unite all the Nagas and to reconstruct Naga Hills from the ruins of the World War. This council did not last long” (Ramunny, 1988:29-30).

**Government of India Act, 1935**

311-(1) In this Act and, unless the context otherwise requires, in any other Act the following expressions have the meanings hereby respectively assigned to them, that is to say “British India” means all territories for the time being comprised within the Governors’ Provinces and the Chief Commissioners’ Province:
“India” means British India together with all territories of any Indian Ruler under the suzerainty of such an Indian Ruler, the Tribal Areas, and any other territories which His Majesty in Council may, from time to time, after ascertaining the views of the Federal Government and the Federal Legislature, declare to be part of India;

A.D 1935

Part 12 cont. “Tribal Areas” means the areas along the frontiers of India or in Baluchistan which are not part of British India or of Burma or of any Indian State or of any foreign State;

313-(1) subject to the provisions of this Act for the time being in force, such executive authority as is hereinafter mentioned shall be exercised on behalf of His Majesty by the Governor General in Council, either directly or through officers subordinate to him but nothing in this section shall prevent the Indian Legislature from conferring functions upon subordinate authorities, or be deemed to transfer to the Governor General in Council and functions conferred by any existing Indian law on any court, judge or officer, on any local or other authority.

(2) Subject to the provisions of this Act for the time being in force, the said executive authority extends to any local or other authority.

a) to the matters with respect to which the Indian Legislature has, under the said provisions, power to make laws;
b) to the raising in British India on behalf of His Majesty of navel, military or air forces, and to the governance of His Majesty’s forces borne on the Indian establishment;
c) (c) to the exercise of such rights, authority and jurisdiction as are exercisable by His Majesty by treaty, grant, usages, sufferance or otherwise in and in relation to the Tribal areas: (Luthra, 1974, :41-42)
Under the Government of India Act 1935 which actually enforced on April, 1, 1937 the Naga Hills District, the North East Frontier tract these areas became ‘Excluded Areas’ within the province of Assam and was under the administration of the Governor of Assam. No law or act of the central or provincial legislature has the power to apply on the Naga Hill District without the approval of the Governor.