CHAPTER V

Epilogue

This dissertation has sought to delve into the historical dimensions of a present-day community of Northeast India – the Dimasas. In doing so, it has emphasized the distinct characteristics of it as a community and how overtime these revealed themselves in changing ecological and geo-political contexts.

Inter-alia, it has also tried to show the limits of what has been called ‘disciplinary’ history. (See the Introduction and Chapter I) This is an attempt at a more integrated approach with insights from anthropology, archaeology, epigraphic, numismatic, written records as well as non-literary sources from which to [re]construct the past. This inevitably called for a close attention to the folk traditions like myth of origin, ballads, and songs and so on, to get a sense of the mentalité of this group at different points of time.

In the absence of written sources, the history of Dimasa, from the perspectives of disciplinary history, is a matter of conjectures informed by a few community narratives. But there is a scope, as demonstrated in this dissertation, in comparing and contextualising community narratives with the available historical evidences. The history of the Dimasas, prior to their establishment in Dimapur has been reconstructed in this dissertation by collating the community narrative with epigraphic, linguistic and other sources. By using various sources, including the contemporary agricultural practice, it has been sought to establish that wet-rice farming cannot be a driving force behind state-formation as the contemporary historiographical practice argue. Rather than being an
Indo-Aryan importation, the wet-rice farming is rather an indigenous practice, which predates the Indo-Aryan and the Ahom migration/conquest.

Another focus of this dissertation has been to highlight the categories and nomenclatures which came to be used by changing state-forms. The advent of the British system of state-craft along with its categories and nomenclatures (as reflected in the Census Reports, for example) tended to mould local societies, even as they were unable to dissolve the ambiguities and unities between clusters of communities, clans, and tribes which pre-existed the new administration. (See the Chapter II & III). The Dimasas have been enclosed in several territorial divisions and their identity has been subjected to fragmentation. Despite being subjected to divisions, their sense of oneness is expressed through their demands for unification of all Dimasa inhabited areas. Although they are yet achieve in their quest for political recognition under unified territory, the future trajectory of their movement remains to be seen.

Even as the pre-independence divisions continue, the post-independent history writing project has pushed the community into the margins. The bias against non-textual sources has denied the community of their pasts. This denial of their pasts is construed as denial of their culture, space and identity. Thus, their movement for identity must not be viewed as political, but cultural. Like the nation-states, they too create their ‘own history’ based on their social memory. In this context, monopoly of history as only legitimate mnemonic practice must be seriously questioned.

The contemporary Dimasa society is a product of the events in the pasts. Their collective experiences are engraved in their social memory that has shaped their society and politics vis-à-vis state and history. The emergence of new state-craft ushered new administrative
and economic system. New fiscal relationship unleashed under the regime may be viewed positively by many. But the community views it as a source of their displacement or alienation which is reflected in their narratives and contemporary political struggle.

This study of the Dimasas as a case demonstrates multiplicity of mnemonic traditions and ‘disciplinary’ history being one of them. The emergence of the disciplinary history as only legitimate or valid mnemonic practice is due to political expediency of nation-states for creation one history for one nation. This has provided the smaller ethnic communities like the Dimasas a context for political struggle to reclaim national space by creating alternative history based on their mnemonic traditions.

Finally, a word about the future. Even if it is uncertain, in the fast changing times of nation-states and international relations along with local considerations seem to make the direction of change clear – a period of tension and possible internecine violence. The way to avoid this, it is time that the Indian Government begin to seriously and thoughtfully reconsider and reconceive the idea of ‘federalism’, ‘decentralisation’, and ‘plurality’, already implicit in our Constitution. May be this way lies the possibility of the establishment of a humane and eco-friendly society.

*Dom Spiro Spero.* (Where there is life, there is hope)
• Memorandum submitted by Shri G. C Hojai, Chief Executive Member, North Cachar Hills District Council to Shri Rajib Gandhi, Prime Minister of India on his visit to Haflong on 13 December 1985, demanding larger autonomy for North Cachar Hills people.

• Memorandum to Shri Rajib Gandhi, Prime Minister of India through the Deputy Commissioner Karbi Anglong, Diphu, dated 17 June 1986, by Karbi Anglong Autonomous State Demand Committee.

• Supplementary Memorandum to Shri Buta Singh, Home Minister, Home affairs, submitted by the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills Autonomous State Demand Committee, dated 30.11.1986.

• Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India for creation of an autonomous state comprising Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills, jointly submitted by Autonomous State Demand Committee and the Karbi Student’s Association, Diphu.

• Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, New Delhi, demanding creation of a new state comprising two autonomous districts of Assam, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills by United People’s Conference, Diphu.

• Government of Assam, Tribal Areas and Welfare of Backward Classes Department (Reform Branch) NO. TAD/R/153/70 dated Shillong 30 May 1970.
