CHAPTER: 2

The relations between the Nagas and the Kukis, 1826-1990

The relationship between the two ethnic communities, viz., the Nagas and the Kukis began since the time they came into contact with each other in their present habitation in Northeast India. The written records on them, particularly on this subject, came to be available only with the advent of British rulers and Christianity. The sources on the Naga-Kuki relations are limited. Prior to British colonialism in northeast India, traces of references made to them could be found in the Royal Chronicle of Manipur, Burangji of Ahom and Royal Chronicle of Tepperah (Tripura) etc., but it is not adequate to construct their past. The two ethnic groups were known for their headhunting habits and war like activities: they not only practices wars and raids on the outsiders but also inter-regions, inter-tribes, intra-tribes and inter-villages. However, this does not mean that there was no peace. Most of the references made on the relations of these two ethnic groups are on their violent activities and do not give due importance to the peaceful relationship they also shared. With the advent of British ruled and Christianity such violence gradually faded away as they strictly banned the violent practices and the felons were severely punished by the rulers. In this background, how these two ethnic entities shared their political, religious and economic relationship will be discussed in this chapter.

A Brief review on their historical background of the ethnies

Before we discuss their relationship, it will be more apt to have an insight into their origin, migration and settlements in the states of Nagaland, Manipur and its adjacent hills of Assam. The Nagas, according to Horam, at first lived in stone caves or in the
womb of the earth.\textsuperscript{159} Vaiphei says, "They (Chin-Kuki-Mizo) came out from a cave or Khul or Khur or Sinlung."\textsuperscript{160} This implied that the two ethnies traced their origin to the cave. This is one reason why many ethnographers and administrators concluded that they have a common ancestor.

The narratives on the migration of the Nagas and the Kukis have semelances as well as variations. They have the same names of rivers and places, which they crossed in the process of their migrations. Further, the routes they traversed to reach the present settlements are somewhat similar, particularly with the Naga tribes who came from southward. Moreover, both point the place of the cave from where they originated to southwestern China. The following quotes will substantiate further. On the Kukis, Hemkhochon Chongloi says, "the settlement in the confluence of Irrawady and Chindwin rivers from where expansion in different directions to subsequent settlements took place. Prior to this era, researchers usually traced them back as part of the southward movement of Tibeto-Burman group from Tibet during the first millennium BCE (BC), and eventually to the Chiang tribes, the ancestor of the Tibeto-Burman race, who lived in western China roundabout 2500 BCE (the province of present day Szechuan and in the mountain region of Kamsu and Shensi)\textsuperscript{161} Soppit writes on the Kuki tribes namely, Rangkhol, Bete, Jansen and Tadoi. According to him, "about the middle of 16\textsuperscript{th} century, Rangkhols inhabited the country now occupied by the Lushais, bordering Cachar, and their neighbours were the Betes with whom they were on friendly terms. Jansen lived at the back of the Rangkhols and driving them nearer and nearer the plains, and ultimately out of the country across Cachar into the North Cachar Hills and Manipur, a small body taking refuge in Tipperah territory. Bete found themselves in much the same position and following in the footsteps of their friends (Rangkhols) crossed into Cachar. The Jansen Kuki now found themselves occupying the Cachar frontier with their neighbours, the Tadoi (Kuki), with whom they were on friendly terms, and who bore the same relation to

them as the Betes did to the Rangkhols. The Lushais, who were at the back of Jansen and
cotribe, Tadoi, soon began to make their power felt and after struggling for many years
in vain, the Jansen and Tadois were driven out, and found themselves following in the
footsteps of their conquered foes, the Rangkhols.\textsuperscript{162} James Johnstone writes: “The Kukis
are a wandering race consisting of several tribes who have long been working up from
the south. They were first heard of as Kukis, in Manipur, between 1830 and 1840; though
tribes of the same race had long been subject to the Rajah of Manipur. The new
immigrants began to cause anxiety about the year 1845 and soon poured into the hill
tracts of Manipur in such numbers, as to drive away many of the older inhabitants.”\textsuperscript{163}
S.Changsan says: “In one of the stages of their movement they gathered themselves at a
place called ‘Khol kip-Khol-jang’, the name of gathering place. It was around 1410 AD.
From here they gradually came over to Manipur, some groups moved further to Mizoram,
Chittagong hill-tracts and some groups to Assam and Nagaland.”\textsuperscript{164}

On the Nagas, in \textit{An Introduction to the Ethnic Problem in Manipur \& A Reportage on the Naga-Clash: A prose in counter-insurgency} notes: “it has been
postulated that either in Paleolithic or in the Neolithic age, the Nagas passed through the
mainland of China and the Irrawady Chindwin valley and gradually moved on through
Thangdut in Burma to Makhel in Senapati district of present Manipur. From there they
seem to have dispersed again to the areas presently inhabited by them.”\textsuperscript{165} According to
G. Kabui, “it has been conjectured that the Naga had traversed from South West China to
Burma and Western Thailand and to island South East Asia and moved north again and
entered into the present habitat in North East India and some area of upper Burma.”\textsuperscript{166}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{162}{C.A. Soppit, \textit{A short History of the Kuki-Lushais tribes on the N.E.F Districts, Cachar, Sylhet, Naga Hills and the North Cachar Hills}, Shillong, 1887,pp.2-8.}
\footnote{163}{James Johnstone, \textit{My Experiences in Manipur and the Naga hills}, Vivek publishing house, Delhi, 1971, p.25.}
\footnote{164}{S.Changsan, \textit{A brief account of the Kuki} (unpublished Article), Kohima, Nagaland, p.3.}
\footnote{165}{Gam A Shimray, Shimreichon Luithui, Tapan Bose \& Sanjay Kumar Singh, \textit{An introduction to the Ethnic Problem in Manipur \& A Reportage on the Naga-Clash: A prose in counter-insurgency}, Naga Students' Federation, Kohima, Nagaland, 1994, p.9.}
\end{footnotes}
Thus, on their migration, there is broad similarity but the differences between the Nagas and the Kukis could not be denied as well. The Nagas reached their present settlement in more than one waves from different directions: northwest wave, northwards wave, eastwards wave and southwards wave etc. Unlike the Nagas, the Kukis are generally attributed to have come to their present settlements from the southward. Consequently, some of the similar names of the routes, places and rivers are found in the Kukis as well as in the Naga tribes. This is more with the Naga tribes who came from southward direction. There is also the time scale difference between the Nagas and the Kukis to occupy their present habitations in northeast India. Most of the records of pre-British to post Indian concluded that the Nagas are the oldest inhabitants of the hill areas in Manipur, Nagaland and its adjacent hills and the Kuki tribes as later arrivals.

Prior to the arrival of the Kuki tribes, wars and raids marked the condition of the areas: it was not only between the Nagas and outsiders but also amongst the Nagas such as inter-tribe, intra-tribe and inter village. The influx of the Kuki tribes made the situation worse and the Rajah of Manipur could not handle the problem. Johnstone writes, “Manipur in those days, owing to intestine quarrels, could have done nothing and the Raja Nur Singh gladly handed over the management of the new arrivals to him (Mc Culloch).”167 Mc Culloch succeeded George Gordon and he became a political agent of Manipur from 1837 till 1862. Mc Culloch adopted a policy of settling down these new immigrants. James Johnstone further writes, “seeing that the Kukis had been driven north by more powerful tribes, and that their first object was to secure land for cultivation; Mc Culloch, as they arrived, settled them down, allotting to them lands in different places according to their numbers, and where there presence would be useful on exposed frontiers. He advanced them large sums from his own pocket, assigning different duties to each chief’s followers. Some were made into irregular troops, others were-told off to carry loads according to the customs of the state. Thus, in time, many thousands of fierce

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Kukis were settled down as peaceful subjects of Manipur, and colonial Mc Culloch retained supreme control over them to the last.\(^{168}\)

Mc Culloch's policy of settled down the Kukis resulted into the following. Firstly, it served colonial rulers' interest in the areas. Lal Dena says "in 1840, Mc Culloch the then political agent purposely adopted the policy of allowing the settlement of Kukis on the frontier lines and even among the Nagas. The double purpose of the Kukis settlement in and on the frontiers of Manipur was that the warlike Kukis had to act as a buffer, first, against, the Burmese and second against the recalcitrant Nagas and Lushais tribes."\(^{169}\) Secondly, it served the interest of Manipur state ruled by Raja. In the words of N. Joykumar Singh, "the policy of Mc. Culloch in the settlement of the Kukis was highly appreciated by both the state government and British authorities. Indeed, it was a great contribution of Mc Culloch to the security of Manipur".\(^{170}\) Thirdly, it helped the Kukis who were in a helpless condition. According to A.K. Ray, it had an ulterior motive. 'But the immediate reason as noted by Macculloch, seems to be to save the tribes from the helpless condition prompted by the Lushai incursion into the British territory.'\(^{171}\) The Kuki immigrants not only got land but they were also recruited in irregular troops and received ration and firearms.

However, there was a negative result too particularly on the Nagas and other older inhabitants. The Nagas tribes were discontented with this policy since it was adopted and enacted: since the settlements were made within their settlements and the rulers used the Kukis to suppress the Nagas in colonizing them. The seed of enmity between them and the land issue, which still exist between the Nagas and the Kukis, are often traced to this policy. In An introduction to Naga-Kuki clash in Manipur & A Reportage on the Naga-Clash: A prose in counter-insurgency says: "in 1840, a British political Agent Mc


Culloch brought them in a large number of Kukis and let them loose in Naga Hills with rations and firearms to fight against the Nagas. Within a short period of time thousands of Kukis were settled as subjects of Manipur. However, the majority came subsequent to the first World War after being turned out by the Chin (Myanmar) in the process of enter-tribal war.172

After Mc Culloch made the Kukis settlements among the Nagas and on the frontier areas, the war and peace relations between the Nagas and the Kukis could also be deserved. The relations they shared between them are dealt in the following paragraphs.

Political relationship of the Nagas and the Kukis

Under this heading, the study will examine the political relationship between the Nagas and the Kukis since on the eve of British colonialism to post-British era in the hills country laid between the Ahom kingdom and Manipuri/Meitei kingdom.

Relations on the eve of British rule

Prior to the British intervention, A.K.Ray says, “on the eve of British intervention in the Kuki affairs, the later was maintaining antagonistic relation with the Angami Nagas, Kabui Nagas as well as with the Lushais. There were mutual raids of many Kuki and Naga villages. As a result many of the villages were burnt or deserted.”173 In Chakpikarong (The Anals Naga habitation) Stone Age culture age has been explored and found the existence of this culture.174 This shows the Anal tribe is one of the oldest tribes

173 Ibid., pp.27-28
of Manipur state. The Anals oral history says they were always at wars with the Kukis.\textsuperscript{175}

According to Yonou Asoso, "when the oppressed Kukis came into the Zeliangrong territory they forcefully occupied the lands and forests where the Zeliangrong people had already firmly extended their authority and jurisdictions settled for centuries. The former faced little danger and opposition except occasional resistance from Nagas since they were continuously and hopelessly carrying on headhunting fighting among themselves for mastery, adventurism and bravery. The Kukis with ferocious greed used to take up harsh measures against the Nagas in the areas."\textsuperscript{176} Robert Reid writes: "in 1892, a band of Kukis led by one Toki raided Swemi as the Angami call it or, to give its correct Manipuri name, Chinjaroi, a village in the North east corner of the state and massacred some 286 persons. This was duly punished by the Political Agent."\textsuperscript{177} He further writes, "in February 1910 a punitive expedition was sent by the government of eastern Bengal and Assam against two villages of Kukis lying in unadministered territory on the eastern boundary of the state, who had been guilty of raiding both in the Naga Hills District and Manipur".\textsuperscript{178}

W.C. Krome narrated about Tenyimia\textsuperscript{+}, particularly the Angamis how the war and peace treaty occurred in the olden days: Every village demarcated their boundary before settlement. If any of the villages crossed the demarcated boundary it led to war between them. Every New Year all the male villagers assembled together to appoint the eldest man of the village. The elected or appointed village headman or eldest man made four points: (1) No killings, (2) No poison, (3) No land encroachment of the village by any of the villagers or by any enemy villages and (4) No lies but to speak the truth. Whoever violated these, would be killed before the next New Year by Tiger, Snake, human being or enemies etc. Whoever followed these rules would be blessed with


\textsuperscript{177} Robert Reid, \textit{History of the frontier areas bordering on Assam from 1883-1941}, Spectrum Publication, Gauhati, 1942, p.78.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., p.79.

\textsuperscript{+} See \textit{Sourvenir Special Issue}, Tenyimia Union, Kohima, Nagaland. A paternal body comprising of seven tribes- Chakhesang, Angami, Poumai, Pochury, Rengma, Zeliangrong, and Memai called "TENYIMI". It was on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} February that Tenyimi was formally declared "TENYIMIA UNION".
longlife and prosperity etc. Whenever the village had disputes with other villages or communities over land or any other issues, they met on a new year and seriously discussed whether to fight or not. In this discussion, one of the villagers would volunteer on behalf of the villagers to fight against the enemy’s village. Thus, the village resolved to fight against the enemy’s village. Thereafter, on behalf of the villagers the three (3) elders of the concerned village would bless the volunteer person. The volunteer person took a sort of an oath like he would not cut his hair, nails and beards etc to ensure victory over the enemies. He was forbidden: to be with his family or cohabit with his wife and lived separately, to wash clothes, utensils or to have a bath and to go to his enemy’s village. These were maintained with strictness till the war ended. If he violated these rules he would fail in his mission or die. When he proceeded for war, he had to kill three cocks and cooked it. He ate and packed some of the cooked chicken, rice and water and carried it along with water into the jungle to fight war against the enemy. Around 3 am in the morning, three elders of the village would inspect him about his health, weapons like spear and dao and he would tell the three elders of the village that the whole villagers should fast for three days. On the third day, he returned to his village with the enemy’s head. When he came back he would shout, which was a sign of victory. Then he would meet three elders first then the villagers as a whole. The victory would be celebrated with a village feast. The victorious volunteer or warrior received ‘house tax’ from his villagers. In this, none knew the aim and object of the village and the volunteer person. So they were sure to get enemy’s head. In the end, one village achieved victory over the other warring village. Thus, peace had to be made. The leaders of both the respective villages would meet and hold discussions for peace between them. The defeated village proposed and informed the victorious village that they were the defeated party and surrendered to them. Further, they proclaimed that they would never claim or raise the cause (s) of war again. Then, a pair of ‘Mahru’ or a pair of mug of wine would be exchanged between them. They would also eat meat, rice and drink wine amongst the leaders of the village. Then they shook hands and bid goodbye to each other. From the day they exchanged ‘Mahru’, there would be no war between these two villages. The next day both the villagers celebrated by feasting and visiting each other villages and then they
became one family. They would help each other in times of troubles as a family. If any one of them violated this, all the villagers would be perished or killed.\textsuperscript{179}

P.K. Thekho narrated about Tenyimia (Nagas) on how they came to have a Peace Treaty:

1. When fighting went on for a prolonged period and the two parties were exhausted; then they proposed a peace treaty.

2. When the two villages or communities' war came to an end, the defeated or weaker village or community proposed for peace. The weaker or defeated group would offer spear, wine and meat to the stronger. The defeated or weaker would be under the domination of the stronger village or communities. If the stronger killed any of the weaker villagers, the stronger village would be perished.

3. In the case of equal strength of the warring villages or communities, they exchanged spear, wine and meat. They ate and drank together. If any one of them violated the treaty made, they lost the dignity of the village or community and would be perish under all kinds of curses.\textsuperscript{180}

From the above narrations, amongst the many points to be noted: in the olden days the peace treaties were made between the warring villages or communities and they observed the peace treaty for the feared of curses and lost of dignity for the offender or violator village.

Yonou writes, “sometimes the Naga villages wary of oppression, afraid of their cruel incursion, ravages and raids submitted themselves to hostile Kukis and entered into traditional diplomatic relations. To show this good gesture and will in language and in action, diplomatic feast was held in which different kinds of flavouring meats and drinks were thrown between the contending parties and friendly agreements were sworn between them on the basis of which damage or murder was forbidden by the contacting parties themselves at any occasions. Rather they usually agreed to fight together against a

\textsuperscript{179} An excerpt from interview of W.C.Krome (Angami tribe). He was the President of Tenyimia i.e., 13\textsuperscript{th} March 1993- 12 July 2003. At present, he is an advisor of Tenyimia.

\textsuperscript{180} An excerpt from interview of P.K Thekho, Paumai Naga tribe. He is ex-convenor of NPMHR, Manipur.
third party if the latter attacked any one of them.” Yonou writes, “On the other side, the Zeliangrong, Tangkhul, Kom and Anal Nagas fell in the territorial jurisdiction of Manipur and Manipuris were helpless to control the Kukis... somehow most of the times the Nagas and Kukis were forced to live together in peace and harmony as they shared the same Animistic religion and basic cultural unity at almost all levels of society. In times of crisis it was also not unusual for them to protect and help each other.” S.Prim Vaiphei says: “It was a time when people knew no God. So, there had been many mischievous things, they did. However, they also did many good things. They settled disputes among the Nagas and stopped them from killing and endless mutual headhunting. In many places, Naga villages requested the Kukis to come and settle near their village for their protection. For instances, there is a story that the Liangmeis of Thonglang village planned to attack the Thanggal Surung village. As soon as the people of Thanggal Surung discovered the plot, they requested the Kukis to come and settle near their village and protect them from harm. Thus, there is one Kuki village near Thanggal Surung known as Thanggan Thanglunpa.” Dr.Aosenba says: Although racially, the Nagas, Manipuris and Kukis are allied Mongoloid stocks, the Nagas relation with them could be described as having wars as well as fraternal relationship. These show, despite many inter village and inter tribe wars, there were peace treaties, peace and harmonical relationships, protection and help for each other between the Naga villages or tribes and the Kuki villages or sub tribes/ clans.

K.Changsang narrated that according to the Kukis and the Angamis, particularly Semoma clan: there were constant skirmishes between the Angamis and the Zeliangs in the olden days or headhunting days. Whenever Angamis raid Zeliangs villages it was brutal even kids and wives were not spared from their harrasement. Zeliangs could not bare all these. So, chief of Jampi village (Kuki) who was from Sithou clan was invited to

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establish in their areas. Thus, they made their settlement there. The earliest villages of Kukis in this area were Shungshang and Shunghlu, which are now under Peren subdivisional headed by an Additional Deputy Commissioner. After the Kukis made their settlement, Angamis raids or depredation on Zeliangs stopped. The Kukis and the Angamis of Khonoma also made an agreement or treaty by drinking barrel water. The reason why Zeliangs invited Kukis was that the Kuki chief of Jampi was powerful during those days; they were fearless warriors. The chief of Jampi also brought his subjects along with him. During those periods Zeliangs built the houses of Kuki chief of Sailhem, Jampi, Shungshung, Shunghlu, Tulbung. Secondly, Beishumpui Zeliang village was paying tax to Tulbung Singsong Kuki village. In 1985, Tulbung Singsong Kuki village chief told Beishumpui chief not to pay him tax anymore. In 1990s during the Naga-Kuki violent conflict, Zeliangs asked the Kukis to pay ‘Rampo’ (taxes). 185

According to Zeliangs there were skirmishes or raids between Kuki and the Poi (Lushai). The Kuki group fled from them and the Zeliangs hid them in the Corcupine hole and saved them. Thus, they began to settle with them. 186 Hekhevi Achumi says, some of the Kukis were brought into Nagaland by the Angamis during their war against Zeliangs in 18th century. Therefore both the Angamis and the Zeliangs brought the Kukis to Nagaland. 187

“The Kukis were migrating North when the Sarkar came into contact with the Angamis, and the Kacha Naga villages had begun to call in Kukis to defend them against raiders from Khonoma, which maintained a fluctuating suzerainty over the Kacha Naga villages.” 188 According to P.S. Haokip, it is a fact that till the recent ethnic killings, the Kuki tribes in Nagaland co-existed peacefully with their neighbours, mainly the Zeliangs Tribes. It is on record that the Kukis and Khonoma village entered into a “Peace Treaty” by drinking water through the barrel of gun – friendship gifts like spears were exchanged and the Kukis helped Khonoma, Semoma Khel, in their construction of a fort, called

185 Excerpt from the interview of K. Changsang, April 2005. He is a retired Director, Government of Nagaland.
186 Ibid.
187 Excerpt from an interview of Hekhevi Achumi, April 2005. He is Secretary Finance of Naga Hoho.
Semo-Kunda which still stands today.\textsuperscript{189} The peaceful relationship between the two ethnies is also seen with the advent of Christianity. The Naga and the Kuki shares relationship as not only Christian brothers but also shares churches, associations/conventions and denominations.

There are also many oral histories and written records, which also informs us about the existence of peace treaties, alliances, peace and harmonial relationship and protection and help in times of troubles.

\textit{Relations during the British Era}

The Raja of Manipur and the British rulers always exploited the antagonistic part of relationship of the Nagas and the Kukis in pre-independence era. This continues into the present era, which will be seen further. Yonou notes, “As they were more powerful than the Nagas, the Kukis frequently raided on the Tangkhul, Kom, Anal Nagas villages for plunder and captivity, which Meitei Laipak claim to be its territory, tried to rule over them and reduced them to slaves at times. The Meiteis having better relations with these Nagas used to destroy their designs, sometimes enticed them into palace enclosure and murdered them. Sometimes they also put Kukis whom, they called “Khongjais” to suppress any Naga revolt against Meiteis.”\textsuperscript{190} Lal Dena writes, “in 1840, McCulloch, the Political Agent, purposely adopted the policy of allowing the settlement of Kukis on the front lines and even among the Nagas. The double purpose of the Kukis settlement in and on the frontiers of Manipur was that the warlike Kukis had to act as a buffer, first, against the Burmese and, Second, against the recalcitrant Nagas and Lushai tribes. In like manner, the colonial administrators also used the Nagas first against the Burmese and then against the Kukis and the Lushais.”\textsuperscript{191} On different occasions, such as the invasion of the Mao Nagas in north Manipur, the Suktes in South Manipur and the Naga uprising

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\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.,p.6.

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in Kohima in 1879, the Kuki warriors were used by the colonial officials and this was the
time when probably the first seed of discontentment of the Nagas against the Kukis was
sown. A.K.Ray says, “traditional antagonistic relations were exploited by the British in
their frontier policy of peace and defence and they used the Kukis against the Nagas and
the Lushais for this purpose.” These narratives suggest that the Rajas of Manipur and
the British rulers used these tribes against each other to serve their own interests, which
was a policy of ‘Divide and Rule’.

In the first half of 20th century the Nagas and the Kukis revoluted against their
colonial masters: the Kukis in 1917 and the Zeliangrong in 1930. In these revolts, one
could see their relationship. During the First World War, the discontented Kukis sparked­
off a rebellion called Kuki rebellion of 1917-19. The immediate cause for this event was
the refusal of the Kukis to be recruited for Labour Corps to be sent to Egypt. This
rebellion failed but it is to remember that the British rulers could not suppress it so easily.
During this uprising of the Kukis, the colonialist recruited the Nagas against the Kukis.
Some of the Nagas also acted as spies for the British ruler. Further, the Nagas who did
not act for the rulers also showed their loyalty and supports to the ruler. These could be
seen from the following illustration: the Chief of Duthang village has kept a document,
which was preserved in a bamboo tube, which his father has received from the township
officer at Tamu. He shows that they submitted themselves to the government of Manipur.
They also requested the authority to regard them as not partaking in the Kuki rebellion
and consider them as not Kukis. At the same time, the Kukis also targeted the Nagas
like Zeliangrong, Tangkhuls and Anals, etc. In the words of Robert Reid, “the Kukis
seized the opportunity to pay off old scores against Naga villages, the Kabuis and
Tangkhuls being upwards of 200 heads were taken by the raiders, and several villages

192 Ibid., p. 184.
194 See Captain Rajendra Singh, the Anals of Manipur, Published Under the Directorate for Welfare of
destroyed." The oral history of the Anals says that Anals were oppressed by the Kukis during the Kuki rebellion of 1917.

The second tribal uprising, which broke out in 1930, was under Jadonang, a Kabui Naga. During this uprising, they targeted colonial ruler and also the Kukis. Robert Reid says, "in the year 1930-31 occurred the unrest connected with rise of Jadonang, Kabui Naga, who started a new religion and induced the superstitious Kabuis to believe that he would overthrow the existing administration and enable them to take revenge on the hated Kukis." Its aim was to overthrow the colonial ruler and the enmity between the Zeliangrong and the Kukis also erupted. To suppress this uprising, the rulers recruited the Kukis. The Kukis did the same things in the Zeliangrong uprising as the Nagas did in the Kuki rebellion. They were not only recruited to supress the rebels but also to act as spies. Further, they remained loyal and supportive to the British rulers.

These uprisings created so much tension not only between the Kukis and the British rulers in Kuki rebellion and the Nagas and British rulers in Zeliangrong rebellion but also between the Kukis and the Nagas in both the rebellions. These rebellions even made tension in the Baptist church. Lal Dena writes, "as a retaliatory move, the colonial officers took up the 'Kuki punitive measures' and recruited Nagas to suppress the rebellion. On the other hand, during the Zeliangrong Naga movement under Jadonang, the colonial officers recruited the Kukis to suppress them. In this way, the usual practice of divide and rule policy was fully operative in course of the consolidation of colonial control over the different ethnic tribal groups of Manipur, as elsewhere. It is also strange to observe these two tribal rebellions against their ruler or oppressor. In most of the tribal revolts, particularly, in India during the British rule, their neighbours came to aid, if not manpower but by providing weapons or acting as spies. In case of the Nagas

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196 Ibid., p. 80.
197 See Frederick Downs, 'Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *History of Christianity in India, vol. 5, part-5*, the Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, p.110.
and the Kukis, they supported the ruler against each other during their revolts, though both considered the colonialists as enemies. Thus, the Nagas and the Kukis uprisings against their rulers: the British ruler exploited their antagonistic part of their relationship in their uprisings to consolidate, prolong and enhance their rule over them. Secondly, the Nagas and Kukis also used their uprisings to pay off their old disputes. As a result of these, both were also against each other. However, with the end of these uprisings, they began to have peaceful relationship till the outburst of Naga-Kuki violent conflict in 1992.

**Relations on the eve and after India’s Independence**

Here, an attempt is made to understand the relations between the Nagas and the Kukis on the eve and after India’s Independence. In this, this study will look at two aspects; firstly, their relations in the Naga National Council (NNC) Movement, which trace its root to the Naga Club of 1918 in the Naga Hills. The second aspect will be about their relations in Manipur.

The Naga Club was formed in 1918, which could be called as the first organization of the Nagas to vent out the grievances of the Naga peoples. The Naga Club encompassed members of various Naga tribes and also the Kukis in the Naga Hills. The Kukis were, in fact, active participants in the ‘Naga Club’. On 10th January 1929, when Naga Club’s delegation submitted memorandum to Royal Commissions led by Sir John Simon also called as ‘Simon Commission’, therein, they demanded the Nagas to be left alone and to led them determine their own future. Shri Lengjang Kuki was one of the twenty signatories of the memorandum submitted to the ‘Simon Commission’. The first Naga political organization - Naga National Council (NNC) was founded in February 1946.\(^\text{199}\) In NNC, late Seikhohen Kuki and Jankhosei Kuki represented the Kuki tribe of Naga Hills as full-fledged member of the Naga National Council. Late Seikhohen Kuki

\(^{199}\) See *A Brief Historical Account of the Nagas*, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights, p.10.
was also member of NNC delegation in their maiden visit to Delhi for Nagaland. In the Naga Voluntary plebiscite of 1951, which was called on May 16, 1951 at Kohima by late A.Z. Phizo, the then president of Naga National Council, the Kukis as one unit of the tribes in Naga Hills also voted in favour of a Sovereign Nagaland. Elders and leaders from the tribe like Paochung Kuki, Chief of Khaibung, late Subedar Khupjalet Kuki, Chief of Molvom, late Lenjalal Kuki, Chief of Bungsang, late Onpao Kuki, a public leader played very active roles. When the NNC went underground due to oppression and suppression of the Government of India, the Kukis were also part of it: they shed tears for the burning of the villages and the suffering of the people during this period. They joined underground movement since the beginning till today, despite, the emergence of Kuki Undergrounds (UGs) since late 1980s. When a small part of the Naga areas was granted a Statehood- Nagaland in 1963, the Kukis were considered per in all spheres.

The situation of the Nagas in Manipur differed from their counterparts or their fellowmen in the Naga Hills of Assam (Nagaland and adjoining Hills in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh). As it has been mentioned earlier that these tribes occupied the Hills country lying between Assam and Manipur Kingdoms. This Hills Country was divided between the two kingdoms - Assam and Manipur by the British rulers though they, to some extend, took care to preserve their identity. The part of Hills country of Manipur was under British Political Agent of Manipur State Durbar. Prior to the British ruled, Manipur Rajas claimed or exacted tributes on some of the villages from time to time but they never constituted part of their kingdom. This part of Hills country was excluded from ‘Exclusive Areas’ and ‘Partially Excluded Areas’ categories, though the Naga Hills and the Lushai Hills and North Cachar Hills were under the ‘Exclusive Areas’ and others under ‘Partially Excluded Areas’ etc.

When the British rulers were to leave India, the tribals of the hills area, which was directly under British Political Agent or President of Manipur State Durbar, refused to

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merge with the Manipur state. During this period the Kukis and the Nagas took the same stance. "When the transfer of power of administration of the hill areas to the Manipur State Darbar was in the air, there was a fresh rumbling in the hills. The Nagas and the Kukis did not like to remain as state subjects of Manipur. Under the leadership of a Naga leader, Mr. Daiho of the Naga National League (NNL), the idea of future administration of the hills was floated. The transferred hill administration to the Manipur State Darbar was never welcomed as the later had every scepticism that the hillmen would not have right place in Manipur, predominantly a Hindu state as well as the hillmen would never be selected for the constituent Assembly by the Maharaja or Darbar and the Manipuri public. He insisted on the coincidence of ethnic and linguistic boundaries with political boundaries. In the fields of religion, customs, habits and usages, it was argued that there was no similarity with the Manipuris nor was their local administration similar to that of the valley Manipuris. Rather they were similar to those of Assam hills. It was also argued that geographically the hills of Manipur form a part and parcel of its surrounding hill districts of Assam and Burma. In all intent and purpose, the NNL demanded secession of the Manipur hills." Naga National League speaks on behalf of the Nagas in Manipur and also advocated unity with other tribes (Nagas and Kukis or Lushais or Mizo) in its demand for merge with adjoining hills in Assam or Self-determination in general way.

The Kuki National Assembly (KNA)* also took the same stand with the Nagas and was agitating against the merger with Manipur valley and they were for union of hills in Manipur with the hills in Assam to be under one administration. For this, "KNA also started mobilizing the support of the neighbouring tribes like the Lushai and Chins of Burma." But suddenly the KNA’s stand on territorial autonomy changed before the election of the Electoral College in 1952. It could not heartily endorse the idea of the NNL for the merger of the hill areas of Manipur with Assam. In the 17 point Election Manifesto in 1952 the leaders of the KNA stressed that the “Manipur state in any case

203 Ibid.,p.123.
204 Ibid.,p.124.

Detail explanations of the KNA will be found in the next chapter.
and on any condition should not be allowed to be merged with the Hills of Assam."205

Thus, the unity created between the Nagas and the Kukis for merger to Assam hills ended in 1952, as KNA changed its stance in favour of anti-merger with the hills of Assam and began to advocate integration of Hills to Manipur. This is shown by their election Manifesto of 1952 but the Nagas continue to keep the issue alive till today.

Secondly, on the eve of transferring power, in May 1947 a committee consisting of the Kukis and Naga members was formed for organising the Naga-Kuki unity party. This move came from Mr. Lunneh (Kuki) and Mr. Rev. Lorho, a Naga. The purpose was to solve their common problems. Again another pact was proposed between the Kukis and the Mao Nagas to be signed on 29th and 30th October 1947, which intended to include the Maram and Khairao Nagas besides the Maos.206 But this Naga –Kuki Unity did not last long.

The period between the colonial ruler left and the period before the Manipur Raja signed merger to Indian Union, the princely state of Manipur came under constitutional monarchy till September 1949. President of Manipur State Darbar, before he left, appointed a committee to draft a constitution of Manipur state. In this constitution-making body, its members were to be comprised of both the representatives of the valley return by indirect election in 5 Tahasil and the representatives of hills nominated by the president of State Darbar. The draft constitution of Manipur was divided into two parts, viz., the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947, which was for the valley and the Manipur Hill Peoples’ (administration) Regulation, 1947, which was for the hill peoples.207 There was protest against the nomination of the constitution-making body by the Kuki National Assembly. The Nagas joined the constitution-making body without clamoured. But the KNA was on principal against the nomination of the hill representatives on the following grounds:

205 Ibid., pp.124 -5.
206 Ibid., p.114.
207 Ibid., p.117.
1. Nomination was made without asking the opinion of KNA whereas the Tangkhul Nagas were allowed to change its representatives in the committee and the Kabui Nagas too were allowed to have one representative even when the committee was nearing its end, and whereas some of the hill representatives have mentioned that they represent a part and parcel of the hill people in the committee.

2. The working committee of the KNA also resolved that they will not be bound by the decision of Constitution-Making-Committee, unless satisfactory solution of the following points were made, viz, solving the Land alienation problem of the Kukis, abolishing force labour system and granting equal rights with plainsmen, the original draft of the Hill Peoples’ regulation should stand and in view of their illiteracy, half of hill seats in the Assembly be nominated by the hill people and finally, raising the allotment of real revenue of the state for the hills from 17 ½ % to 25%. 208

The differences between them became visible as A.K. Ray puts it: “it became clear when the Tangkhul Nagas and the Kabui Nagas abstained from the meeting of the Naga-Kuki Unity organized by Mr. S.L. Lunneh and Lorho at Mao on 27.5.1947.” 209 “In the matter of representation in the Constituting Making Committee, the main thrust of grievances of the KNA was against the Nagas.” 210 All these show that in the nominations of Hill representatives for Constitution Making Committee, the differences between them erupted. Therefore, their relations in overground politics in Manipur on the eve of India’s independence were both unity as well as disunity.

Relations in their civil movements in post- Independent era

When NNC came into existence, the Nagas in Manipur automatically came to be a part of it despite the artificial boundaries created by the successive rulers divided them. “In protest against the dissection of the Nagas without their consent and in expression of

208 Ibid., p. 118.
209 Ibid., p. 119.
210 Ibid., p. 121.
their solidarity with all Nagas to live under one Naga Administrative Unit, a campaign known as Naga National League was successfully launched during 1947 and 1948 during the Chief Ministership of Maharaja Kumar Priyabara Singh of Manipur. The symbolic expression was “No House Tax Payment” to the Government of Manipur, but they decided to pay the House Tax to the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District in Assam. As a result, Mr. Athikho Daiho (President) and Mr. N. Modoli (Gen. Secretary) were arrested by the Manipur Police and Assam Rifles imprisoned them at Dum Dum Central jail, Calcutta. On the public protest against the arrest of their leaders, Assam Rifles shot dead three persons at Mao Gate, namely:

1. Mr Ausu Hepuni, Punanamai Village,
2. Mr. Modo Kholi, Kalinamai Village
3. Mr. Mahrili Lohru, Kalinamai Village. In addition, there were four (4) persons, who received serious bullet injuries.\(^{211}\)

During this event the Kukis, including the KNA supported the Nagas, only from 1952, KNA joined integrationist movement of Manipur.

The KNA since its inception pursued land problems. As early as 1946, in its resolutions, “the activities of the KNA started right from this time with its plan for the ‘settlement of the Kukis in the Kangpokpi-Kanglatongbi reserve in North Manipur’.”\(^{212}\) In their protest against the nomination of hill representatives, KNA also put forward, amongst others, solving of land alienation problem unless satisfactory solution KNA will not be bound by the decision of Constitution Making Committee.\(^{213}\) This land problem was mainly with the Nagas. One could easily discern that land issues always crop up in the Naga-Kuki relations, which is one issue that frequently strains their relationship.

\(^{213}\) Ibid., p.118.
In 1960, KNA demanded a separate state within Indian Union, "the KNA had summarized all the problems of the Kukis, even the issue of economic exploitation to the territorial problem and asserted that the only solution to the Kuki problems lied in the formation of Kuki State within Indian Union. While it was sceptic of the intention of the valley domination, it was equally apprehensive of the self-preservation of the Kukis. So the memorandum to the Prime Minister- unless something is done immediately for self preservation, namely, establishment of a separate state of their own within the Indian Union, they surely succumb sooner or later to extinction and extermination which has now seriously been threatening them." If the 1960s was the decade for the demand of a separate state within the Indian Union, the 1970s was a decade for starting a democratic movement for a separate revenue district. In 1970s, there was a demand for a separate revenue district for Kukis. This began with the Kuki Chiefs Zonal council meeting held on 3rd September 1970 in which it was raised, though the committee to demand this was formed earlier. The KNA also demanded separate hill district along with Kuki Chiefs Zonal Councils. On May 5th 1971, KNA leaders met Indian Union Leaders in New Delhi. Leaders of Kuki Chief Zonal Council also met Indian Union Leaders in July and August 1971. The Governor of Manipur was also urged to help them. However, the Governor after consultation with the central leaders told the Kuki Chief Zonal Council leader that Centre appreciated for a separate revenue district but was against Kuki as a named for the said District. Thus, separate district for the Kukis could not be achieved. In 1975 March and 1986 March, KNA redrafted their constitution and their present objective is to get a homeland for the Kuki-tribe. The Kuki militants, who began to emerged since late 1980s are also demanding 'Kuki homeland'comprises Kuki inhabited areas in India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Thus, the Kukis are still pursuing the demands for Kuki homeland and separate revenue district. For the 'Kuki district', Sadar hills in Senapati district and its adjacent areas and the Kuki homeland comprises of larger areas, from the State of Manipur, Senapati, Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Chandel, Churachandpur districts and parts of the valley districts are to be carved out. Both the demands met opposition from

214 Ibid., p.125.
215 Ibid., p.126.
216 Ibid., p.126.
217 Ibid., p.127.
the Nagas. From the Nagas side, they have no objection to the Kukis demands but not an inch of Nagas land is to be sacrificed. In a letter to the President, Government of India, in 1981, “we Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) strongly oppose the proposed creation of a new District to be called Sadar Hills District in the state of Manipur as an attempt at further administrative break up of Naga areas and alienation of our people from their land.” It further says, “we are of the opinion that the presently proposed Sadar Hill District is an attempt to further divide the Nagas and take away their land by carving out part of the territorial presently within the Naga majority inhabited districts of North, West, East and Tengnoupal of Manipur State.” The Naga territorial demand for sovereignty in India covers Nagaland, parts of Assam, Arunachal and four districts of Manipur namely, Chandel, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Senapati. Thus, the Kukis demand for sovereignty, separate state and fullfledged revenue district directly came into clash with the Nagas demand for sovereignty.

Relations between in underground movements After India’s Independence

Despite the clash between the Nagas and a section of the Kukis i.e., Kuki National Assembly (KNA) in their territorial demands, a section of Kukis always worked together with the Nagas to achieve Naga Sovereignty. The Kukis joined the Naga underground since the beginning of NNC’s armed wing Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN). The Kukis joined Naga militancy under the leadership of General Kaito Sema in 1957-8. Gen. Kaito was killed in 1968 but the Kukis continue to be in the Naga Underground till today. P.S Haokip, President of KNO writes, “the Kuki National Organization explicitly states that issues concerning Kuki in Nagaland are separate from those related to Kuki in other parts, such as in present-day Manipur, Assam, Tripura and Burma. In press release on 13 March 1994, the Kuki Inpi of Nagaland categorically stated that the

219 Ibid., p.2.
220 This information is gathered from Hangsin, Language Officer, Govt. of Nagaland, Kohima, 2004.
Kukis of Nagaland are not a part of the Kuki movement that is taking place elsewhere.  

However, looking at the history of the Kukis and the sovereignty movement of the Nagas, it is not only the Kukis in Nagaland that gave ‘unflinching support’ to the Nagas movement for Independence but also the Kukis in other parts too despite the existence of opposition from certain sections of the Kukis. C.Tongjangul Haulai* writes:

"Being fully aware of what is to happen in future amongst the people of this region and particularly my country, ideas and thoughts began pouring out from my mind followed and translated into real actions which I wished to place in record for future progeny."

1. Firstly, as recorded in history, amongst the people who traced their origin from the Mongloid stock, are the Nagas and the Kukis. They have no much difference. There had not been unblotable ill will between them. They had the same food habit. There never was communal hatred between them on ground of caste or creed. They had been living side by side throughout history with common religious practices. Their social set up and upbringing is the same. They had almost everything in common. Nagas have always been very close associate and partner of the Kukis as such both traced their origin from the ‘Tibeto-China’ and none deny their origin as same and all maintain that they came out together all along. They crossed the mighty Irrawady together and settled at ‘pampacheng’ near Tuihat river flanked by Chindwin river on the west. The Nagas were and are more adventurous than the Kukis. They advanced earlier than the Kukis toward the Manipur and Nagaland and had settled in this region 20 years ahead of the Kukis lived together side by side wherever they settled and lived.

2. Secondly, the programme and action of the Naga National Council and the Federal Govt. of Nagaland have penetrated into every nook and corner of the tribal inhabited areas since 1962. This made me to ponder what my Naga friends are up to: I had developed an intense desire to know from them the aim and objectives of the struggle. When I realized I was unable to remain a silent spectator in the cause and struggle where my sister Naga community with whom I had born and journeyed together all along involved. I came to know that one of the respected leaders of the movement Mr.R.Suisa was at Khongpan village. I went to him and came to know all about from him. He told me many things about the politics……………. I was deeply impressed by the sincere advocacy of Mr.Suisa. I accepted whatever he said as a gospel truth. The relation of the Nagas and the Kukis through ages, the love and hate that existed amongst closest people, the

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221 Haokip, Zale 'n-gam, p.23.
* C.Tongjangul Haulai was Regional President of Kuki Tribal Union (K.T.U) in Naga National Council (NNC) till 1980s.
commonness of habits, practices that was all along; all came to my mind. I realized that a time is bound to come when every tribe or community based land demarcation question and settlement on this basis will surely take place and what then be the position of the Kukis? Although unschooled and uneducated as I was, the will to do something good and tangible for my people in this direction I left my family and village, joined the Naga Independent Movement as a humble National Worker, firstly with Mr. L. Phanitphang, Aungh of Wung Division in my territory on the 17th August 1962. Then start my struggle.

In 1963, last week of September, in a Zomi Hotel at Imphal, a meeting of the Kukis took place with the topic “Divisive policy of Indian Government amongst the Kukis”......... As the first step Kuki Tribal Union was formed in this meeting with the resolution to join, support and work side by side with our Naga Brothers in the struggle for sovereign Independence. The meeting elected some office bearers as follows: Mr. Lalkhohen Thangeo- president K.T.U, Mr. Khaikhohen Hangsin – Secretary K.T.U........... ....In pursuance of the resolution of Imphal meeting, as K.T.U. representative Mr.C. Tongjangul Haulai and Mr.T. Sehkholun went to the N.N.C. Headquarter and had met and discussed issues with the vice-president Mr. Imkongmeren and the General Secretary Mr. T. Muivah on the 25th November 1964. After prolonged discussion and negotiation K.T.U formally joined the Naga National Council on the 25th November 1964......... Order was received from N.N.C’s K.T.U. Affairs in-charge in January 1965 with appointment order of Mr.C. Tongjangul Haulai as president K.T.U. and Mr.C.S. Haulai as Secretary K.T.U and Mr. T. Sehkholun as Pangtong........... NNC’s K.T.U is divided or having organization as follows:

1. Mao, Sadar and Sagolmong area as Unit - I Manipur.
2. Ukhrul Area as Manipur, Unit-II
3. Kohima District, Nagaland, Unit-III.²²²

K.T.U was a sort of department of NNC and FGN. It looked after the affair of the Kukis. Below this department were three Units, which are mentioned above. There were oppositions from some section of the Kukis to K.T.U. such as Kuki Union Committee (KUC), but this ended in 1985. The President of K.U.C. Mr. Seikhothang Hangsing in his reply to K.T.U on 5th January 1985, says that for the love and dignity of our people both K.T.U and K.U.C shall work hand in hand and whatever you do and strive, K.U.C will support and back you always.²²³ After the Shillong Accord of 1975, K.T.U like many other Naga workers came overground and continues to pursue their work. But when

²²³ Ibid., p.10.
NSCN (Naga underground organisation) made its appearance in 1980s, there were many Kukis in it. When the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) split-up, the Kukis were also in dilemmas. Most of the Kukis were in NSCN (K) but after 1995 many Kukis joined NSCN-IM. They are holding high posts like Tatar and Kilonser, etc, in all the groups of the Nagas undergrounds. Some of them who are holding high posts are:

1. Chungkhojang Singson-Kilonser in NSCN-K
2. Haolim Khongsai-Tatar (MP) in NSCN-IM
3. Seipao-Tatar (MP) in NSCN-IM
4. Nguljalate Chongloi –President of Kuki region in NNC (Adino)
5. Lalkhongam Hangsin –Secretary of Kuki Region in NNC (Adino).

There are many of them below this rank. The Kukis are there in all the groups of the Naga underground. Almost all the Kukis have left NNC’s FGN for NSCN but many of the overground Kukis still support NNC.²²⁴

In the late 1980s, newly established Kuki undergrounds like Kuki National Army (KNA) an armed wing of Kuki National Organization (KNO) and Kuki National Front (KNF), etc., appeared on the scene with a slogan - ‘Kuki Home Land’. The territorial demands of the Nagas and the Kukis came directly into clash. However, the Naga militants and the Kuki militants since 2000 are gradually strengthening their relationship by making alliances and ceasefire-agreements. The problem in their relationship is that there are four groups in the Naga underground movements with the same ultimate goal i.e. Sovereignty or Independence of Nagalim. The dominant underground groups of the Nagas are NSCN-IM and NSCN-K; both these groups are still rivals. There are also many Kuki militant organizations, which are rivals, for example, KNA Myanmar based militant is a rival of India based Kuki militants. In these situations, the alliances/relationships made between the Nagas and the Kuki militants are along factionalism.

²²⁴ This information is gathered from Hangsin, Language Officer, Govt. of Nagaland, Kohima, 2004.
In conclusion, one can say that the relationship between the Nagas and the Kukis, since the time they came into contact with each other, was characterised by war and peace. According to Asoso Yonuo these sorts of relations were borne among the Nagas, Meiteis, Kukis, and Assamese before the emergence of the British. Not surprisingly, conflicts as well as harmonies were bound to crop up in the intercourse among these Mongolian people since they were stranger to one another, though they all belong to the same race.\textsuperscript{225} With the emergence of the British rule and Christianity, their relationship came to be more harmonious though enmity in their relationship erupted, particularly in their rebellions against their colonial ruler but soon they returned to their peaceful and normal relationship. Further, the advent of ethnic consciousness amongst them led them to think of their own ethnic communities yet they still shared and worked together on many issues till date. For instances, polices affecting the hills’ interests or the tribals’ interests in political, economic, social and religion etc.

**The Naga-Kuki relations in Religious sphere**

The religious beliefs of the Nagas and the Kukis since yore days to present days are similar. In ancient days both the communities were animist. Today, both are Christians: more than 95% of the Kukis and the Nagas are Christians and below 5% of them are Animists. The ‘Animist’ period was marked by violence such as inter-village and inter-community wars, raids and headhunting, etc. The Naga-Kuki relations since Christianity made its appearance are cordial and brotherly unlike ‘Animist’ days. Yet, the influence of ethnic politics on their Christian relationship is remarkable. Here is an attempt to study their relations in their beliefs.

Animism and the Naga-Kuki Relations

Among the tribal traditional religions like Animism, Sarna Dharam, Nature worship etc, the religion of the Naga tribes and the Kuki tribes was Animism. The names of gods/goddesses and the methods of worship they used towards their gods varied as it happened with all the tribes. Yet, the similarity in their religion for the Nagas and the Kukis was more prominent. According to C. Larka, “Some missionaries made studies on the belief system of some tribes through field investigation, participatory observation and critical analysis prove that the so called ‘animism’ of the Tribals is, in fact, ‘monotheism’. There are elements of God the Father as creator, protector and redeemer from whom all blessings flow over the tribe, family, children, crops, fields and jungles. There are subservient lesser spirits who dwelled in different places according to their role and some are benevolent to human kinds. They have different names given to the same role of God the Father, Creator and caretaker. Ancestor worship occupies the pivotal place in the family worship of the Tribals. The belief in the life – after – death is common and libation to these Ancestors are offered with great respect. The stages of the life are ceremoniously celebrated with the same meaning as in the tribal belief system.”

Asoso writes, “in essence, traditional Animism believed in existence of one omniscient and omnipotent Supreme God, with many other subordinate good and evil gods and goddesses, spirits including angels, ruling over the human beings, animals, the sun, the moon, the earth, the mountains and hills, the rivers and the forest etc. This is obviously different from monolatry in concept and worship only.” The above quotes explain the tribals belief in ‘animism’. This explanation is relevant to the tribals particularly the Nagas and the Kukis in Northeast India.

According to F. Downs, “there was also considerable variety in their religious beliefs and practices. With the exception of a few small Buddhist groups in Arunachal

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Pradesh, Tripura, and Mizoram, the traditional tribal religions were of the primal type (commonly but improperly called “animism”). Within that broad classification there was and is much variety. Most of the tribes had a concept of benevolent gods, including gods of creation and gods responsible for general human welfare to whom periodical sacrifices were made, but most of the actual religious practice consisted in sacrifices and observances of taboos designed to propitiate malevolent spirits.228 This includes the Nagas and the Kukis traditional belief – ‘Animism’.

According to Rev. Najekhu Yepthomi, “the native Naga religion is basically similar to the type of religion found among the tribes throughout India. It is an Animistic religion with all of the nature believed to be alive with unseen and mysterious forces. The Tribal people recognized many minor deities, ghosts and spirits of trees, rivers and even the hills as their gods. J.P.Mills and J.H. Hutton describe the Nagas like many other tribes, which have been labeled by the all embracing term ‘ANIMIST’ as possessing a plethora of beliefs coupled with a paucity of systematization. According to these two authors, many Nagas believed in a vaguely-conceived supreme spirit, which they imagine to have created the world. Other Nagas, like the Angamis, believed in a supreme spirit KEPENVOPFU who was the Ancestor of the human race. Still others like the Lothas seem to have had no definite beliefs concerning a creator. Below these higher spirits were a host of lesser beings. These included sky spirits, jungle hobgoblins, a god of tigers, a goddess of fruitfulness, the ghosts of men drowned or slain by enemies, and many others. Many of these lesser spirits had specialized functions and specific localities. It is likely that each village had some unique spirits not known to its neighbours.”229 "The Naga concepts of the after-life are confused and vary from tribe to tribe. There is, however, a universal agreement that the soul does not perish at death. The Nagas believed that these spirits are extremely hostile to human being and brings such as dead, floods, drought, epidemic and infertility etc. Thus the people have to appease them. Each Naga village has a set of priests who attend to the religious welfare of the community. The

228 Frederick S Downs, 'Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', History of Christianity in India, Vol.5, part-5, the Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, pp.5-6.
Naga Tribal priesthood is hereditary. Their main function is to offer sacrifices at all festivals and other important occasions in the tribes corporate and individual life. The birth, death and marriages rites are performed by them. They are in charge of keeping all the tribal deities happy and joyful. Since they have the knowledge of how to deal with the gods. Also, they communicate with the dead men’s souls. Sacrifices are offered for the appeasement of the angry spirits, the rooster is usually consumed ceremonially. Pigs, Bison, and Cows are also used."\(^{230}\) This implies that the Nagas were ‘Animist’, which has features like any other tribes’ belief in ‘Animism’.

On the Kukis belief prior to the advent of Christianity, H.Chongloi points out, “the religious documents at our disposal (the incantations) affirmed that Pathen holds center place in the primal Kuki religion."\(^{231}\) He, further, mentions the existence of various divine or semi-divine beings and supernatural manifestations, etc. Divine or semi divine beings such as Nungzai- the consort of Chung pathen or Pathen, Noimangpa- the one who rules under world and Pheisam- the one who make people rich or poor. Supernatural manifestations, there are a host of beings conceived in a seemingly chaotic mass of existence. The forms, nature, characteristics of them are never perceived in clarity, as the following words used to refer to them collectively or in part show: thilha (spirit of the dead), lhadam (ghost), gamhois (forest spirit), inmunse (village evil spirit), etc. In general, there are two kinds of supernatural beings – benevolent and malevolent. Animal sacrifices are mostly carried out to mollify the malevolent spirits.\(^{232}\) Besides these, the Kukis also believed in life after death.

The evidence collected above shows us that both the Nagas and the Kukis believed in ‘Animism’. Still today some percentage of their members continues to hold on to this belief. However, within these broad similarities, there are variations not just in names of gods/goddesses but also application of the methods in sacrifices, ceremonies and rituals etc., to their gods. This is not only between the two but also amongst different

\(^{230}\) Ibid., pp.17-19  
\(^{232}\) Ibid., pp.132-5.
Naga tribes. The practices of headhuntings, wars and raids were associated with religious belief and rituals. The victor village or tribe attributed their victory to the god/gods or goddess and its related rituals of their village over their foes. And the vanquished believed that misfortune had befallen on them due to incorrect rituals or anger of their village or tribe’s god or gods or goddess or goddesses. One can say that, unlike Christianity, their relation as ‘Animist’ was marked by violence, where the heads of enemies were trophies for them- to attain unequal status amongst the equals and all sorts of prosperity etc. Despite Christian belief and missionaries preaching against such violence, their violence continued. It was not only when many of them were converted to Christianity but also effectively brought into Christian fold, violence could be curbed effectively.

The government attempt to curb their violent activities had ramifications for the government itself. Consequently, the government was concerned more with their ‘administered areas’, only when circumstances brought them, they interfere in ‘unadminister areas’. As a result of these ramifications, the missionaries could not enter these areas as they desired because of the government restrictions. This could be seen from one incident; when E.W.Clark sought permission to be transferred to the Naga areas, “it was not easy to get permission from the Government. While the British had already annexed the Angami area they did not want to extend their administration to the other Naga areas unless circumstances forced them to do so. The presence of missionary in an unadministered area might stir up trouble. In the end Government gave him permission to go with the clear understanding that it would not guarantee protection.”

In these circumstances, Christianity and missionaries played a more important role in uprooting violent activities of the Nagas and the Kukis: inter-village and inter-community feuds and headhuntings, etc.

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Christianity and the Naga-Kuki Relations

The earliest known Christian contacts with North East India were made by Catholics in the 17th and 18th centuries. For a time there was a large Christian community associated with the Mughal garrison at Rangamati, in the present Goalpara district of Assam, but it left no permanent community in the region. A small "Portuguese" Catholic community at Bondashil in the Cachar district of Assam, the remnants of another Mughal army, and a similar community at Mariamnagar in Agartala which was in existence since the 18th century, is all that remains of the earlier Catholic presence. These communities seem to have been preoccupied with their own affairs and took no initiative in the later spread of Catholic Christianity in North East.

The first recorded contact of the Catholic missionaries with Assam was in 1626 when the Tibet-bound Jesuit Missionaries, Stephen Cacella and John Cabral, visited parts of Goalpara and Kamrup districts on their way to Tibet. However, the real beginning of Christianity in North East India was made in 19th century and in 20th century it made tremendous progress but the real growth came after India's independence.

Christianity reached amongst the Nagas and the Kukis in 19th century. Yet, there were many problems to overcome, to point out a few: firstly, British government restrictions, secondly, difficulties and persecution faced by the missionaries and the newly converts and thirdly, the existence of various clans and tribes with different languages, culture etc., these different tribes were again divided into two groups, viz., the Nagas and the Kukis. Frederick Downs commenting on the unexpected growth of Christianity in Manipur says, "such growth is unexpected in the light of the fact that, in addition to the persecution, there were a number of formidable obstacles to be overcome. Perhaps the major one was the multiplicity of tribes, and the division of those tribes into two often antagonistic groups- the Nagas and the Kukis." The point is that the

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234 Frederich S. Downs, 'Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', History of Christianity in India, Vol.5, part-5, the Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, pp.64-65.
236 Frederich S. Downs, 'Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', History of Christianity in India, Vol.5, part-5, the Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, p.110.
Christian missionaries also had problems over the division of the tribes into two ethnies - the Nagas and the Kukis who often had antagonistic attitude to each other.

The advent of Christianity amongst the Nagas and the Kukis in Northeast was due to the work done by the American Baptist missionaries. In 1836, Serampore missionaries who were the first to begin evangelism in North East offered the work to American Baptist Missionaries in Burma, which was accepted. "Rev. Nathan Brown, his wife and O.T. Cutter were the first Missionaries to enter Assam. They reached Sadiya on March 23, 1836 and Miles Bronson arrived in Sadiya on July 5, 1837 and afterwards moved to Jaipur."237 The earliest attempt to Christianize the Nagas was made in 1839 by the American Baptist Missionary, Dr. Miles Bronson, by starting a school and a chapel at the Konyak Naga village at Namsang (now in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh) near the British outpost of Jaipur."238 "The Christians of different areas tend to honour those missionaries who pioneered the work in that place. Thus the Garos remember Mason and Phillips, the Nagas remember Clark or Rivenburg, the Christians of Manipur remember Pettigrew, etc. It is highly doubtful that any of these would have had the opportunity to render the service they did if it had not been for the foundations laid by Miles Bronson. He was a man who lived inspired by an extraordinary vision, a vision of the peoples of North East India acknowledging the Lordship of Christ. His conviction that given time and faithful work this vision would become a reality was unshakable."239 Thus, Miles Bronson laid the foundation for the next generation of missionaries who worked amongst the Nagas and the Kukis in North East India was very important.

As mentioned before, the primary aim of the Christian Missionaries was to propagate the gospel - the message of Christ. To propagate this among the antagonistic or warring tribes was not an easy task, particularly amongst the Nagas and the Kukis. One thing that needs to be appreciated about Christian Missionaries was their love for 'savages' and unbiased attitude towards them despite the enmity that prevailed among the

238 Ibid., p.22.
tribals. This led to the new converts to have cordial relationship between them as co-Christian. Further, the persecutions faced by the new converts were mostly from their own family members, clansmen and the villagers, however, it enhanced cordial relationship among the Christians that encompassed the Nagas and the Kukis. F. Downs also says, “in the beginning of Christian movement converts from both the groups- the Nagas and the Kukis worked closely with each other.”240 “Before the 2nd World War, the Christians of all tribes loved each other and lived happily as real members of a family. In fact, they regarded all Christians as their own members and relatives. Associations were formed with geographical names or area not in a tribal name. But soon after the war, some sort of communal thinking and ethnic identification were stressed more.”241 This shows that with the advent and intensification of ethno-nationalism, the Naga -Kukis Christians came to emphasize increasingly on their ethnic identity despite Christian notion of brotherly relations amongst the Christians.

In Nagaland, the first Naga to be baptized was Hubi in 1847 and the second Naga was Longjanglepzuk of Merangkong village (Ao tribe).242 But the real work amongst the Nagas began with E.W.Clark and Godhula in 1871. “With Clark’s encouragement Godhula made an exploratory visit to the Ao hills in October, 1871...within six months, nine young men from Haimong and neighbouring villages accompanied Godhula to Sibsagar to receive baptism. On 11th December, 1872, they were baptized by Clark and made members of the Sibsagar church.”243 When a missionary, Eward W.Clark, accompanied Godhula back to the village, fifteen more were baptized...in 1876 Clark himself moved to the hills, living first at Molungyimjen (Haimong) and then newly formed Molungyimsen.... In fact the Ao area was not yet administered when Clark went there – against the government officials.”244 In 1880 a second Naga center was opened at
Kohima in the Angami area to the south, and in 1885 a third was established among the Kyong (Lotha) Nagas at Wokha.\textsuperscript{245} "The first tribe turning to Christianity in large numbers was the Aos, followed by the Semas, and then the Lothas. These three tribes represented the main concentration of Christians in Nagaland prior to Indian Independence (62\% of total in Nagaland)."\textsuperscript{246} The other Naga tribes and the Kuki tribes followed them.

The advent of Christianity amongst the Kukis of Nagaland began in the late 1890s. Visier Sanyu says, "The Baptist work among the Kukis in Nagaland began in 1899. The first Convert was Mr. Ngulhas Thomesong, who was baptized in 1908. The spread of Christianity was slow. The first church began in 1912 at Sirhuna village, followed by the second church at Chalkot village in 1918. Both the Churches were planted by Rev. Niesier Angami and Kruneze Angami; supervised by the Kohima field led by Rev. Rivenburg. More Churches were added - Inbung, Mandei, Tesangki, Khibung, Paona, Malvom, and so on."\textsuperscript{247} He further say: "In 1954, due to linguistic problems the Kukis formed their own association. The Kuki Baptist Association was led by Kelhosekho Angami as a Field Director."\textsuperscript{248} Thangkhohao Limsong in his interview narrates that during Kelhosekho tenure, the first Kuki Christian Association (KCA) was established at Chalkot village and T. Haolai was sent to Calcutta for Bible training. T. Haolai was the first theological graduate and he took charge of KCA after Kelhosekho.\textsuperscript{249} All this shows that the Kuki Christians in Nagaland could be regarded as partly the product of the efforts of the Angami Naga Christians. Today, both Angami Baptist Council of Churches (ABCC) and Kuki Baptist Associations are under Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), which is under Council of Baptist Church in North East India (CBCNEI).

The Zeliangs and the Kukis also shared a good rapport as Christians in Nagaland. Prior to Kuki Christian Association in Nagaland, the Kukis and the Zeliangs were under

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., p.82.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., p.108.
\textsuperscript{247} Visier Sanyu, 'A brief Account of Baptist Associations', \textit{From Darkness to Light}, Nagaland Baptist Church Council, 1997, p.74.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., pp.74-5.
\textsuperscript{249} An excerpt from the information given by Thangkhohao Limsong, NCS Adl. Secy. Govt. of Nagaland, Kohima.
the same Association known as ‘Kohima Field Church Council Association’. Under the Kohima Mission Field, the Zeliang - Kuki Association was formed in 1926. By 1936, there were 200 Christians on record. The first pastors Mr.Ngulpu, Rev.Keniese Zeliang, evangelist Mr. Sojang and Mr. Houbing- were all paid by the Kohima Mission Field.250

"The last annual Conference was held at Hengning Kunglwa in January 1953. After this conference, in 1954, Kukis came under a separate Association called Kuki Christian Association (KCA)."251 The Kukis and the Zeliangs Baptists in Nagaland were clubbed together under one Association from 1926 to 1953.

These also show us that the Kuki rebellion of 1917-1919 and the Zeliangrong rebellion of 1930-32, wherein the Kukis and the Nagas were regarded as enemies, did not affect Zeliang - Kuki Association under Kohima Mission Field. Today, the Baptist formed Associations on Tribe or linguistic basis under the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC). The Nagaland Baptist Church Council is an apex body of Baptist Church in Nagaland, which is under the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), an apex body of all the Baptist councils/conventions in North East India. Thus, unity is found in a broad division but if ones go deeper there is diversity too. There are many Christian belonging to different denominations in Nagaland: Many of these Churches or denominations do not organize their members on the basis of tribe or linguistic or ethnic belonging. There are also many Churches or denominations, which are similar to the Baptist organization.

In Manipur, Christianity arrived later than the Nagaland areas. The first missionary to reach Manipur was William Pettigrew, in1894. He came as a missionary of Arthington mission but joined American Baptists in 1896. William Pettigrew arrived in Bengal under the auspices of the Arthington mission in 1890. He developed an interest in the Manipuris he met in Cachar but could not enter Manipur until the acting political agent gave him permission to open a school at Imphal, the capital, in1894. Though the

251 An excerpt from the informations provided by Thangkhohao Limsong, NCS Adl. Secy. Govt. of Nagaland.
school did little else but provides tuition for the children of government officials even that were too much for the political agent when he returned from leave. Afraid that Pettigrew's work would disturb the orthodox Hindu Manipuris, the agent told him that he could not continue in Imphal – but that he might work in the hill areas, which were under the direct administration of the agent.\textsuperscript{252} When he reached Manipur to work among the Meiteis, the British Political Agent denied him to do so. Thus he shifted his mission to the tribals in the hills country. It is said that he first approached a Thadou Kuki Chief, Kamkholun Singson of Senvon village for permission to locate his work there. But permission was denied to him. It is also said that he went to a Mao Naga village but was refused.\textsuperscript{253} In his search for a new location for his work, Pettigrew visited Paoyi, Shiroi, Khanguhui and Ukhrul. In January 1896, he decided to stay at Ukhrul and start his work. A small temporary building was put up and the villagers of Ukhrul were invited to learn to read. Raihao, the Chief of Ukhrul, was one of the first students who attended the school. Hearing this, the chief of Hundung, Zingthan also sent 15 students.\textsuperscript{254} The first emphasis of the Missionary work was on education because preaching the Gospel to people who had never heard about it was not an easy task.\textsuperscript{255} In 1896, two people got baptized in Manipur. Twelve boys attending the school, both the Kukis and the Nagas were baptized in 1901.\textsuperscript{256} The numbers of the members increased rapidly with the arrival of Revival in Manipur. "This revival had been carried to Manipur from neighbouring Mizoram and had great impact on both Nagas and Kukis"\textsuperscript{257} This is shown by the progress it made: 1901-14, 1911-132, 1921-4,050, 1931-10,401 and 1951-68,394. This increase was also due to the failure of the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-19 and the Zeliangrong movement of 1930-32.\textsuperscript{258} Christianity, thus, spread to various tribes and clans of the

\textsuperscript{252} Frederich S. Downs, 'Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', History of Christianity in India, Vol.5, part-5, the Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, p.84.

\textsuperscript{253} L. Jeyaseelan, Impact of the Missionary Movement in Manipur, Scholar Publishing House (P) Ltd, New Delhi, 1996, p.54.

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid., p.54.

\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., p.54.

\textsuperscript{256} Frederich S. Downs, 'Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', History of Christianity in India, Vol.5, part-5, the Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, p.85.

\textsuperscript{257} Ibid., p.110.

\textsuperscript{258} See Frederich S. Downs, 'Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', History of Christianity in India, Vol.5, part-5, the Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992.
Nagas and the Kukis. In fact, today, it is their religion and has become part of their culture too.

The above narrations show that these two ethnic entities shared cordial relation as Christians but there were also times when their antagonistic attitudes erupted. At the beginning of the Christian movement, converts from both the groups worked closely with each other, but following the Kuki Rebellion during which many Nagas assisted the government in its operations against the Kukis, tension within the Baptist church increased.\(^{259}\) The Zeliangrong rebellion was started by non-Christians, yet, since Zeliangrong Christians belonged to the same community, it somehow affected Zeliangrong-Kuki Christians also. In 1947, the North West Baptist Association had its split and the case between the Kukis and the Nagas could not be settled by the Standard Committee of the Associations nor by the Missionaries even in the succeeding 3 years. So, since 1948, the Kukis and the Nagas of Tamenglong area started to have separate Association of their own. In this way Kuki Baptist Churches came to have their own separate Associations.\(^ {260}\) This implies the colouring of ethnic politics of the Christian Associations, particularly North West Baptist Association, Manipur. It further shows the beginning of not only establishment of churches on tribe-basis but also using ethnic appellations for their churches or associations. The political-minded people in the name of the advancement of their clan or community members used the situation, which further divided them on the basis of ethnic, tribe and clan.

Today, polarization is increasing within Christian organizations, particularly amongst the Baptists based on the above-mentioned basis. As mentioned earlier the Nagas and the Kukis were warriors and their warring nature made them not only had feuds within their own tribe but also between the two- the Nagas and the Kukis. This does not meant that they fought as two separate ethnic entities as the ethnic consciousness dawned on them only in 20\(^{th}\) century. Their wars were basically inter- village or inter-tribe or inter- areas. When Christianity arrived and when they gradually accepted it as

\(^{259}\) Ibid., p.110.

\(^{260}\) The Manipur Baptist Convention; The first one hundred years of Christianity in Manipur, 1896-1996, Manipur Baptist Convention, MBC Literature Committee, 1996, p.49.
their religion, it broke those antagonistic attitudes with each other. However, ethnic nationalists to demarcate and defend their ethnic identities for their ethnic interests have maneuvered their antagonistic relations of pre-Christian era. The ethnic politics has penetrated into their Christian relationship, which often led them into tension and conflicts based on tribe and ethnic divisions, etc. Nevertheless, the Kuki-Naga Christians, despite their ethnic divisions in Manipur, still share churches, denominations and attempts to live as good Christian brothers and sisters.

In conclusion, the Nagas and the Kukis relations as ‘Animist’ or pre-Christianity days were both antagonistic as well as friendly but tilted towards antagonistic attitude. This was not only between the two but also within each of the group. Due to this some of the Nagas made peace with some of the Kukis against the other Nagas or vice-versa. There are also instances of the Nagas inviting the Kukis to fight with them against the enemies who were also Nagas. In short, it was marked by both ‘antagonistic’ and ‘friendly’ but tilted more towards antagonistic as the period itself was characterized by inter-village or inter-community raids, headhunting and wars, etc. When Christianity reached them their relations improved towards being ‘friendly’ and considered themselves as brothers in Christ. Looking at the past and the present relations of the Naga villages, R.R. Shimray writes, “today, the past enmities and revenge of the days of head hunting have been forgotten and the villages are living in peace through the love of Jesus Christ.”

This is true. But isolation from each other that pervades into their Christian relationship is increasing, which is due to their desire to safeguard their separate ethnic identities. Moreover, both the ethnies clash in their interest on land and the territorial goals in their ethnic movements against the government of India. Further, the Government and its agencies have been reported to manipulate their antagonistic relationship for their vested interest.

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The Economic Relationship of the Nagas and the Kukis

The British administrators, ethnographers and linguists considered the Nagas and the Kukis as separate entities since the time they came into contact with them. They did this on the basis of not only on account of their different social systems, political organizations, languages, customs and cultures but also due to their economic aspects. For most of them, the Nagas were primitives yet leading a sedentary life and the Kukis as primitives and nomads. This differentiation between the Nagas and the Kukis could be seen from their writings. For an example, Grierson a linguist classified these two, besides other traits, "the Kukis who are closely related to the Chin and Lushais are migrating shifting their village sites every 4 or 5 years and never taking to permanent irrigation and terraced rice cultivation by means of irrigation. Their cattle are invariably 'Methan'. Nagas, on the other hand, have almost invariably permanent village sites and permanently irrigated and terraced rice fields and they keep ordinary Indian cattle."262 This, one of Grierson classifications, is a sort of economic differentiation between these two groups. It implies that the Nagas are 'sedentary' where as the Kukis are 'nomads'. The usage of the term 'nomads' for the Kukis was prevalent amongst them, for example, James Johnstone says the Kukis are a 'wandering race'.263 Many scholars of independent India continue to employ it. It is true that the Nagas are the earliest settlers of the present territory and the Kukis and the other tribes are latter arrivals. If one looks at the history of the nomads and its definition, the term 'nomad' has become irrelevant to the Kukis in this modern era. The Kukis are leading a life in a modern context like any of the Hill peoples in Northeast India. This does not mean to deny the existence of 'shifting-habits' of the Kukis i.e., shifting of settlements. The 'shifting of settlements' by the Kukis has to be looked from internal and external problems: internal problems like despotic chief- he is regarded as the sole power and authority and owner of all land of the village; external problems like attack by bigger community. The practice of shifting to another settlement due to some problems could not be termed, in the modern context, as 'nomads'. The stage of nomadism was passed through by all human societies at one point of time. The Nagas

left nomad life and led a sedentary life much earlier than the Kukis and for the Kukis also the term 'nomad' has become irrelevant. The shifting-habit of the Kukis within the areas where tribes like Nagas and Kukis settled is still practiced by some of the Kukis. Yet, many of the Kuki villages are century (ies) old.

Under the colonial rule, the Nagas and the Kukis were two ethnic entities having many tribes and sub-tribes. The word 'Tribe' traced its origin to ancient period. The word tribe was first used by British Anthropologists to denote primitive and less organized societies, particularly in the African continent. In Indian context this word was used in contrast with caste and caste-hierarchy. This is further distinguished from the words Jati and Gana. But in loose terms it also denoted some group as non-Aryan tribes. The definition of tribe is not unanimously accepted for the simple reason that any definition is not likely to be totally universal. Another reason is that the tribes are now very much in transition. However, there are some most commonly accepted characteristic features to identify a Tribal society mostly for the purpose of scheduling them as such to bring them under the purview of the Constitutional provisions. The word 'tribe' continues to be used in Independent India by the government and academicians, but the implication differs from that of the Colonial era. The Constitution of India protects and provided provisions for the Tribes in the country, which also include the Nagas and the Kukis.

The Nagas and the Kukis, during the British period, were protected not only as primitive peoples on the stage of evolution, which needs to be studied and protected against the penetration of dominant Hinduism influence but also to preserve their identity as distinctive. During their rule in Northeast India, they protected the barbaric tribesmen found in the Hills from the plainsmen. This could be seen from the following evidences: The hill areas of North-East India were uniformly administered until 1937 as backward tract exclusively under the Chief Commissioner. From 1 April 1937, there was a bifurcation of the administrative pattern. The Mizo Hills, Naga Hills, North-Cachar Hills and N.E. Frontier Tracts were called 'Excluded Areas', excluded from ministerial

265 Ibid., p.32.
jurisdiction and the Garo Hills, the British portion of the Khasi & Jaintia Hills and Mikir Hills were under the categories of ‘Partially Excluded Areas’. The Excluded Areas were guarded by the Inner Line, which prevented the entry of outsiders without permit. The last of such lines was drawn in North-Cachar Hills in 1942.\(^{266}\) Thus, the Act of 1935 with an effect from 1 April 1937, the Naga Hills along with others came under “Exclusive categories”. Prior to this Act of 1935, they came under backward Tracts. The Hills of the present Manipur state mostly occupied by the tribes, particularly the Nagas and the Kukis came directly under the President of Darbar, which meant that it was separated from the valley country ruled by the Raja of Manipur though it was excluded from ‘Excluded categories’. This meant that the Nagas and the Kukis were exclusively administered by the British rulers outside the purview of Plainsmen subjects.

On the eve of India’s independence, the Nagas and the Kukis in the Naga Hills and in the hills country of Manipur did not want to be left with ‘plainsmen’. They demanded to be left alone. In the State of Manipur there was a movement against merger with Valley country; instead they demanded merger with the adjoining Hills of Assam occupied by their people.\(^{267}\) When the British rulers were to leave the state, the Constitution of Manipur was to be drafted into two parts - one for the Hills and the other for the Valley. In the words of A.K. Ray, “Just on the eve of British departure a committee was formed consisting of the officials and the non-officials to explicitly draft the constitution for the state. The representatives of the Valley were returned by indirect election held in the five Tahasils, while the representatives of the hills were nominated by the president of the Manipur State Darbar under whose responsibility was laid the then administration of the hills. The draft constitution of Manipur was divided into two parts. The Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 and the Manipur Hill Peoples’ (Administration) Regulation, 1947.\(^{268}\) In the Naga Hills, the Nagas and the Kukis protested against the merger with India and this led to the formation of the Naga National Council (NNC), which stood for Independence of the Nagas. The Nagas and many Kukis


\(^{268}\) Ibid., p.117.
of Manipur also supported NNC. The movement for this goal is still going on enlarging its base and support from within and outside.

On attaining Independence, India provides in its Constitution for recognition and granting privileges to the tribes. The government of India in different states of Northeast India recognized many Nagas tribes under ‘Any Naga tribe’ or on the basis of the communities’ name. For the Kukis, they are recognized as ‘Any Kuki tribe’ in different states of Northeast except in Manipur, wherein the Kukis are recognized under two heads- ‘Thadou tribe’ and ‘Any Kuki tribe’. The Nagas and the Kukis are enjoying same privileges and opportunity as Tribes. In Manipur State, the Tribes, which includes the Nagas and the Kukis, are having the same Tribal stands particularly when their rights and interests are concerned. The All Tribal Students’ Union Manipur (ATSUM) gave Presidential address to Shri K.R. Narayanan, President of India. Along with it a memorandum was submitted on 14th July 1999. In this it was stated, “step-motherly treatments of Manipur State compel us to minutely ponder over the fates of the tribals... therefore, ours is a separate territory and a bid distinct from that of Manipuris or the Manipur. Our forefathers had never been under the control of the Maharajas of Manipur nor are we legally in the State of Manipur either... the misery and sufferings of the tribals consequent upon the indifferent treatments, discrimination, biased, alienated and domineering and corrupt administration of the State of Manipur is a heart rendering state. Rules of special protection meant for the tribals and reservation of seats to tribals have no meaning at all. Development funds meant for the tribals are the perennial money sources of the Manipuris, piles of policy of how to deprive and how to override the privileges and facilities of the tribals is the daily business of the state of Manipur.269 The Tribal Students’ Union Manipur is an apex organization of tribal students in Manipur, which also includes the Nagas and the Kukis. They are actively pursuing for the rights and the welfare of the tribes in Manipur.

269 Territorial Rights of Outer Manipur Tribals, All Tribal Students’ Union Manipur (ATSUM), Imphal, 2000, pp.4-6.