Chapter 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Every human problem starts from the face of the earth, so is the case of the Nagas - in Nagaland, the sixteenth State of the Union of India which is one of the most picturesque as well as the most rugged among the Indian States. It is situated in the north eastern corner of India and is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh (erstwhile - N.E.F.A.) on the north, Assam on the west, Manipur on the south and Burma on the east. Nagaland has almost a total geographical area of 16,579 square kilometres. Its mountains, enchanting valleys, swift-flowing streams and evergreen forests speak of the scenic beauty of Nagaland. The terrain of Nagaland is mostly hilly, mountainous and rugged. The hilly terrain is covered with green forests but it forms an irregular plateau with the elevated ridges and peaks. The peaks of the Naga Hills vary in height from 350 metres to 3,000 metres above sea-level. The highest peak in Nagaland is Saramati in Tuensang district whose height is 3,826 metres. The second highest peak is Japfu and its height is about 3,014 metres in Kohima district. Nagaland does not have much plain area. This is evident from the fact that Dimapur (Manipur Road) with an area of 150
square kilometres, is considered to have the largest plain area. The Dhansiri is the largest river of the State which flows through north Cachar and Kohima before it falls into the Brahmaputra. The other two rivers are the Dikhu and the Doyang rivers which are not big enough but they have their own importance as they make the land fertile. While the Dikhu river flowing through Naginimara in the Mon district and joins the Brahmaputra and the Doyang river originates near Mao (Manipur) and finally falls into the Dhansiri river.

While India in general faces three seasons in the year - namely, winter, summer and monsoon, Nagaland has almost two seasons, namely, winter and monsoon. Rain starts in Nagaland in early April almost every year and continues up to October. The rainfall is almost equitably distributed throughout Nagaland and the average temperature in winter falls as low as the three degree centigrade. The soil of Nagaland is acidic, rich in organic matters but poor in phosphate and potash etc.  

During 1975-76, about 11,600 hectares of land were put under cultivation out of which 3,200 hectares of land were put under terrace rice cultivation and the rest under jhuming or shifting cultivation. The chief agricultural products of Nagaland are rice, maize, onion,
millet, chilli, mustard seeds, soyabees, cotton, sugar-
cane and a variety of vegetables, in addition to these,
orange, pineapple, papaya, banana, figs, peaches and many
other fruits are also grown there. The hill state is,
however, very rich in forest products such as bamboo and
timber, and is also the home of some wild animals like
elephants, tigers, deer, monkeys etc. Nagaland may soon
provide the country with precious petroleum products,
as the Geological Survey of India which is actively
exploring the country for oil and coal, hopes to find
them here. Some quantity of superior quality coal
has been found in Borajan near Naginimara. It is also
available in some quantity in Tuensang and Mokokchung
districts.

The Colourful People

Nagaland presents, unity in diversity in matters
of tribe and language in particular. The social and
cultural heritage of the Naga people might have been
the same had they possess one common language. But the
Naga people do not belong to one tribe but to more than
twenty. The main tribes are- Angami, Mao, Sema, Rengma,
Lotha, Ao, Tangkhul, Chang, Konyak, Chakhesang, Phom,
Sangtam, Yimchunger, Khiamungan, Zeliangrong, Wancho,
Noctes, Singphos, etc. etc. This multiplicity of tribes
in Nagaland is due to the fact that the Naga people
migrated to this part of the country in different groups at different times and they remained confined to their ridges and mountainous terrains. This has also resulted in the multiplicity of languages in Nagaland. The various tribal Nagas speak their own dialects which were essentially different from one another. But recently the Naga people have developed a language which is known as Naga (which is a mixture of Hindi-Assamese-Sanskrit-Bengali and Nepali). And this has become the lingua franca of some tribes of Nagaland. But as soon as Nagaland became a constituent State of the Indian Union, English became the State language. The medium of instruction in schools and colleges of Nagaland is English. Thus, while other States of India are laying emphasis on their regional languages and wanting to do away with English, Nagaland has accepted English as the State language. (Now English has been used as official language in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram). The departure from the main trend is due to two factors. Firstly, the Naga people did not have a common language nor did they have any common script of their own. Nagamese has been developed only very recently when the Assamese, Bengali and Nepali etc. came into contact with the Nagas. Secondly, the British and American Missionaries influenced the innocent/ignorant Nagas to become Christians. They
tried to change the social and cultural outlook of the Nagas. The Britishers, in fact, made a deep impact on the social and cultural life of the Nagas. The simple and innocent Nagas were dazzled by the Western English culture and way of life. English thus became very popular among the Naga elite/society. It was regarded as the language of the socially, economically and politically advanced Nagas who were of the notion that the key to advancement lay in learning English. Years after independence when Nagaland was given statehood, English was accepted as the State language by the people of Nagaland.

The Naga people are simple, friendly, hard-working, honest and self-respecting. On the other hand, they could be called egoists and selfish like any other human being on earth - because the moment they felt that they are being let down without proper sentimental approach, equality and justice then they become ferocious and dangerous and indulge in direct action according to Naga customary laws prevalent among different tribes. The most praiseworthy thing about the Nagas is their belief in a casteless society or egalitarian way of life. They do not harbour any prejudice related to caste and creed. There are no social outcastes there in Nagaland according to Naga customary laws. However, all are
treated equal and they do not make any distinction among themselves on the basis of caste, creed and colour. Mostly the modern Nagas are Christians. The Western British and American Christian Missionaries had been working for a long time (approximately from 1830s to 1950) in Nagaland and they succeeded in educating them and making the Nagas Christians. In almost every Naga village there is a Christian Church. However, all the Nagas are not Christians and many of them still do practice ancient tradition of Naga worship and follows Naga customary laws. In addition to that even the Constitution of India has provided a special provision for the preservation and protection of Naga customary laws under Article 371A of the Constitution of India.

The written history of the Naga people before the arrival of the British in India is not available. Since the Nagas in the ancient time and in the medieval period were far from the centre of modern civilisation and therefore, they had little idea about writing of any history. Moreover, they lived in such inhospitable mountainous terrains and that the people from the plains could not establish any contact with them and as a result very little is known about their early history. Though a number of paleolithic tools (stone age) recently discovered in Nagaland and Manipur throw some light on
the early history, culture, religion, and social life of the Nagas however, they do not give a clear picture about the origin of the Nagas. How the Nagas came to this part of North East India is not recorded. This, however, does not mean that the Naga people do not have any written or unwritten account of their origin and their early history. There are in fact, many legends and mythological stories which speak about the origin of the Nagas. In modern times, the British and American Missionaries and adventurers made some attempts to know about the Nagas. Some of their writings throw much light on the origin, social, cultural, religious and political life of the Naga people.

Here it would not be out of place to add a few words as to why the people living in this part of the Hills are called Nagas. John Butler believes that the people in the plains used to call the folks living in the Hills, as Nagas. Some other writers, however, believe that the word 'Naga' has been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Nag' which means a snake. But the Nagas did not themselves know that they were the descendants of the snake spirit instead the snakes are their number one dangerous enemy and instantly killed and chopped-off the head of the snake whenever found in the jungles. Therefore, it is not convincing at all that they are the descendants of snakes. Both Robert Reid and L.W. Shakespear
think that the word 'Naga' is deformed Hindu word of 'Nanga' meaning 'naked'. A Greek scholar of second century A.D., Ptolemy holds the same view. He has referred to the Nagas as 'nanglonç' which means 'naked people'. According to Holcombe and Peal the term 'Naga' has its origin in the word 'Nok' which means 'Folk' and as the Naga people used to live in groups, they came to be known as 'Nagas' later on. This view of Holcombe and Peal appears to be logical and nearest to the truth.

The origin of the Naga people is shrouded in mystery. Different scholars hold different views. Some believe that the Nagas belong to the Tibeto-Burman, or, Indo-Mongolid race. There is yet another version which suggests that the Nagas were no other than the Kiratas of India. During the Vedic period the Kiratas migrated to their Hills and later on they came to be known as Nagas. The chief exponent of this view was Dr. S.K. Chatterjee. He writes, 'The Kiratas were known to the Hindu world as a group of people whose original home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the East, in Assam particularly, who were yellow in colour and presented a distinct type of culture. They had spread all over the plains of Bengal upto the sea'. This view of S.K. Chatterjee, however, does not appear to be very sound and most of the scholars do not subscribe
to the view that the Kiratas were none else than the Nagas.

Some Naga tribes have some legends and stories of their own which throw light on their origin. The Mao-Naga tribe believes that their origin comes from Makhel itself where they are now in the north district of Manipur. From here many Naga tribes started migration like - the Angami, Sema, Rengma, Chankhesang, Lotha, etc. etc. and spread over to many areas of Nagaland. The mythology, legend says that the First - Mother/Woman (named Dzüli Mosúa) was there at Makhel (Mao) and suddenly Heavenly clouds descended and enclosed her, and impregnated her and gave birth to God. And after that Naga generations multiplied. But this view is also not accepted by all - Naga tribes.

Again some Naga tribes like - Chakhesang, Sema, Rengma and Lotha believe that the first Naga came out of a stone in a place known as 'Khezakenoma' which is few miles away from Makhel, Mao. Whereas some Naga-Christians believe that they are the generations of Adam and Eve who were the first to come on Earth according to the Holy-Bible. As the children of Adam and Eve spread all over the world as the Bible says. But Hindu view is again contradicting this. The Ao-Naga believes that their first Naga came out of stones (Lungterok) and
later on spread over to the other Naga areas. There is still another legend which suggests that the first Naga emerged from a Lake. These stories and legends do not however, seem to be very convincing because they are based on superstitions and religious beliefs. It thus appears that there is a lot of controversy regarding the origin of the Nagas.

But the view which states that the Nagas belong to the Tibeto-Burman, or, Indo-Mongoloid race appears to be very near the historical truth. This is simply because the Nagas did not come to this part of North East India from a very far off land. Some of the people living in the plains from either side of the Himalayas might have come to this part and the mixture produced the Nagas. Hence it would be appropriate to say that the Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race.

**Migration**

Another issue that needs scrutiny is whether the Nagas were the original inhabitants of these Hills or whether they came from a far away place to this part of north east India. It does not appear that the Nagas have been living in this area from time immemorial. The reasons are not far to seek. The terrain is so inhospitable, the climate so rough and unproductive that the people
cannot think of settling there in normal circumstances. It appears more plausible that people came to this part from some other places. Most of the scholars believe that originally the Naga people came from Central Asia.\textsuperscript{25} These people of Central Asia were known as the non-Chinese Chinang tribes and barbarous. They first came to north-west border of China many centuries before the Christian era and later on these tribes spread over to China, Indonesia, Philippines, Bhutan, Burma, other South-East Asian countries and to the present Naga Hills/land.\textsuperscript{26} This is evident from the facts that Nagas bear similarity with some tribal groups of Dyaks of Indonesia and Koyans of Indo-Chinese countries. Smith has also written that the social customs and cultures of the Nagas resemble those of Dyaks and Koyans - the tribal people of Indonesia and the Philippines. Smith is of the view that the Nagas belong to the same blood which is found in the people of Burma, Sikkim, Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and other hilly areas of north east India.\textsuperscript{27}

Different Naga tribes came to Nagaland after crossing the Irawadi and the Chindwin rivers of Burma. Some of the allied tribes of the Nagas like - Karen, Shan, Chin, Singpho and others who had come from the western China settled in Burma.\textsuperscript{28} Dr. S.K. Chatterjee believes that these Indo-Mongoloid group of people came
to India in the 10th century B.C. and confined themselves only to the north eastern part of India. Since the place where they settled down was covered with dense forests and rugged hills, there could not be any communication between the people of the plains and the Nagas for a long period. These Nagas, after having settled in the north eastern part of India, established their respective tiny sovereign-village States like the ancient Greek-city States. The Naga people of ancient times earmarked their territories with stones, rivers and mountains. They started jhum, and terrace systems of cultivation. They established their rule on the basis of ancient Greek-city States in the sense that a village-state contained a well organised political community. The base of their organisation was republican - sovereignty or aristocracy. The customary laws and traditions were their code of conduct. As they were still far from modern concept of civilisation, they never managed to establish a single united and recognised sovereign state of their own combining all the tiny village-states.

Thus the Nagas have a diversified history. The primitive Nagas must be appreciated for their local self-government which was based on customary laws, through fights, head-hunting, wars, rivals and petty tribal feuds very much prevailed among them. Now-a-days,
the Nagas believe in such virtues as unity at the time of outside invasion, obedience to elders or chieftains, peaceful settlement of their petty quarrels and faith in customs and traditions apart from their conversion to Christian faith as the process of modernisation enters in.

Now the question arises as to why these tribal people migrated to this inhospitable and mountainous part of the land. No definite reasons can be assigned, but it appears that they might have come to this area in search of livelihood or just to satisfy their sense of adventure of conquest and rule. These people could not settle in the plains because the area had already been inhabited by other non-Nagas. The only vacant space was the hilly areas and so they decided to settle down there comfortably without any disturbances.

There might have been some contact between the people living in the plains of India and the Nagas in the early period but during the Mughal period even it appears that the contact between the two was almost non-existent. It is a fact that the Mughals could establish their control over Bengal and proceeded towards western Assam at the close of the twelfth century but they did not establish their control over Assam. Since the Mughal Kings did not get a foothold in Assam, the question of any kind of contact between the people of the plains and
the Nagas does not arise.

**Contact with the Assamese**

In fact, contact was only established after the rise of the Ahom kingdom in Assam in the 13th century.\(^{32}\) The Ahoms were the original inhabitants of Burma. They came to north eastern Assam through the Patkai-Range and North Eastern Frontier Agency (Arunachal) and later on they spread over to the plains of the Brahmaputra valley. The first Ahom King was Sukapha who established the Ahom Kingdom in Assam in 1228. He was ambitious and so he wanted control over the neighbouring areas. It is said that the Ahoms first attacked the Naga village in search of food. The Nagas resisted with the result the Ahoms tried to suppress the Nagas by force. This created enmity between the two. The Nagas, in retaliation, also made several attempts to raid the areas under the control of the Ahom King.\(^{35}\) Thus there was a war between the Nagas and the Ahoms. In this war the Ahoms could succeed in establishing control over some of the Naga tribes such as the Noctes, and Konyaks. Later on, the Lotha and Ao Naga tribes were also brought under the control of the Ahoms. As a consequence the Ahoms compelled these subdued Naga tribes to pay tributes in the form of Mithuns (a kind of Buffalo) and other commodities as a token of
their allegiance to the Ahom Kings.\textsuperscript{34} In return the Ahoms granted to the Nagas exemption from rent over the lands and the areas meant for fishing purposes. The Naga youths were recruited in their army and administration. Thus it is evident that some of the Naga tribes had been in contact with and under the control of Assam when the Ahoms were ruling over Assam. Michell, J.F. has also written that the Nagas were under the control and jurisdiction of the Ahom Kings. He wrote that "present inhabitants are the remains of the hill legions enlisted by the Rajas of Assam and given their present lands as their reward of good services."\textsuperscript{35}

It is thus obvious that the Nagas had been in contact with the Ahoms of Assam in the early period. It is also a historical evidence that there was some sort of understanding between the Assamese rulers and the Nagas concerning matters which affected both the parties. The Nagas had accepted the supremacy of the Ahoms but they were allowed freedom in internal affairs. They agreed not to encroach upon the Ahom's territories.\textsuperscript{36} They also promised to pay some tribute to the Ahom King. There were occasions when the Nagas stopped the payment of tributes to the Ahom Kings. But such deceitful activities of the Nagas did not go unpunished. The Ahom Kings used to send expeditionary forces for punishing
the Nagas for non-payment of tributes or other deceitful activities. However as time rolled by, the Lotha Nagas became rebellious against the Ahoms in the last decade of the seventeenth century. They challenged the authority of the Ahom King and made several raids in his territories. In return Ahoms sent an expeditionary force under the command of T.C. Phukan to the Lotha Naga area to punish the rebels. Phukan's army dealt with the Lothas ruthlessly. Many of them were killed and their houses were burnt to ashes. The Lothas, thereupon, prayed for mercy and peace. This is evident from their prayer to the victorious commander, Phukan, "We are your slaves now. We do not know what is right and wrong. We are ignorant. Now we shall offer two girls to the King with two female slaves and other articles. We hope that Phukan will save us".36A

Thus, there is no denying the fact that by the end of the 17th century the Ahoms of Assam had established their authority over the Nagas who were living within borders of the Ahom Kingdom. But in the 18th century the Ahom Kings became weak because of their quarrels with Burma. The Burmese invasion of 1728 made the Ahom Kingdom weaker. The Nagas took advantages of the weakness of the Assam/Ahom kings and started once again their raids upon the plains of Assam.37
It thus become obvious that the Nagas had been subdued by the rulers of Assam in the seventeenth century. No doubt some of the Naga tribes had also accepted the supremacy of the kings of Assam. This historical accident, however, does not mean that all the Naga tribes were under the control and jurisdiction of Assam. In fact, they were brought under the control of British India only when the British conquered the whole of India. But in the remote interior Tuensang area, the British could not control the Nagas.

**British Expedition in the Naga Hills**

While the process of the consolidation of the British rule in India was going on, the British Indian government came into contact with the Nagas. The British annexed Cachar of Assam area in 1832 and 1839 and with this annexation the process of integration of the Nagas in the mainstream of British India was started. This is evident from the statement of Alexander Mackenzie who has written that, "we were brought into contact with the Angamis, (A Naga tribe) ... by the acquisition of Cachar with its hill territory running up between the Angami hills and the Khasi hills ... to the very confines of Nowgong."³⁸

What were the factors which compelled the British to come into contact with the Nagas and assert their
authority over them? It appears that the British government was influenced by five major factors. Firstly, the Indian government was very much concerned about the safety and security of the Indian borders. The British wanted a safe and secure frontier on India's north eastern border. They wanted to have influence and control over the Himalayan territories from Tibet to Burma. The snowy Himalaya was itself a strong barrier against the invaders from the north. But logistics and strategy demanded that the territory south of the Himalayan watershed should be in the control of the British. There is the legend that one who sits over the roof of the world (Tibet) would dominate the southern side of the Himalayas. The British Indian government was aware of this. Since the Nagas hills were on the southern side of the Himalayan watershed it lies in the logic of circumstances that the British Indian government had to have control over this area.

Secondly, the frequent Naga raids on the plains of Assam also compelled the British to establish their control over the Naga hills. The British at first had tried to befriend with the Nagas as the Ahom Kings had done in earlier period. But this move did not bear any fruit. So the British adopted the policy of sending military expeditions to subdue the Nagas. The British
sent at least ten military expeditions between 1839 and 1850. The objective of these military expeditions were mainly two. The British wanted to overawe the Nagas so that they might stop raids on the plains of Assam. Secondly, the British wanted to be acquainted with the topography of the Naga hills.

Thirdly, the British came to India to establish a flourishing trade in this country. But soon they became the political master of India. It was therefore natural that they should extend their commercial interest in every nook and corner of the country. The British had already made secret agreement with the King of Manipur, which gave them a better scope in the field of trade and commerce. Since Nagaland is adjacent to Manipur, the British could not remain inactive. Hence they went on subjugating the Naga territories one after another, in the following years. This became evident when they opened new markets and established salt depots in the British occupied Naga territories.

Fourthly, the British needed a direct route from Assam to Manipur for developing trade relations with the Manipuris and for protecting their commercial interests in Upper Cachar, north Assam and Burma also. This was however, not possible until a new road had been constructed from Assam to Manipur via the Naga hills.
Mackenzie has written that "the importance of opening up a direct communication between Assam and the Manipur was at that time much insisted upon and it was in the course of exploration directed to this end that we first came into conflict with the Nagas of these hills." Since a passage to Manipur, however, was possible only through the Naga hills, the Nagas had to be subdued first. That is why Captain Jenkin and Pemberton with 700 (seven hundred) Manipuri soldiers and 800 (eight hundred) coolies marched from Manipur to Assam in January 1832, with an intention to open direct communication between Assam and Manipur.

Fifthly, it appears that the British authorities at Calcutta were reluctant to penetrate into the Naga hills in the beginning because of its dense forests and non-availability of proper communications. When the British came to know that the King of Manipur was in favour of extending his sway over the Naga tribes - the British became cautious and alert immediately. Alexander Mackenzie writes that, "Facts came to light which made it clear that the object which Gambhir Singh (King of Manipur) had in his view was the permanent conquest of the Naga hills ... and the British began to feel uncomfortable in prospect of Gambhir Singh's operations." Thus the desire of the King of Manipur to extend his
influence to the Naga hills compelled the British to adopt a new policy. Consequently the British entered into the Naga territories with an expeditionary force. When the Nagas resisted, the British suppressed them. Thus the result of the British policy in the words of John Butler was - "one long sickening story of open insults and defiance, bold outrages and cold-blooded murders on the one side, and long suffering forbearance, forgiveness, concession and unlooked for favours on the other, varied now and again with tours, immovable depu­tations and expeditions".43A

Therefore, it is obvious that the British in the middle of the nineteenth century developed both commercial and political interests in the land of the Nagas. To realise their objectives the British asked their officials in Assam to establish a military post in the North Cachar hills near Naga territory.44 The British organised a small Cachari Levy also with a view to helping the British force because the Cacharis were well-acquainted with the hilly-tracks of the Naga hills. (The British sent ten military expeditions into the Angami Naga areas between 1830 and 1850 with a view to exploring the Naga areas and establishing their control). After having annexed north Cachar to the district of Nowgong in January 1839, the British government directed E.R. Grange,
the Sub-Assistant to the Sub-Commissioner at Nowgong, to make an investigation into the cause of the Angami raids and to punish the chiefs of the two warlike Naga villages, namely, Khonoma (Phizo's village) and Mozema. Consequently, Grange marched to the Naga areas with an expeditionary force. He succeeded in persuading the Naga chiefs to stop raids and plunder of Assam. He opened a new way from Chumukedima (Samaguting) to Dimapur. He also found that the cause of the Naga raids was slave trade carried on by the Angamis with Bengali merchants in the plains who used to induce them to produce such slaves. Grange, therefore, recommended the setting up of a military post at Chumukedima (Samaguting) so that this slave trade could be stopped. Grange believed that if the slave trade was stopped then the raids would also diminish. Grange was in favour of creating only a military post in the Angami Naga area just to control the raids and malpractices of the Nagas. This would have provided protection to the people living in that area. But the British government did not accept Grange's proposal because the expected income from the taxes, tolls etc. would have been much less than the expenditure incurred over the establishment of the military post.

Captain Jenkins, Commissioner of Nowgong, also proposed to the parent government to attach the Angami
Naga-tract to Nowgong and appoint an extra Assistant Commissioner for the Angami Naga areas. But the British did not accept the proposal because at that time it had not been decided to bring the Naga territory under British rule. However, after sometime and having due considerations, the British government agreed at least to set up a new post in the Angami Naga territory which would make communications easier with Assam, Manipur or Cachar. Thus the British officials in Assam were entrusted to open up a market and a garrison at Chumukedima (Samaguting). It appears that the local British officials of Assam were in favour of subjugating the neighbouring Nagas as soon as possible. But the British government was not yet ready to establish civil rule/administration in the Naga areas because it would have incurred huge expenditure. The government, however, agreed to set up a military post in the Angami Naga area in order to protect the proposed market and the garrison and to control the Naga raids upon Cachar and Nowgong. On instructions, Grange set out for the Naga Hills (Angami areas) in January 1840 with an expeditionary force. His purpose was to choose a suitable place for the opening of the new military post in the Naga hills. But Grange could not succeed in establishing such a post. However, he managed to arrest some Nagas and set their houses on fire.
When Grange visited the Angami area, he came to know that the Angami Nagas were against the Manipuris. The reason for this hostility was the exploitation of the Angamis by the Manipuris. The British seized this opportunity to develop a friendship with the Angami Nagas. This is evident from the instructions sent to Lieutenant, Bigge the principal Assistant to Nowgong. He was asked to enter the hills and make leisurely and, if possible, friendly progress from village to village conciliating the chiefs by personal exchange of views. In fact, the British government were not trying to administer the Naga hills. They just wanted to exercise general political control over the hill tribes and establish a military post to prevent the Naga raids. In pursuance of this policy the British government asked Lt. Bigge for the second time to lead an expedition to the Naga hills to achieve the desired results. Lieutenant Bigge undertook this expedition in 1841. Surprisingly enough he faced no resistance and succeeded in concluding a friendly agreement with most of the leading Naga tribes.

According to the agreement the Dhansiri river was recognised as the boundary line between the British district and the Angami tract. The Dhansiri was also earmarked as the boundary line between Manipur and the Naga hills because of two reasons. Firstly, the British wanted peace on their borders. This peace was endangered because
of constant quarrelling between the Nagas and the Manipuris. The settlement of the boundary was intended to restore peace on the border. Secondly, the British were against the expansionist designs of the Manipuris. They did not want the Manipuri king to extend their territories in the Naga hills. The Nagas were in short supply of salt, so they wanted to have a salt depot in their land. On the request of the Nagas, Lt. Bigge, agreed to open one at Dimapur. The friendly visit of Lt. Bigge, to the Naga hills produced the desired result. So the British Government thought that such continued visits by British officials would not only improve the relations with the Nagas but also prevent the slave-traffic carried on by the Nagas with the Bengalis of Sylhet.

Establishment of British Authority

Captain John Butler, the Principal Assistant of Nowgong, visited the Naga areas in 1845. He succeeded in concluding a Non-Aggression Pact with the Naga Chiefs on 11 December, 1845. The Treaty was concluded in a very friendly and cordial atmosphere. Butler has written, "All the Chiefs were summoned .... They promised not to, molest their neighbours in future, to abstain from plundering, excursions and cutting of Heads of Nagas or other clans, to refer all disputes to the British authorities ... to pay annual tributes to the British Government as
a token of allegiance. This agreement made the British virtually the sovereign master of the Naga people. They even undertook the responsibility of settling internal disputes of the Nagas.

The Nagas, however, failed to observe the provisions of the agreement. Inspite of their undertaking to remain peaceful, they continued to loot, plunder and kill the British subjects. The notes and tour diaries of the British Officers who visited the Naga areas in those days reveal that the Nagas not only killed British military personnel, but also looted and murdered the civilians living in Assam district. The British Government therefore, opened a police post at Chumukedima (Samaguting). Bhogchand, an Assamese of extraordinary courage and intelligent person was made in-charge of this Chumukedima police post. A market was also opened near this post.

The opening of the trade market and a police post had two purposes. Firstly, the British wanted to impress upon the Nagas that they were genuinely interested in establishing trade relations with them. Secondly, the British intended to let the Nagas know their business and that no violation of agreement would be tolerated. Those objectives however, could not be achieved. The police post at Chumukedima failed to check effectively the Naga raids on the British subjects nor could the
trade market do brisk business. Two reasons may be assigned for this failure. Firstly, the Nagas did not attach much sanctity to the agreement and secondly, they became irritated with and to some extent apprehensive of the police post at Chumukedima. Their apprehension became real when in pursuance of the agreement of the British officers tried to settle the internal feuds of the Nagas. The British had undertaken this opportunity with a view to maintaining peace and order on their border and also to keeping the Nagas under their lordship. This policy of interference in the internal feuds of the Naga tribes, however, did not produce the desired objective of the British. The case of the assassination of Bhogchand is very illustrative. There was a dispute between the Jibili Clan of Mozema village and the Nihilis of Khonoma (Phizo's village). The Jibilis of Mozema village sought the British assistance against the Nihilis of Khonoma. Since the British had undertaken to settle internal feuds of the Naga tribes, Bhogchand, in-charge of the British police post at Chumukedima (Samaguting) went to Mozema along with 40 (fourty) constables to settle the disputes. There he not only mediated but also tried to arrest some of the trouble makers. Bhogchand was attacked by the Nagas. He was ultimately killed because some of his sepoys fled in panic when the Nagas attacked the party. The assassination of Bhogchand made it clear that the
Angami Nagas did not like the British interference in their internal affairs. The British also realised the futility of excessive involvement in the affairs of the Nagas. But the assassination of their officer had to be avenged. If the Naga culprits were allowed to go unpunished, it would not only embolden them to do further mischief but would also create the impression that the British were afraid of the Nagas. Hence, the British decided to take the most stringent and decisive measures in order to deter them. In pursuance of this policy, Lieutenant Vincent was deputed to lead an expeditionary force to Kikerima (Kirima) to avenge Bhogchand's murder and to arrange for the surrender of those who were known to have been concerned in the recent attack upon the British officials. Vincent had to face stiff resistance but ultimately he succeeded in suppressing the turbulent Nagas of Kirima (Kikerima). Many Nagas were killed and some of them were taken captive by Vincent. Thus Bhogchand's killing was avenged at last.

Policy of Non-Interference

The policy of military expeditions and involvement in the Naga affairs which the British had adopted from 1835 to 1851 was, however, given up after the bloody battle of Kikerima/Kirima. The British realised the futility of the policy of military involvement in the
Naga hills after 1852. Hence they adopted the policy of non-interference. Thereafter, Captain Butler, the principal assistant of Nowgong, had recommended the complete abandonment of the Naga hills. Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of British India, accepted the recommendation of Butler. He noted in the minutes of 20th February, 1851, saying "I dissent entirely from the policy of taking possession of their Naga hills and establishing of our sovereign over savage inhabitants, our possession could bring no profit to us, and would be as costly as it would be unproductive. The British government therefore, ordered for the withdrawal of British troops from the Angami areas. Consequently, Dimapur was abandoned and the British force was withdrawn from the Naga areas. Here a question may arise as to why the British gave up the policy of military expeditions. The reasons are both economic and political. The British had entered into the Naga hills with the hope of increasing their trade and commerce but it is well known fact that trade and commerce can flourish when all the parties are willing and the atmosphere is suitable for both. But in the case of the Nagas the situation was quite different. The Nagas were apprehensive of the British. They were not civilised up to the British taste and educated enough to understand the complexities of modern business. Moreover, there was no proper administration
in the Naga hills. The British could have established a flourishing trade in the Naga areas, had these Nagas been under their administrative control. But administrating the Naga hills was not only expensive but militarily difficult.\textsuperscript{59} Hence trade in the Naga areas was considered an impractical proposition. Political expediency also demanded the policy of non-interference in the Naga affairs. In 1852, the British were involved in the second Anglo-Burmese war. They were not in a position to spare military personnel for the Naga hills. Hence a policy of non-interference at the time lay in the logic of circumstances.

The British policy of non-interference in the Naga affairs from 1851 to 1865, however, resulted in the loss of British prestige in that area. The passive attitudes of the British made the Nagas all the more aggressive and they started to raid and plunder of the British subjects. The Nagas made numerous, even upto about 35 raids from 1851 to 1865, on the British subjects and killed many British subjects led mostly by the Angami Nagas. Thus the whole British areas adjoining the Naga hills became disturbed during that period. This state of affairs forced the British to go in for re-appraisal of the whole policy concerning the Naga hills. The local British officials of North Cachar were putting pressure
on senior officials to pursue an active policy in the Naga hills. Lt. Gregory, the Officer-in-charge of North Cachar, was of the view that "unless he was allowed to adopt more vigorous measures than were permitted to his predecessors, he could not guarantee the safety of his sub-division". In 1862, a new Lt. Governor, Sir Cecil Beadon succeeded to the office. He believed in an active and forward policy. He maintained that "in the course of a few years Assam would be divided amongst the Bhutias, Abors, Nagas, Garos, Mishmis and other wild tribes .... and that if petty outrages were to be allowed by withdrawal of the British frontier, then, the British would soon find themselves driven out of the Province. He continued to put pressure on the British government of India to adopt collective measures to assert the British authority over the Nagas. He noted in one of his despatches to the Governor-General that the British policy of withdrawal from the Naga hills had proved to be a great mistake. Therefore, Sir Cecil Beadon, Lieutenant Governor, suggested the way only to protect the British Officers and subjects in Assam was to "re-assert our authority over them and bring them under a system of administration suited to their circumstances and gradually to reclaim them from the habit of lawlessness to those of order and civilisation". Beadon's proposals,
in fact, aimed at bringing the country of the Angami Nagas at once under the control of the British Government. However, the Governor-General of India was not in favour of such a drastic step. He expressed aversion to any attempt to subdue the Nagas. But he agreed with Beadon that some steps had to be taken "to protect low lands from the Naga incursions". He therefore instructed the Lieutenant Governor, Beadon to display moderate physical force so that the portion of the hill tract adjacent to the plains could be brought into order. Thus the British Indian government gave no sanction to occupy the Naga hills as the British Bengal Government had desired but merely allowed the establishment of a strong Central station at Samaguting (Chumukedima) and the Officer-in-charge of which was to endeavour to maintaining conciliatory intercourse with the Nagas.

Gradual Extension and the Naga Resistance

In pursuance of the new policy a new administrative zone was created in 1866 at Samaguting (Chumukedima). This hill district was to comprise the entire Angami Naga hills and the area lying west of the Dhansiri. The British headquarters at Asaloo was abandoned and the office was shifted to the new headquarters at Samaguting. Lieutenant John Gregory was made the Deputy Commissioner
of the new district at Samaguting (Chumukedima). A whole police contingent was placed under him for the protection of the newly established headquarters. The British forbade seriously the King of Manipur to send expeditions to the Naga hills in future. The British government wanted to survey the entire area of the Naga hills and so a number of survey parties were sent. The Nagas offered resistance but they were suppressed. Thus, the British got a firm foothold on the heart of the Naga hills. Thus the overzealous British officials wanted extension of the British jurisdiction beyond Samaguting (Chumukedima). But the Home Department, however, was not in favour of extending the line of the British frontier to the interior of the Naga hills. But when Captain Johnstone, the Officiating Deputy Commissioner of the Naga hills, annexed two villages of the Lotha Nagas in Wokha in 1875, on the pretext that they repeatedly attacked the British survey parties and threatened the tea gardens in upper Assam and then the British government had to approve the measure. Thus the British systematically pursued the policy of extending their authority to the Naga territory and the occupation of the hill area after 1866. In July 1875, Colonel Keating, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, had even recommended the transfer of the British administrative headquarters from Samaguting (Chumukedima) to Wokha in
the Lotha Naga areas. Keating's plan had two objectives. Firstly, exploration and survey work would have been all the more easy if Jokha were made the British headquarters. Secondly, the British administrative jurisdiction would have extended further in the Naga interior areas. The British government of India, however, did not agree to Keating's proposal. It preferred to await the result of the next season's survey operations before moving the headquarters from Samaguting (Chumukedima).

The establishment of administrative headquarters at Chumukedima and the gradual extension of the British power to the Naga hills made the Nagas very apprehensive. They wanted to check this at any cost. Hence the Nagas increased raids on the British posts and survey parties. The Angami Nagas of Khonoma and Mozema villages were leading the resistance movement against the British although they were at daggers' drawn earlier with each other and the Mozema village was siding with British. From 1874 to 1876 they plundered six villages, destroyed wholly, or partially nine villages which were friendly to the British and killed nearly 334 persons. In December 1875, Captain Butler the Deputy Commissioner of Chumukedima was killed while he was engaged in a survey work at Pangti, a Lotha Naga village. The Naga raids on the British administered areas continued
throughout 1876. In February 1877, the Angami Nagas of Mozema attacked the Cachari village Gamaigaju and killed six British subjects and wounded two persons. In short by 1877, the Naga hostility against the British reached its zenith. The Governor-General of India acquainted the Secretary of State for India with the Naga outrages. The Governor-General in a despatch to the Secretary of State in June 1877, wrote that till then the British objectives had been the maintenance of peace on British India's border. Previously they had not taken the responsibility of civilising the Nagas or maintaining order among them. But if peace was to be maintained in that troubled border area then they would have to acquire effective control and influence over a large section of the Naga hills. The Governor-General, however, sought the permission of Secretary of State for India to shift the British headquarters from Chumukedima (Samaguting) to Kohima. Since Chumukedima was too far from the heart of the Angami Nagas area, an effective control over the Angamis was not possible from that place. Hence, the British headquarters had to be shifted to some place which was in the heart of the Angami Naga area and that was none else but Kohima. The Secretary of State agreed to the proposal of the Governor-General and even that no time should be lost.
In pursuance of this policy, Stuart Bayley, Chief Commissioner of Assam, directed Damant, the Deputy Commissioner of Chumukedima, to occupy Kohima and make it the British headquarters. Consequently, Damant occupied Kohima in spite of stiff resistance of the Angami Nagas and moved his headquarters to Kohima on 19 March, 1879.

The occupation of Wokha and lastly Kohima by the British made the Nagas all the more hostile. Hence, they made a last desperate attempt to lodge the British from their territory. They smuggled a large number of firearms and collected such weapons as spears, daos, bows and arrows in large quantities to fight the British. Damant came to know the warlike preparations of the Angami Nagas. However, Damant personally went to Kohima on October 14, 1879, with an escort of 81 (eighty one) men to avert the situation. When he tried to enter the village gate a Naga Sentry shot him dead. The party who was escorting him fled away because Angami Nagas outnumbered them. Damant was warned earlier but refused, so was the fate. This encouraged more the Angami Nagas to attack the British post at Kohima. Thousands of Naga warriors fought against the British Indian army and they would have gained control over Kohima but the Nagas could not because of the massive re-inforcement
which arrived to Kohima from Wokha and Manipur. The Angami Nagas could not succeed in their effort because the British had sent reinforcements to the besieged Kohima post. Now the British wanted to crush the Angami Nagas' resistance for ever. Hence the British sent Brig. General Nation to Khonoma on 17 November, 1879, to subdue the Angami Nagas. The Nagas who were expecting the British counter-attack faced the British with great courage and patience. Even Major James Johnstone, who physically took part in the Kohima battle has written, "The Nagas met us with heavy fire and showers of spears and stones. One of the spears struck Forbes and Redgeway was badly wounded in the left shoulder by a fire shot at ten places". Ultimately, the Nagas could not meet the heavy force of the British for long and left the battle field and withdrawn for the next assault. Though the British succeeded in defeating the Nagas at Kohima they suffered a great loss. Three British officers were killed, 4 wounded and 44 rank and file were either killed or injured. The defeat of Khonoma, in fact, marked the end of serious trouble and hostility in the Naga hills. Now the British government set up strong military posts at Wokha and Kohima. The Naga villagers were severely punished, mainly in the form of manual labour, which helped the British government in constructing roads and buildings etc.
The question of evolving a new British policy towards the Nagas arose after the defeat of the Angami Nagas at Khonoma and Kohima. Sir Bailey, the Chief Commissioner, proposed to place the entire Naga area from Burail on the south to Nowgong on the north under the Naga hills district. The British government had no alternative but to extend their control over the Nagas from a strategic central position. Hence the British government approved that the Naga hills district should be administered as British territory.⁷⁵A

Thus the formation of a full-fledged Naga hills district is a remarkable landmark in the history of British relations with the Nagas. The downfall of the Angami Nagas in the Khonoma battle gave the British a golden chance to establish their rule over the Nagas.⁷⁶ Their main objective was to bring the strategic area of the Naga hills under their control and when this objective was achieved in 1879, Charles Illiot, the new Chief Commissioner of Assam, prepared an exhaustive memorandum on the future administration of the Naga areas.⁷⁷ He proposed the laying down of a permanent boundary and division of the district for the convenience of the administration. Charles now favoured the imposition
of House tax, appointment of Village Headmen (Dobhasi) and the opening of dispensaries, village schools and other possible facilities for the well-being of the Nagas. He therefore, directed the British officers/assistants to maintain direct contact with the Nagas by going to their respective villages. 77A

Charles Illiot's (New Chief Commissioner of Assam) proposals reveal that the British were in favour of bringing the western and central portion of the Naga hills as a settled district of the new province of Assam which was approved by the Home Government. 77B As a result, the British succeeded in controlling the Nagas. The district witnessed "the progressive establishment of peace and good order and the quite submission of the Nagas to our rule". 78 The Nagas were pacified because of two reasons. Firstly, the British managed to establish a firm hold over the Nagas. Secondly, the British officers personally toured Naga areas and developed cordial relations with them. 79 In the process of British administration, both British and American Christian Missionaries also played vital roles in civilising the Nagas and making them live peacefully. Consequently, the Head-hunting, as a way of life by the Nagas ceased and the fighting among the Nagas for petty matters and their inter-village feuds gradually
came to an end.

The defeat of the Angamis in the Khonoma battle made the British masters of the Lotha and Angami areas in the Naga hills. But the other Naga hills areas such as Mokokchung and Tuensang, however, remained outside the British administration control. The British policy was to consolidate their authority over the Naga areas already occupied, while simultaneously acquiring unoccupied Naga territory. Hence after 1879, the British tried to bring Mokokchung and Tuensang areas under their control. Survey parties sent to these areas were followed by military expeditions. The Aos, Phoms, and Konyak Nagas, of Mokokchung areas offered stiff resistance to the British but this soon broke down. The British not only established their control over Mokokchung but made it a separate sub-divisional headquarters and by 1908, the entire Naga hill areas between the Dikhu and Sarai Rivers comprising Borjan, Wakchung, Wanchang and Liangkha, was annexed and put under the newly created Mokokchung sub-division. Thus by 1908, the British had become the sovereign masters of both the Kohima and Mokokchung Naga areas.

Now the only Naga tract that remained outside British territory jurisdiction was Tuensang areas which
lay in the east of Mokokchung and touched the western border of Burma, the Chindwin River, being the line of demarcation between the Naga hills and Burma. As early as 1907, A.W. David, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga hills district, had commented that they would not have real peace until they absorbed the whole area between Assam and the Chindwin river. Sir Archdale Earle, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, had also said in 1914, that the process of the British expansion in the Naga hills had to be continued until the whole of the country between Assam and Burma has been taken over. The Government of Assam as well as the British Indian government agreed to the views expressed by the local officials because the subjugation of Tuensang Nagas not only would have completed the process of occupation of the whole of the Naga hills area between Assam and Burma but could have also provided an opportunity to exploit the coal bearing areas of Tuensang. Hence, vigorous efforts were made by the British to annex the villages of Tuensang area one by one and by 1922 the entire Tuensang area passed into the hands of the British. Thus the whole Naga hills area came under the sovereign jurisdiction of the British by 1922. The Nagas also sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly, accepted the overlordship of the British colonial power.
Policy of Isolation

While the process of bringing the whole of the Naga area under the British jurisdiction was going on in the beginning of the 20th century, the British Government was also contemplating how to carve out an area for the hill tribes in the administrative system of British India. The Naga hills district with its headquarters at Kohima had already been created and this was made a part of the Province of Assam. The administration of the Naga hill areas, however, was not only difficult and arduous but also different from that of the plains. The British Government was alive to this fact and hence the (British; Government of India Act 1919, gave special powers to the Governor-General of India with respect to the hill areas and declared 'Backward Area'. The British had made the Naga hills district a part of Assam but little efforts were made for the integration of the Naga people with the people of the mainland. The freedom movement had already been started by the Indians under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The British government tried to keep the Naga people away from this nationalist movement which had been launched by the people living in the plains. The British made all efforts to keep the Nagas in isolation. That is why, when the Government of India Act 1935 was enacted, the Naga hills district was declared
an 'Excluded Area'. Sir Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam, mentioned about the Constitution Act of 1935 which said, "Throughout the discussions previous to the framing of the new Act, the authorities concerned had no difficulty in agreeing that the Naga hills ought to be kept outside the purview of the new Constitution. They were accordingly declared to be an "Excluded Area" under the Government of India (Excluded and partially Excluded Area) Order, 1936, and have since the 1st of April, 1937, been administered by the Governor in his discretion". Thus the British wanted to have a separate identity. All this goes to suggest that the British established their sovereign control over the Naga hills and made it a part of the administrative system of British India but the people of the Naga hills were kept aloof from the mainstream of the country. Perhaps some British officials wanted to make the Naga hill areas a British colony (Crown Colony) even after India's independence. This is evident from the proposal of Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam which was submitted to the Governor General of India. Robert Reid had proposed that even after granting of independence to India, the Naga hills, north eastern frontier agency (N.E.F.A.) and the Chittagong hill tracts of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) should be retained as the 'Crown Colony'.
Therefore it is a different matter that the Home Government did not approve of Reid's proposal but the British policy of treating Nagaland as excluded territory and keeping the Naga people away from the national mainstream encouraged some misguided Nagas to demand an independent Naga State which in fact, became a bone of contention ever since India became independent in 1947 and thereafter.
Notes and References


3 Ibid.


5 In Nagaland there are two methods of cultivation - namely, terrace and jhuming. In jhuming the slopes of the hills are divided into different plots and cultivated for one year or two years. The farmers shift to the next plot in the coming years and cultivate it for one or two years. In this way the rotation goes on and the farmers come back to the first plot again after some years for cultivation. In the terrace method, however, the cultivation is done yearly.


14 In many places celts have been found in Nagaland. A well polished celt collected from a river in Mokokchung District is available in the Nagaland State Museum. See also, J.H. Hutton, Some Curved Stones in the Doypang Valley, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 20, Sibsagar, 1925; and J.H. Hutton, Two Celts from the Naga Hills, *Man*, Vol. 24, No. 15, 1924.


16 Smith, Missionary Activities and Acculturation of Backward People, *op. cit.*., pp. 175-78.


23 T.C. Hodson, Some Naga Customs and Superstitions, Folklore, Vol. 21, 1910, pp. 296-312.


26 J.C. White, Sikkim and Bhutan, op. cit., p. 7. See also, Burma Census Report, of 1911, p. 252.


34 Verrier Elwin, Nagaland, op.cit., p. 18.


36A Lakshmi Devi, Ahom's Tribal Relations, op. cit., p. 68.

37 Ibid.


41 A. Mackenzie, History of the Relations of the Govt. with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal, op. cit., p. 102.


44 Mackenzie writes that "The continued remonstrances of the Assam Commissioner led at length to a cancelment of the call upon Manipur and a European Officer was in 1839 ordered to occupy a post near the Naga country and endeavour to bring the Chiefs to terms."


48 A. Mackenzie, History of the Relations of the Govt. with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal, op. cit., pp. 106-07.


52A John Butler, Travel and Adventures in the Province of Assam, op. cit., 1855, pp. 39-45.

53 Captain Brodie, Narrative of a Tour over that part of the Naga Hills laying between the Dikhu and Doyang Rivers, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XIV, Pt. 2, 1845, pp. 828-40. See also, J.H. Hutton, Diaries of Two Tours of the Unadministered Areas East of the Naga Hills, Memorials of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XI, 1929.


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58 M. Alemchiba, A Brief Historical Account of the Nagaland, Kohima, 1972, p. 58.


61 Bengal Judicial Proceedings, April, 1866, No. 140.

61A Ibid.

61B Ibid.

63 *Bengal Judicial Proceedings*, October, 1866, No. 612.


64 Michell, *North East Frontier of India, op. cit.*, p. 211.

65 *Foreign Political Proceedings*, December, 1875, No. 70.

66 A. Mackenzie, History of the Relations of the Govt. with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

67 M. Alembibha, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland, op. cit.*, p. 82.


69 Alembibha, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland, op. cit.*, p. 82.

70 *Foreign Political Proceedings*, April, 1877, No. 80.


71 Mackenzie, History of the Relations of the Govt. with the Hill Tribes of the North Eastern Frontier of Bengal, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-43.


76 *Assam Proceedings*, November, 1882.

77 *Foreign Political Proceedings*, January, 1882, No. 135.


78 The Account of the Province of Assam, Shillong, 1903, p. 77.


84 *Foreign Proceedings*, August 1896, No. 36, p. 84.


86 The Govt. of India Act 1919, Section 52 (A)(I)(2), cited in P.N. Luthra's *Nagaland from a District to a State*, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Shillong, 1974, pp. 41-42.

87 The Govt. of India Act 1935, Section 311 (1)(2), a, b, c, cited in Luthra's *Nagaland*, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.
