A study on the ethnic identity is gaining momentum in the intellectual circles over the world. One of the main reasons is the increase in the ethnic identity problems. However, this does not mean that all the ethnic identities are creating problems. “At any given time only a small percentage of ethnies are politically mobilized. Of all ethnies disputes, only a small percentage results in collective violence and even fewer in civil war. Most of the world’s ethnies are not fighting each other or other state within which they reside. Of the some 1600 major cultural groupings, less than 300 have recently mobilized in politicized protest or rebellion and only some 30-40 wars are ongoing in a particular year.”

It is a fact that in today’s world, ethnic identities are increasing in numbers. Yet, the ancient existence of ethnic groups cannot be dismissed. The Structural-functionalist anticipation that ethnic identities will disappear with the increase in modernization, industrialization and urbanization has not happened. On the contrary, more and more ethnic groups are emerging with an increase in modernization, industrialization and urbanization. Accordingly, it is anticipated that there will be increase of ethnic identities and its problems. This leads ones to believe that the study on the ethnic identity will also be on the rise. In this chapter, I will discuss the approaches and the definitions of ethnic identity. This would include the discourses on the ethnic identities of the Nagas and the Kukis, which also encompass their movements. This is done in order that the study on the Naga-Kuki relations could be placed and understood in an appropriate context.

Explanations of ‘Identity’ and ‘Ethnic’

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines ‘Identity’ as:

1. a) The quality or condition of being a specified person or thing.
   b) Individuality, personality.
2. Identification or the result of it.
3. The state of being the same in substance, nature, qualities, etc., absolute sameness.

According to C. Larka, “Identity in general is understood as a set of external features and internal traits which, negatively, distinguish an individual, or group of people from others and positively, render uniqueness through specific characteristics. This is the reason why even identical twins with plenty of similarities are two different individual and so too are two different socio-ethnic groups.” These two definitions show us that ‘identity’ is something that shows uniqueness of a person/group etc., and the way it is distinguished from others.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines ‘Ethnic’ in four ways:

1. (a) (Of social group) having a common national or cultural tradition.
   (b) (Of clothes, music, etc.) characteristic of or influenced by the traditions of a particular people or culture, one regarded as exotic.
2. Denoting origin by birth or descent rather than nationality (ethnic Turks).
3. Relating to race or culture (ethnic group; ethnic origins).
4. (Archaic) pagan, heathen.

An adjective word ‘ethnic’ has been used much longer than the noun ‘ethnicity’. The former was used in the context of heathen or non-Israelites but since mid 19th century secular connotation has also come into being. In this study the term ‘ethnic’ is employed

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synonymously with common culture, common language, common religion, similarity in mindset, similarity of social and political organizations, distinctive geographical boundary, same origin, same race, same way of life, common decent, common history and common aspiration to be achieved, etc., of the peoples or a group and an ethnic group is distinctive from others. Thus, ‘Ethnic Identity’ can be defined in this backdrop.

Definitions of Ethnic Identity

M.N.Karna defines ethnic identity as “subjective and symbolic use of certain elements of culture by a group of people to differentiate themselves from other groups.”\(^{25}\) C.Larka says, “ethnic identity is a much stronger term than tribal identity, because, the former refers to their own perception of identity, while the latter refers to the term attributed to them from outside. The question of retaining one’s identity is, therefore, related with ethnic identity. The components of such identity are common origin, common language, and similarity of social and political organizations, common religion (belief system), and a distinct geographical boundary. All these further define common aspirations to be achieved. These serve as the sources of strength and unity of a particular ethnic group.”\(^{26}\) Paul Brass writes, “a nation therefore may be seen as a particular type of ethnic community or an ethnic community politicized, with recognized group rights in the political system.”\(^{27}\) These define ethnic identity as a stronger or greater term than tribal identity and compares to nation’s identity. Secondly, it defines ethnic identity as subjective and objective or symbolic use by the members of a group to categorize themselves as distinct group and differentiates themselves from others. In short, ‘we’ and ‘they’ by using subjective and objective markers are the features of ethnic identity. Thus, ethnic identity is an identity of ethnic group united by common origin, common way of life, common culture, common language, common religion, similarity in mindset, similarity of social and political organizations, distinctive geographical boundary, same


way of life, common decent, common history and common aspiration to be achieved, etc. It, further, has features to distinguish and differentiate from others and ‘they’ and ‘we’ are the features of ethnic identity. Therefore, it is subjective and an objective markers which unite the members of a group and differentiate themselves from others. And many scholars advocated that ethnicity is synonymous with nation-state and ethnic identity with national identity.

In the assertion of ethnic identity by an ethnic group C. Larka says, “an ethnic or cultural group does not become aware of its identity unless it is challenged by those who are non-members. It becomes problematic when its very existence is threatened by other more superior and powerful cultural groups.”

Shalina Mehta writes, “various religious, culture, and linguistic diversities occupying the Indian sub-continent are specified communities to which every member subscribes with a sense of belonging. They have their respective histories and many other intra-community commonalities. The sense of belonging, which keeps the members of these communities together irrespective of their geographical placements, is termed as ‘core Identity’. However, members of these communities may not assert or even express these inherent associations ordinarily. It is only under situation of stress and on threat to their ethnic identity that they may express themselves collectively.” These shows the members of ethnic group assert their identity when there is threat. Besides this, ethnic group also asserts their identity when there is profound ethnic consciousness and nationalism and wants to achieve certain goals.

**Approaches to Ethnic Identity**

There are debates among the scholars working on the ethnic identity. The three general approaches to ethnic identity are noted: firstly, ‘Primordialism’, also called ‘Essentialism’, is very popular among non-scholarly circles, but has very few proponents in the scholarly world. In academic world, Clifford Geertz (1973) and Walker Connor

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According to primordial theory 'ethnic identity' is an inherent aspect; it existed since the beginning and it is not a recent or modern phenomenon. Further, the elements or cultural elements that constitute 'ethnic identity' are an inbuilt and intrinsic. The second approach is called 'Instrumentalism' or 'Situationalism' or 'Circumstantialism' or 'Interactionalism'. It came to attack 'Primordialists' view in the late 1960s and 1970s. Frederick Barth (1969) and Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (1975) popularized the theory of instrumentalism. According to instrumentalists view 'ethnic identity' is a product of 'interaction'. The elite for the attainment of their interests uses this ethnic identity. The instrumentalists view emphasizes on ethnic boundary and the process of recruitment but not on the cultural stuff that the boundary enclosed and also consciousness of the group in relation to others.\(^31\) Thus, for instrumentalists, ethnic group is form by interaction, ethnic group is an interest group, and ethnic identity is an instrument to achieve its interest.

The third view is 'Constructionism'. Constructionists opposed ethnic identity as an inbuilt aspect advocated by Primordialists and as an instrument to achieve their interest as believed by Instrumentalists. It focuses on the consciousness, ideology, abstract, subjective and imaginary aspects, etc. For the Constructionist, "ethnic identities are socially constructed, opposed inherent affective quality of ethnic relations, and the Constructionist emphasis on the metaphor and rhetorical power of kinship. The emotional power of kinship and home is so transferred to the larger group of people."\(^32\) The central claim of constructivism is that the formation of ethnic or national identities is a modern phenomenon. Identities in pre modern times tended on the whole to be face-to-face and operated on a small scale. Ordinarily people rarely interacted beyond their local environments and identities were considerably flexible. Extra local communities did not include 'the people'; such larger communities consisted primarily of the ecclesiastical elite and the court-based aristocracy and nobility. Modernity changed the meaning of identities by bringing the masses into a larger, extra local, framework of consciousness. It

\(^30\) Ibid., p.4810.
\(^32\) Ibid., p.12.
made identities and communities wider and more institutionalized. Further, the constructivist emphasis is on the construction of group categories by the knowledge-elite, its promotion by centers of power, and its effects on 'the people'.

"Much scholarly disputation has centered upon whether ethnicity is primordial or instrumental." Add to this is constructionism, which come into sight in recent years. "Primordial ethnicity is seen as closely tied to kinship and descent, rigidly bound, enduring, emotionally charged. Instrumental (situational) ethnicity is thought to be ambiguous, changeable, driven by considerations of advantage or disadvantage in the pursuit of immediate interests. Indeed, it has long been recognized that ethnic boundaries are often permeable and changeable- because of territorial intermingling, continuous variations in cultural traits, interethic interactions, intraethnic diversity, and state interventions. But the inclusive reality is that ethnies are both primordial and circumstantial-some are fluid, others rigid; some endure over centuries, others are short lived. Further, there exist exploration of common inherent elements and construction of common symbols to add to their known inherent traits of the ethnic groups. Moreover, in recent years some ethnies appeared and some ethnies have disappeared- either absorbed by dominant ethnies or extinct. Thus, the three theories need serious attention in the study of ethnic identity. The ethnic identities of the Nagas and the Kukis will be discussed in this chapter.

Ethnic Identities of the Nagas and the Kukis

The Nagas and the Kukis are maintaining their separate identities. When one looks at both the Nagas and the Kukis, they shared many similarities. These similarities started right from the theories of their origins. The Nagas, according to H. Horam, at first

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34 Ibid., p.4812.
35 Ibid., P.4806.
36 Ibid., p.4806.
lived in stone caves or in the womb of the earth. S.P. Vaiphei says, "they (Chin-Kukis-Mizo) came out from a cave or Khul or Khur or sinlung." According to T.C. Hodson the Naga, Kuki and Meitei descended from a common ancestor. Thus, the theories of cave as their origin are similar amongst them. Further, they all pointed the location of the cave to the southwestern China. The folktales and folksongs on their migrations also mentioned the same name of places, countries, rivers, mountains they crossed but there are variations in how they reached their present habitation and the time scale in occupying their present settlements. Both these communities are linguistically grouped under Tibeto-Burman of Sino-Tibetan family and racially classified as Mongoloid race. In their political organization, the Kukis are distinguished by hereditary chief whereas the Nagas are democratic in nature but among the Naga tribes like Sema and Konyak tribes, there is a similarity with the Kuki political organization. In the sphere of religion both the communities were animist but today they profess Christianity. In the social practices of the Nagas and the Kukis there are similarities. There are many other shared traits between them, which are not dealt in this. Despite such similarities both safeguard their ethnic identity as distinct. The question is: why and how is this done? To understand it, one has to begin with the appellations of 'Naga' and 'Kuki'.

The Term 'Naga'

The existence of the term 'Naga' has been traced generally to Ptolemy of 2nd century A.D. "The first mention of the Nagas as a people inhabiting their present land was made by Claudius Ptolemy, the Greek philosopher and historian in 150 AD. Claudius Ptolemy mentioned in his book Geographia, the Nagas as Nagalagoi (the realm of the naked, Claudius Ptolemy, Geographia, Vol.VII (II), page-18). "The Royal Chronicles of Manipur also mentioned the Naga country and the people." Since 13th century, Buranji

40 White Paper on Naga Integration, Published by Hekhevi Achumi, Secretary (Finance), Naga Hoho, Nagaland, 2002, p.5.
41 Ibid., p.6.
of Assam mentioned the word ‘Noga’ or ‘Naga’, whatever the pronunciations or
derivation or meaning of the term ‘Naga’ were, our concern here is that the word ‘Naga’
existed for the peoples occupying a land between and outside Assam kingdom and the
Manipuri Kingdom since early AD.

It is interesting to note that in the Royal Chronicle of Manipur some of the present
day Kukis’ sub-tribes/clans are mentioned as Nagas. For instances, ‘Yaraba conqured
Naga villages of Hawkip Chingshang’, and ‘Koiremba conqured the village of Khongjai
Nagas and brought one captive’. The period referred to is approximately 747 A.D
and 1507-8 respectively. Hawkip or Haokip is a clan of Thadou/Thadou Kuki/Kuki and
Khongjai is synonymous to the term Kuki or sub-tribes of Kuki. These sorts are also
mentioned in the subsequence pages of the Royal Chronicle of Manipur. If one follows
the writings in the Royal Chronicle of Manipur, the word Naga was also used for the
present day Kuki clans/sub-tribes. Contrary to this, M. Horam says “the appellation
‘Naga’ is not applied to any of the other tribes living in the Naga Hills. Strangely enough,
the Kukis, Koms, Paites, Thados, Kacharis and some other tribal folk, though living
alongside the Nagas from ancient times, are not lumped together with the Naga and have
distinct names of their own.”

M. Horam says, “whosoever first called the Nagas by that name and whatever the
word may mean, the Nagas themselves knew each other by the name of the tribe to which
they belonged. Even the present tribals names, like Angami, Ao, Lotha, Sema and
Tangkhul, seem to have been coined by outsiders, most probably by the British
Administrators.” He further says: “The present awareness of being one people was
understandably absent among the Nagas till very recently.” Gangmumei Kabui says,
“The Naga tribes call themselves by their tribals names. In the early period, the name
Naga was not known. But it was the outsiders like the Assamess, Bengali, and Ahom

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42 See L. Joychandra Singh, ed., The Lost Kingdom (Royal Chronicle of Manipur), Prajatantra publishing
with whom they had very wide contact, gave this name to the tribes.”46 These mean that, the name ‘Naga’ and the present tribals name were given by the outsiders. Further, the wareness as Nagas among them came very recent.

Therefore, the name ‘Naga’ was not coined by them but given by outsiders. Despite, the existence of the word Naga since AD, the tribes of Naga knew each other by the name of the tribe. The popularity and the regular used of the term ‘Naga’ as an appellation for the various tribes came only during the British rule, even then their tribals name are still retain and use under the common appellation –‘Naga’, which is also believed to be given by outsiders. It is a fact that the word Naga has become a unifying pole for the members of the group. According to T.S. Gangte, “the term Naga has assumed the centripetal force which unites heterogeneous tribal groups that converge the Naga axis, while at the same time maintaining their separate identity zealously. Establishment of the Naga National Council, the ascendancy of Angami Zapu Phizo in the political limelight of the Nagas which took them to the path of secessionist movement in the fifties and the subsequent creation of Nagaland State in 1962, gained momentum to propound that the term Naga was not a tribe, but a nation.”47

The Term ‘Kuki’

According to P.S Haokip, record dating back to 33 AD, during which Nongba Lairen Pakhangba, the Meitei kings existed refer to two Kuki Chiefs named Kuki Ahongba and Kuki Achouba. Cheitharol Kumaba (Royal Chronicles of Meitei kings)


I disagree with the writers who say that the Anal was an old Kuki elsewhere then joined the Naga Identity. To the author the term old Kuki is misnomer and the affinities, if any, are to be looked from broader perspective i.e., the Nagas and the Kukis than between the Kukis and the Anals or Lamkangs or Moyons or Monsangs, etc.
notes, in the year 186 sakabda (AD 264) Meidungu Taothingmang, a Kuki, became king.”

This means that the term Kuki exists since first century AD.

Contrary to this, Reid says, “The first reference was made to the ‘Kukis’ in 1777 A.D., when these tribesmen attacked the British subjects in Chittagong when Warren Hastings was the Governor General of Bengal.”

William Shaw writes, “The origin of this word (Kuki) is not known, but it first appears in Bengal, ‘Rawlins writing of the ‘Cucis or mountaineers of Tipra’ in Asiatick Research (11, xii.) in 1792.” These two quotes show that the term Kuki came to be appeared or used by the British rulers since the last quarter 18th century.

Soppit writes that “the designation “Kuki” is unknown to the tribes now so called by the plains people. The designation ‘Kuki’ is never used by the tribes themselves, though many of them answer to it when addressed, from knowing it to be the Bengali or plains term for their people. The address they made to the so-called Kuki:
1. Rangkhol
2. Bete
3. Jansen
4. Tadoi, terms are used by the villagers, and are their tribal designation in their own respective dialects.”

Whatever the contentions were, today the term Kuki stands for an ethnic group. “The term Kuki refers to an ethnic entity that spreads out in a contiguous regions in Northeast India, Northwest Burma (Myanmar), and the Chittagong Hill tracts in Bangladesh.”

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49 A.S. Reid, Chin Lushai Land, Calcutta, 1893, p.3.
50 William Shaw, Notes on the Thadou Kukis, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, Delhi, 1928, p.11.
Thus, the terms ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ were given by outsiders and it has no aborigine’s origin. The concerned peoples or to whom they christened the terms were not aware or did not know it, though they understood it when addressed to them since they had their own appellation. The terms ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ were prevalent but not very popular till the advent of the British rule. The British administrators, ethnographers and political agents, etc., in contacting with these tribes came to use these terms for them not only in their daily discourse but also in their records and other things. In course of time, they popularized them. Not only the outsiders called them by these terms or suffixing/prefixing these terms with theirs in course of time but also the tribes themselves came to accept the terms as their own. There was an acceptance of the terms by both the outsiders and the natives as their appellations. Thus, ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ came to be known as their ethnic identities.

**Differentiating between the Nagas and the Kukis as separate ethnic entities**

The contact between the colonizers and the concerned ethnies i.e., the Nagas and the Kukis varied. The British rulers came into contacted with the Kukis since 18th century in Chittagong but with the Nagas, after the treaty of Yandaboin 1826 i.e., in 1832.

As stated earlier that the term ‘Naga’ in Royal Chronicles of Manipur was also prefix or suffix to the present day Kuki clans/sub-tribes. In the beginning of British rule the terms ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ were loosely used: sometimes the word ‘Naga’ was loosely applied to the Kuki clans/sub-tribes and the ‘Kuki’ to the Naga clans/tribes. It seems even in the 1881 census both the Nagas and the Kukis were clubbed together but thereafter they were grouped separately.

But this came to be changed later on, particularly with the progressed of British rule in Northeast India. The British Administrators, Ethnographers, Linguists and Political Agents distinguished the Nagas and the Kukis by using their own criteria. G.A. Grierson classified the Nagas and the Kukis under two heads as distinct from the
linguistic point of view. Besides Languages, he also makes three points on ethnic basis; firstly, the Kukis who are closely related to the Chin and Lushais are migrating or 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 permanent irrigated and terrace rice fields and they keep ordinary Indian cattle. Secondly, the Kukis have hereditary Chiefs who are greatly respected. While the Nagas lived in domestic communities and headman, if any, have little or no influence in the village. Thirdly, the Kukis wear their hair long and cover the head with a ‘pagri’. The Nagas have their hair short and used no head covering accepting occasionally during festivals or war-period. There are many more of them, who classified between these two groups using their invented criterias or borrowed criterias. These classifications made sharp cleavages between these two. During the colonial period the terms ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ came to be legitimate appellations for the tribes to whom they applied. The classification of the Nagas and the Kukis under two heads and the differentiation between these two by using certain yardsticks was the invention of the colonial rulers. The colonial rulers used these terms in their daily discourse, revenue records and census, etc. Many of the yardsticks they used to classify the two are ambiguous and fallacious.

The Government of India followed the same classifications of the predecessor. The classification between these two communities continued even today, in fact, widened. Today, the terms ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ have become generic terms for each, which cover various tribes, sub-tribes and clans, etc. This was accentuated by the dawn of ethnic consciousness amongst them. Today, safeguarding one’s ethnic identity becomes utmost important for them. Many writers and scholars of post independent India used yardsticks, borrowed from colonialist or their own inventions, to differentiate them as distinct groups. Consequently, their differences became more and more widen, this led them to think that they are totally different from each other, which means overlooking their shared origin, race, religion, language, similarity in social and political organizations, etc. Of course, this does not mean that they are homogeneous groups. They have myriads

differences, which marked them differently. The points which this study would like to make in this regard are that the two ethnies i.e., the Nagas and the Kukis, have inherent elements or traits to unite them under one ethnic group. Secondly, they also have inherent uniqueness to constitute their own distinct ethnic entities. The emphasis of ethnic studies on them inclined more towards inherent distinctiveness and mostly dismissive of their similarities, which is also inherent. For an instance, S.P.Vaiphei makes distinctions between the Nagas and the Kukis-Chins:

1. The Kukis (Kukis) chiefs invariably inherit their position by the right of birth and initiative in all matters concerning the administration of their villages and classmen, by whom they are respected and feared. On the other hand, the government of the Naga tribes is distinctly democratic. Their chieftainship do not necessarily pass from father to son, but practically depend on the will of the tribesmen and the Naga chiefs are therefore without much individual power and their ruler is based on the general approval of the clan.
2. Method of cultivation are totally different: The Kukis merely jhooms in a most untidy and wasteful manner whereas the Nagas take greatest care and pride in elaborate system of terrace cultivation.
3. Dress-The Kukis either wear nothing but a blanket or else a dhot wound round the loins passing between the legs from front and fastened behind in the regular Indian way. On the other hand, the dress of the Nagas is invariably a cloth tied round the loins with the loose end hanging down in front.
4. Settlement- Kukis settled either on hillside or hilltop. The Nagas settled mostly on the hilltop.
5. The recurrence of the traditional songs of the Kukis has rhythm. The Nagas traditional songs are bobble and jumble up.
6. Weapons -Kukis used arrow in hunting whereas the Nagas used only spear.
7. Gun powder-Kukis manufacture their own gunpowder out of dung or filth, which are collected from under the house with large bean as sulphur. Such use of gunpowder was unheard among the Nagas.
8. House-Kukis houses are with porch in front part of the house. Naga houses seldom have porch.
9. Construction of house-Kukis does not level the foundation of their house; they elevated the floor evenly either by plank or bamboo flats; whereas the Nagas leveled the ground for the construction of their house.
10. Voice/Tone-The Kuki are slow in speaking. The features of Nagas are more pronounced and in many other ways the lighthearted Nagas far apart from the solemn slow speaking Kuki. The Kuki worn their hair long and most of the Nagas cut their hair. "54

Today, the Nagas and the Kukis have established separate ethnic entities based on their inherent elements of distinctiveness and differentiation yet inherent elements of similarities could not be dismissed.

Ethnic Identity of the Nagas

An appellation 'Naga' has become an ethnic identity of the Nagas and the elements that constituted ethnic identity of the Nagas are many. In the Uniqueness of Naga history, "the following are the common characteristics of the Nagas, which are very distinct from many other societies.

1. Feeling of Nagaism or being a Naga-This is the highest degree of Naga identity where every individual Naga meets together under the banner of the word 'Naga', the people having pierced ear-holes derived from Burmese word.

2. Village democratic principles- except that of the Sumis and Konyaks, every Naga village is ruled by the nominated village councilors/elders who represent every clan or a group of families. Under this principle, all the general decisions are taken by consensus exhibiting the real democratic spirit, where advice of the clan representatives/elderly people plays a major role in decision-making. This practice was in existence since time immemorial exhibiting an indigenous model of pure democracy.

3. Self-rule village administration- the entire Naga society is a village-based society where every village is self-contained and maintains its autonomy. They follow a very strong and well-knitted self-rule village administrative system. This indigenous self-governing system is perfectly working amongst the Nagas, the strongest system in the world.

4. Uniqueness of their identity-Naga society means the village society, a clan based and a kind of watertight society having the highest degree of social cohesion drawn from the village hold. They first owe allegiance to the family, the village, the tribe and lastly to the 'Naga community as being a Naga. This integrated networking system of ethnic loyalty is not found in other society as strong as the Nagas. This is the most unique feature of the Naga society and culture, which is missing amongst many other tribal communities in the world.

54 S.P. Vaiphei, In search of Identity, Kuki-Chin Baptist, Imphal, pp.34-37.
5. **Village Brigade system** - For the purpose of defence, they maintain a full unit of trained young personnel in form of an army brigade (morung system) sentry system in the village is still prevailing. Every Naga village is guarded by its own sentry under the supervision of village authority system. Every citizen is like a trained police in Naga society.

6. **Bounded authority and functions** - Under village authority system, they perform well-established powers and functions. The village government is vested with supreme power as well as authority over all matters pertaining to village administration of justice. The lawbreakers are then punished according to the merit of the case. In the villages, they take meal three times i.e., once in the morning between 6-7 A.M, noon between 12-1 P.M and in the evening between 5-6 P.M in Naga way. This is a place where people sleep early and rise early to start the daily chores early.

7. **Red tea** - serving a very simple tea known as Pikaja, (red tea) without adding sugar and milk is a common practice.

8. **Rice beer** - a country made liquor is consumed by every Naga tribe especially the men folk. Bamboo cup and mithun’s horn are commonly used while serving rice beer. In the past, some people felt reluctant to convert into Christianity just because they did not want to do away with drinking.

9. **Cultural dress** - every Naga tribe has different traditional dresses and garments. Their traditional shawls and dresses are so distinct that speak their ethnic colourful identity. In this way, a given cultural dress signifies a particular tribe. Even within the same tribe, they wear different cultural shawls signifying a particular clan demonstrating their status in society.

10. **Meat sharing practice** - Nagas are heavy meat eaters. Their social structure is determined by this practice; especially among the Aos. One will not find any social gathering without meat. Sharing pieces of meat especially on important occasions like marriage, festivals and succession of village administration etc is also a common practice.

11. **Gift** - Giving of customary gift/present is a common practice adopted since early centuries and institutionalized during the British administration in Naga territory. This practice is so common in their society today. Customary gifts are honored more than ordinary gifts. Normally, such gifts are not supposed to be refused to whom it is given.

12. **Use of Humor** - Nagas are generally humorous. On any occasion/gathering either in the level of formal or informal, their discussion and debate is characterized by the used of humor. Even in the family circle, it is very popular.

13. **Hospitality** - Nagas are hospitable by nature and by birth. They respect even a stranger, honor them and protect them. However, once they are mistreated, they take revenge.

14. **Openness of mind** - unlike many other races, Nagas are in general open-minded people. They have, but only one heart. That is why; they refuse to accept the double minded people.

15. **Simplicity and honesty** - Nagas are generally very simple and honest. This is more in the villages whatever limitations they have. Due to their simplicity, ignorance and honesty, they are sometimes easily cheated by others.

16. **Respect of the seniors** - Irrespective of gender, status, qualification or position in society, they show respect to the seniors. Seniors are well recognized in Naga society. Without taking permission from elderly persons, the youngsters hardly move. That is why, the role of elderly people is of paramount importance in Naga society.
17. **Guarding of women** - Generally, women move first and the men folk follow them while walking either in the street or in the path. A man walking ahead of womenfolk is considered shame. They have high regard and concern for women. They are well protected.

18. **Shaking of head** - as a sign of agreement/acceptance of the points or discussion at hand, they shake head through which a consensus opinion can be drawn. This is found mainly amongst the elderly people and the youngsters follow them. Rising up of hand is not their practice in public gathering to show their willingness. Shaking of head is not found amongst the women.

19. **Observance of festivals** - Nagaland is a land of festival. Ceremonies, dance, ritual practices during festivals are very common in Naga society. In fact, richness of Naga culture well demonstrated through such practices.

20. **Belief and practice system** - Traditional knowledge based on social practices and belief system is very common in their society. They have deep rooted foundation that promotes social cohesion.

21. **Patriarchal system of family structure** - Naga society is a man dominated/man ruled patriarchal society. No matriarchal system of family is noticed. The children maintain the clan title of the father. Women do not inherit landed properties and they do not fully participate in decision-making levels.

22. **Care for dead** - The dead of a person is highly respected. The entire village population gathers and observes mourning of the deceased. The Aos observe for three days.

23. **Way of living** - the way of living pattern irrespective of tribe is common such as domestic activities, construction of house, living standard and style, dressing and simplicity in nature. These are highly appreciable and recordable.

24. **We feeling** - There is a strong sense of ‘we feeling’ among the Nagas irrespective of tribes. Feeling of togetherness is one of the best characteristics of any community.

25. **Farming system** - Terrace farming system and shifting cultivation are common practices. These are their main occupations, which are still traditional oriented.

26. **Rearing system of domestic animals** - they live in the mist of domestic animals, rear them in the home yard. This practice is also highly traditional and customary oriented.

27. **Used of log drum** - this is used for various purposes such as signals when the breaks out or enemies’ attack, jubilation etc by beating the log drum in unison.

28. **Traditional institutions (dormitory system)** - A kind of bachelors’ training Centre. This is a famous traditional rural institution, which is sadly disappearing today after the inception of Christianity.

29. **Ear holes** - Piercing of ears irrespective of men and women is a common practice indicating the meaning of the word ‘Nagas’ a translation of Burmese word ‘na’ ‘ka’ (’na’ means ear, and ‘ka’means holes according to Burmese). In this way, the word ‘Naga’ emerged. This has become their common identity today in term of social development.

30. **Tattooing** - Practice of tattooing was common practice among the Nagas especially prior to the advent of Christianity. This practice was not only a part of body decoration but applied as a distinct identity firstly, by the Naga women to distort their natural beauty so that they are saved from the Burmese captors who used to snatch Naga women while living elsewhere in Burma.

31. **Accent** - their tone of voice is very distinctive whether they speak Nagamese or other languages.

32. **Body structure** - short stature, flat nose, small eyes, and Mongolian color.

33. **Un–written Customary Laws** – Naga society is a custom bound society where customary laws are supreme than other law.
The Nagas has a unique history and well-defined territory, which is contiguous and compact. If one looks at the ethnic identity of the Nagas, it is well founded as the outsiders as well as the Nagas themselves accept it. This is compounded by uniqueness of their history, cultural commonality, way of life and well define territory, etc., makes the Nagas ethnic identity deep and firm. Further, the progress of the Nagas’ movement for sovereignty strengthens it. According to Kaka D Iralu, “before 1946, the identity did not have a political or institutionalized form. Our “allotted period” as mentioned in Acts 17:26 came into reality in 1946 when through popular consensus we established ourselves into a nation with a political identity under the institution of the Naga National Council.”

Many sub-ethnic identities are emerging within the Naga identity. There are many more who are speculating to form such sub-ethnic identities. The history of others has shown that such sub-ethnic identity (ies) result into both positive and negative. If the communitarian spirit of these sub-ethnic identities is for the development of the Nagas as a whole and play a role of integration then there may be no problem. But if these sub-ethnic identities have plethora of communitarian spirits for them alone rather than the whole Nagas then Naga ethnic identity will be shattered from within itself and also outside forces could easily play a policy of divide and rule among the Nagas.

Ethnic Identity of the Kukis

It has been discussed earlier on the term ‘Kuki’ and how it came to be accepted as a name of a group. The characteristics of the Kukis, according to P.Misao are:

1. Kukis are strictly patriarchal; women had no position in the society.

2. The wealth was measured in terms of their possession of animals.

3. The Kukis lived on the hill-top or slopes and the ground is elevated with bamboo splits or planks. The edges of the two roofs of the house do not touch the ground. There is invariably a veranda; the one side elevated above the ground is for entry inside the house and the other half of the ground is for pounding and whisking paddy.

4. The folk songs are sung in rhythm and movement of dance is slow but steady.

5. Serious manner, the knowledge of pedigrees, the duty of revenge, the taste for treacherous method of warfare, the clannish feeling, the want of power of combination and continued effort, arrogance in victory are the common traits.

6. The men wear a loin-clothe somewhat like a ‘Dhoti’ and have one or more clothes to wrap around themselves over one shoulder or both. They also wear a cloth as a ‘Pugri’ about a yard or just a little longer. It is tied round the head with the ends, or one sticking up in front. The women wear a loincloth, which is wrapped round their waists and reaches a little over half-way down their thighs. Attached to the cloth, sometimes separately, is a string which is passed round the waist and which holds it up. In addition, they wear a breast cloth, which is wrapped tight round the torso, the outer corner being tucked in at the top at a spot between the left breast and the armpit. Sometimes an additional wrapper is used thrown over the shoulder thus completing their wardrobe. Although the method of fastening seems inadequate, strenuous action does not seem to make their clothes work loose, or fall off.

7. Tattooing: This is not practiced as a distinctive mark of a rite among the Kukis. Some of the young boys and girls tattoo a small circle or dot just for fun.57

To add to the above mention traits of the Kukis, some points are noted down:

1. Marriage: the Kukis practiced cross-cousin marriage i.e. marriage between father’s sister’s daughter / paternal aunt’s daughter and mother’s brother’s son / maternal uncle’s son.

2. The Kukis practiced both Joint and Nuclear family system: the peculiar joint family system called ‘Inherent Joint Family’- the family of the eldest son of the Kuki parents called UPA, which must necessarily have a joint family comprising his parents, unmarried brothers and sisters, and sometimes with married brothers, who have yet to establish themselves. The younger brother of UPA forms the nuclear family of his own. This family ultimately becomes of UPA when his first son is married and lives with him.

3. The institution of ‘Sawm’ as the dormitory of the able bodied young men of the village as the primary means of initiation and education plays a significant role among the Kukis, and it is the manifestation of the style of life they lead.

4. 'Luongman' or Corpse Price is another peculiar system of the Kukis. This is the price for a woman when she dies, and also for her sons. The price is claim by her father, or elder/younger sons, in father’s absence, as a token of love and affection between the uterine kinsmen.

5. Chieftainship: It is associated with ‘Upa’ or senior man. ‘Upas are the only persons who can become Chiefs. The Chief post is not elected but hereditary and is passed on from father to his eldest son. The Chief is vested with powers and authority over his subjects, sometimes, the chief abuse his power and turn into a despot.

6. Inheritance: the eldest son of the parents inherits the property and look after his parents and younger ones.

7. Concept of territory: the village is the highest political unit among the Kukis, and the Chief of the villages and his Council of Ministers which function within a territorial jurisdiction wielding its political authority and prerogatives over the villagers in absolute terms are the supreme political power.

8. Village: It is an independent political unit among the Kukis, and the Chief of the village and his council of ministers are the political leaders. It is also an important administrative unit.\(^5\)

These are some of the important traits of the Kukis. There are many important traits of Kukis, which are not mention here.

When one looks at the history of the term ‘Kuki’ as an ethnic identity, one unearths the present problems to the colonial period. In the colonial period ethnographers, administrators and the political agents, etc., used the term ‘Kuki’ for them (Kukis). The Kukis also used it by suffixing or prefixing to their personal and clan names. But a group of them came to denounce it and another group of the Kukis supports it. The one who denounce it are called pro-Thadou group and the other who advocate the term Kuki are called pro-Kuki. The contention between these two opposing constellations will be discussed mainly on three issues: 1. Scheduled tribe recognition 2. Language and 3. Church.

Before the three issues are discuss, let’s have a glimpse on the notions of the Pro-Thadou and the Pro-Kuki. “The main contention of the ‘Thadou’ protagonists is that ‘Kuki’ being the nomenclature denoting other ethnic groups of Kuki who do not speak

‘Thadou language’ as well should not be misused, by calling it as ‘Kuki language’. The scope and coverage of the nomenclature ‘Kuki’ must on no account be made narrow and limited. In the event of the ‘Thadou’ language being called ‘Kuki language’, the term ‘Kuki’ automatically excludes other ethnic groups of erstwhile ‘Kuki’ and would, therefore, relegate the nomenclature to the level of group appellations, which constitute the term ‘Kuki’. The ‘Thadou’, which is a personal name, must not be treated synonymous to the term ‘Kuki’ which is a political nomenclature having a far larger meaning and wider scope than the term ‘Thadou’.”  

The contention of the pro-Kuki is that the term ‘Kuki’ is a canopy for the various sub-tribes and clans and the term Thadou is a personal name meant for the descendants of the Thadou alone. In other word it is a clan name like other clans under the term Kuki. Further, in the genealogy tree “Thadou is the younger brother of Doungel and the elder brother of Chongloi, Hangsing and Touthang,” Thus, Thadou is not the eldest in their pedigree and the term ‘Thadou’ could not be used for an appellation of all the clans/sub-tribes under the term ‘Kuki’.

Whatever the contention of both the groups, if one looks at the problem, it began with the colonial writers. Prior to the colonial era, the term Kuki appeared but it was the name used by outsiders to address them, each one of them was known by their clan/sub-tribe name. The pan term for them gradually developed during the colonial period. One of the earliest ethnographer as well as administrator who wrote on the Kukis, particularly on North Cachar, was Lt. R. Stewart- A slight Notice of the Grammar of the Thadou. This is also an earliest work on the Thadou and was published in 1857 in the Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal Vol.XXIV. In this, it was written, “Kuki is unknown and they have no title embracing their whole race, but they call one another by the names of their different clans. They all speak the same language but with a slight modification in the dialects, and it is called among them Thadou-pao, from the name of one of their principal clans.”

60 Ibid., p.232.  
This work has both positive and negative consequences; one consequence was that it gave an upper hand to the term ‘Thadou’ against the term ‘Kuki’. This also came to be the standpoint of pro-Thadou group against the pro-Kuki group.

The problem was accentuated by William Shaw’s book. In 1929, William Shaw published a book –Notes on the Thadou Kukis, which mentioned that the Kuki groups like Gangte, Vaiphei, Hmar, Kom, Chiru, Changsan, Lunkim, Hlangam, and Lenthang are under the wing of Thadous. This was a major point of dissention on the part of the non-Thadous.\textsuperscript{62} Many other clans of Kukis also rejected this Thadou dominance. In the genealogical tree of the Kukis, even taking Shaw’s genealogy of the Kukis, Doungel clan, which is an elder brother/clan of the Thadou, still exists. It is obvious that other clans will not accept this disparity of the clans though the Thadou, today, may be more advanced or more in numbers, whatever, it is unacceptable to other Kuki clans. This was a reason why “William Shaw’s book was condemned in 1942 in Mongan village in June and in Thanlon village in August.\textsuperscript{63} A.K.Ray says: “Not only the term Thadou but also the term Kuki were denounced by a large number of chiefs. In the Khuga Valley Chiefs Conference held on 28.6.1947, the term Kuki, was denounced on the ground that it was not their forefather’s name. It is a foreign term, they believed, denoting bad meaning. It was also mentioned in the same meeting that the different non-Naga tribes of Manipur should not be branded as Kukis. In the same tone the term Thadou was also denounced, and equality of all the tribes was pleaded in the meeting. In Thanlon, south Manipur, Area Chiefs’ Conference was held where members of the village authority each from 48 villages were present, three proposed national names were put to vote. The result was as follows: Khul-111 votes, Mizo-32 votes, Kukis 14 votes.\textsuperscript{64} Thus, in 1947, chiefs of Kukis discarded the terms ‘Thadou’ and ‘Kuki’.

When such situations were prevailing within the Kuki group, Indian Government Scheduled Tribes List came out in 1950, therein, recognized Kuki as a tribe in many

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.,p.115.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., pp.115-6.
states of Northeast India. This means that the word ‘Kuki’ covers various clans/sub-tribes of the Kukis. The Indian Government recognized Kuki as a tribe in the states like Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Assam. But in the state of Manipur, the ‘Thadou tribe’ and ‘Any Kuki Tribes’ are recognized since 2001. The reason is that Thadou protested against the Scheduled Tribe List of 1950 recognizing Kuki as a tribe, thus, in the modification list of 1956 the word ‘Kuki’ was deleted and inserted ‘Thadou’. This led two opposing groups within the same ethnic group. “After 1956, various clans of the Kukis formed groups and came forward for recognitions. The largest constellation of Kuki clans for recognition was ‘Khongsai’. The term ‘Khongsai’ covered various clans viz., Lunkim, Lenthang, Thangeo, Changsang, Thangum, Khulhlu, Gumhlu, Khumthang, Hlanghau, Lupheng, Mate, Lhungdim, etc. The second largest group covered clans like Chongthu, Doungel, Haolei, Taothang, Dimgel etc. The third group had Chongloi and Hangsin. These Tribe Recognition Movements of different Kuki clans came to a halt with the insertion of ‘Any Kuki Tribe’,”

65 says S. Changsan. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002, in Part x- Manipur- after entry 29, inserted: “30. Poumai Naga, 31.Tarao, 32. Kharam and 33. Any Kuki tribes.” Thus, these three tribes, which included ‘Any Kuki tribes’ are recognized by the Government of India since 2002. This recognition, for the present, has sufficed the aspiration of the Kukis movements for Schedule Tribe recognition.

However, Kuki National Assembly of North East India (KNANEI) has staunchly opposed this. It submitted memorandum to the Chief Minister of Manipur on this regard. In this memorandum, it was stated: “we came to learn that your Cabinet has already passed and recommended for inclusion of ‘Any Kuki tribe(s)’ in the Scheduled Tribe List of Manipur State. In this connection the Kuki National Assembly of North East India (KNANEI), which is a front partner in your ministry has put forward a very strong and serious objection about the matter and take up an unanimous Resolution that “Any Kuki Tribe” cannot be made, vide its Resolution No.2 of the 12th General Assembly of KNANEI held on 20-3-1991 at Tuiaphai village Churachandpur District Manipur, on serious consideration of the point that Kuki is the common nomenclature of various tribes

65 An excerpt from an interview of S.Changsan, Kohima, Nagaland.
of the Kukis and thereby the Kuki community cannot accept it is an absolute name for a particular tribe of one of its various tribes and on the following important points...the case of Thadou and Kuki is pending at the Gauhati High Court, Imphal Bench. Though Thadou is not involved in the Court case, but “Thadou Kuki and Kuki” are involved. And so, it is subjudice and so, the Government is powerless since the name of the language is the same as the name of the Tribe. And the matter is bound to bring bloodshed among the concerned community also. It is, therefore, prayed that you will kindly drop “Any Kuki Tribe” in the Manipur Scheduled Tribe List recommendation.66 Despite this objection raised by KNANEI, “Any Kuki tribes” stands recognized by the Government of India. This has also brought consonance with other states of North East India like Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

The second contention between the Pro-Thadou and Pro-Kuki is Language: according to the Pro-Kuki group, the language should be christened as Kuki language and according to the Pro-Thadou it should be called as Thadou Language. This Language issue began with the Holy Bible translations in 1960s i.e., after the beginning of the scuffle between these two clusters over Scheduled Tribe List of Manipur. In 1947, a Kuki New Testament Bible was printed, which was translated by Ngulhao Thomsong. During this period, there was no such mêlée. But when Old Testament Bible was translated, the politics of the usages of the terms- ‘Kuki’ and ‘Thadou’ aggravated. As a result of this fight the opponents jailed Dr. T. Lunkim the translator of Holy Bible for months.

One could grasp an idea of their brawl from the following quotes: “The conflict between Thadou language and Kuki language started when the ‘Holy Bible’ was printed in 1960s and the language was named Kuki. This dispute continued for some years in the Court. One party claims that the language in which the Holy Bible was written should be Thadou and the other party claimed that it should be Kuki. There is a Kuki Literature Society and a Thadou Literature Society. The Kuki Literature Society has been engaged in the production of textbooks for primary education. Every textbook of the Kuki

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66 Memorandum submitted to the Hon’ble Chief Minister, Manipur by the Kuki National Assembly, North East India (KNANEI) on the 15th April 1991 against the resolution adopted by the Manipur Government for recommendation of “Any Kuki tribe(s)” for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe List of Manipur.
Literature Society is one and the same as the Thadou people use. As the speakers of the language are divided into two, each side likes to retain their language. The Thadou group alleges that the language cannot be Kuki but it shall be Tadou as there can be no Kuki language. In the midst of this dispute the pro-Kukis demanded a constitutional modification of the List of Scheduled Tribes of Manipur to make room for Kuki. Thadou National Council is deadly against the inclusion of Kuki in the List of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste for Manipur.”

B. Datta Ray writes: “The argument is that Kuki is a generic name meant for a nomenclature for various tribes whether they like it or not. It is argued by the Thadou supporters that Kuki has no language. Kuki supporters on the other hand suggested that Thadou is not a tribe but a name of an ancestor, and Thadou cannot include all Thadou speakers because all the Thadou speakers are not juniors to the Thadou ancestor. They further argued that all the Thadou speakers who are senior to the Thadou ancestors cannot be Thadou. They claimed and insisted that they should be Kuki. Many members of Thadou speakers who do not like to be called Thadou and who are also in a line in their genealogy but senior to Thadou return themselves either as Mizo or Simete etc. They said, “It is better to be a Paite than a Thadou as Paite is not a name of a particular person.”

“The Government of Manipur had even recognized the language of the Thadou as Thadou/Kuki as a medium of instruction at primary level of education. Because of the dispute the order of the government in this regard had been modified by deleting the word Thadou and oblique but retains the word Kuki. At Text-book preparation upto class V grades is in the name of Kuki. Vernacular papers at a higher level is going to be made and accepted under the name of Thadou but not under Kuki.”

T.S. Gangte explains, “Thadou group says that the language has been known as ‘Thadou Language’ from time immemorial. It belongs to them, and should, therefore, be called ‘Thadou Language’ and nothing else. On the other hand, their cognates claim that

67 B. Datta., The Tribal Identity and Tension in North-East India, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p.35.
68 Ibid., p.41.
69 Ibid., p.41.
the language is not the exclusive possession of the Thadou alone. It is as much theirs and, therefore, should be called ‘Kuki’. At a time when social tension was at the peak, the Government of Manipur issued an order to the effect that Thadou Language be read up to Primary stage in schools. This was, however, contested by the other groups. Conceding the counter claim of the other groups, the Government of Manipur issued another, which superseded the earlier orders deleting the term ‘Thadou’, replacing it by ‘Kuki’. The result of such action of the Government had done more harm than good. A Pandora’s Box had been opened for all concerned.”

The above quotes imply that the name for the language is contested between the Pro-Thadou group and Pro-Kuki group i.e. Thadou/Thadou Kuki language and Kuki language. This aggravated their conflict over ethnic identity. One should not miss to understand or see the reality is, the Government stance over Pro-Thadou and Pro-Kuki issues is never firm and solved their problem as an authority of the state. But its policies/orders, in fact, intensify their identity conflict as the state stand is never clear or look into their historical background, it always oscillates between the two opposing groups this could be seen from Schedule Tribes List: inserting one term then deleting it and replacing it by the other term when one group or other group pressurized it, which has become habitual way of doing by the government on the Kukis. While such identity crisis is going on, the general masses of the Kukis are voiceless and they accept whatever is given to them. This is the case of the Kukis, particularly in the state of Manipur but it also affects other parts of Kukis because they speak the same language and used the same Holy Bible though they are known and recognized as Kuki tribe/ Kukis.

The third point is the establishment of separate Kukis Baptist Associations. The Kukis are found in different denominations of Christianity. The Kuki Baptist Associations/Churches in different states of Northeast used the term Kukis, even if they split from the parent church. This is not the case in Manipur though they are under an apex convention of the state called Manipur Baptist Convention, which is under CBCNEI

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an apex Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India. “The Kuki Christian Organization (K.C.O) was formed in 1943, which consisted of the Thadous.”\textsuperscript{71} In 1947, problem erupted between the Nagas and the Kukis in the Northwestern Baptist Association, which was one of three Baptist Associations in Manipur viz., North Eastern Baptist Association, Sadar Hill Baptist Association and Northwestern Baptist Association. “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.”\textsuperscript{72} “In 1949 the Kuki Baptist had its formal fellowship first at Tujangwaichong Baptist Church and the people decided to have their own separate Association, thus, they came to form their separate Association called Kuki Christian Association. It was recognized by the MBC as MBA No.5 and CBCNEI also gave recognition.”\textsuperscript{73} This led to the formation of Kuki Christian Association in 1950 and the name was changed to Kuki Baptist Association (K.B.A).

However, there was infighting in K.B.A, due to the problem of the usage of the term ‘Kuki’, which led to the formation of Kuki Baptist Churches of North East in 1955. MBC elucidates, “another Kuki Baptist Association was also formed by the Kuki Baptist Churches of North East, Manipur in 1955 …… though they were requested to reconsider the case of forming a separate Association and remain in the parent Association…………. After sometime, the Association was recognized as MBA (Manipur Baptist Association) No.6., and CBCNEI also recognized it.”\textsuperscript{74} “The Kuki Baptist Convention (KBC) was formed at Tutangwaichong on the 16\textsuperscript{th} March 1958 with the amalgamation of the Kuki Baptist Association (MBC No.5.) and North East Kuki Baptist Association (MBC No.6.) having its Head quarters at Motbung and a Bible School at Phaicham Centre.”\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{71} The Manipur Baptist Convention; The first one hundred years of Christianity in Manipur, 1896-1996, Manipur Baptist Convention, MBC Literature Committee, 1996, Imphal, Manipur p.50.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., P.49.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p.49.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.49.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p.50.
1958, both the Associations namely, Kuki Baptist Association and Kuki Baptist Churches of North East were amalgamated under the name of Kuki Baptist Convention. This did not remedy the crisis, in fact, it intensified with the emergence of the issue whether the Holy Bible, translated into their language, should be called Thadou or Kuki. Kuki Baptist Convention and Kuki Baptist Association or Thadou Baptist Association came to be separated bodies and they are affiliated to MBC. This did not end the polarization of the Kuki Baptists. When the Scheduled Tribe recognition movements were headed by different clans/sub-tribes of the Kukis and also MBC and the CBCNEI had abolished the number wise Association and permitted to name the associations after their tribe’s name, Chongthu Baptist Association came to be established since 1971. In this Association, clans/sub-tribes like Chongthu, Doungel and Touthang etc are found. MBC writes, on the Chongthu Baptist Association, “The Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) and the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) had abolished the number wise Association and permitted to name the associations after their tribe’s name. As a result, a general body meeting was held at T. Wakonphai Baptist Church in 1971 where Manipur Baptist Association No.6 was re-established and renamed as the Chongthu Baptist Association.”

Today, they have: Kuki Baptist Convention, Kuki Baptist Association or Thadou Baptist Association and Chongthu Baptist Association.

Thus, the scuffling between the term Thadou and Kuki has been hauled on for the past many decades and it has created uncertainty to their ethnic identity unlike the Nagas. Not only that it has done much irreparable damage to them. To settle their dispute is the need of an hour so that their future generations have undisputed identity. Lastly, one thing that needs to be remembered is that despite all these fracas on the terms, the term “Kuki” still retain popular term for people in general both outside and within themselves. The term ‘Kuki’ is also used after their organizations both civil and underground such as Kuki National Assembly (KNA), Kuki Inpi, Kuki Student Organization (KSO), Kuki People Forum for Human Rights (KPFHR), Kuki National Organization (KNO), Kuki National Army (KNA), Kuki Commando Force (KCF), Kuki Front Council (KFC), Kuki Defence Force (KDF), Kuki Front Council (KFC), Kuki Independent Army (KIA), Chin-

76 Ibid., p.33.
Kuki Revolutionary Force (CK RF), Kuki National Front (KNF), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA) and United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF), etc.

Comparison between the Nagas and the Kukis

There is a difference between the Nagas and the Kukis in using the terms for the Nagas, the term ‘Naga’ has been successfully became an appellation of their ethnic identity but for the Kukis, it is shrouded with problems despite its establishment. Unlike the Nagas, Kukis have a problem in using the term ‘Kuki’ as an appellation of their identity due to the opposition from within but the term ‘Kuki’ still retains its popularity particularly in Manipur but the government recognition of ‘Any Kuki Tribes’ has solved the problem to some extend. T.S Gangte notes important contrasting factors between the Nagas and the Kukis, “Every Naga tribe occupies compact, well-knit, well-demarcated and well defined areas contiguous to the other tribes. Their physical proximity makes it possible for regular social intercourse among themselves. Thus, while maintaining their identity separately, social mobility and fusion are possible among them. They are also not very much subjected to outside influence to entertain variegated opinions. Unlike the Nagas, the Kukis are scattered all over the hill areas of Manipur...resulting from nomadic habit.... the Kukis have been greatly influenced by the people with whom they have come into contact through time and space in their approach to their ethnic identity. Second factor is the tribal institutions: While the form of government among the Nagas was democratic in nature, the Kukis had the autocratic form or despotism. The Nagas did not find strange to the changing circumstances as they were under democratic form of Government. But for the Kukis who have been under despotism could not adjust. This led to direct conflict and variegated opinions on the question of common identity. Thirdly, language factor has a great role to play. Exemplary to their political wisdom, and as witness to the process of assimilation, the Nagas are able to evolve, at the height of linguistic diversity, a common language called Nagamese, a pidgin Assameses, at the National level. In contrast, the Kuki tribes while using their respective dialects or one of
the dialects of the tribes can communicate among themselves." Thus, there are remarkable differences between the Nagas and the Kukis.

Ethnic Movements

According to Dennes L. Thompson and Dove Ronen, "the term ethnicity made a sudden reappearance in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first ethnic movement was witnessed in U.S.A...Ethnicity was not unrecognized previously. It was labeled differently. The terms like 'nationality', 'national diversity' and 'differentiation' were used in lieu of the term ethnicity. Prior to 2nd world war, nationalistic awakening was a legitimate entity. This phenomenon led to Sovereign, Independent, Modern, Democratic State, in developed and developing countries. The term ethnicity is a similar phenomenon to that phenomenon. It emerged in 1960s-1970s but is not a legitimate entity due to the different circumstances from that circumstance.... ethnicity (ethnic groups, ethnic nationalism) tended to be viewed as destabilizing, potentially revolutionary forces that threatened to disintegrate states or at least to disrupt their smooth functioning. Ethnicity appeared no longer as a term for a folkloric, or a "Primordial" phenomenon, the manifestation of local tribal feelings but as a term applied to a political force with which to be reckoned... the reason is that nation fulfils the sovereign state. But ethnicity or ethnic nationalism competes with nation-state." He further says, "under colonial rule ethnicity was the concern of colonial rulers and of anthropologist. In colonized state, in a fight to eliminate colonial ruler, ethnicity was put behind or under the mantle of nationalistic. However, the fact remained that most of the newly independent states inherited their colonial boundaries, which enclosed what later came to be called sub-national entities. This meant that varieties of people with different cultural traditions and memories of hostile relations with other groups included within the same national boundaries. But 'long existing ethnic identities could not be put on the back burner for an

indefinite period but when political struggles started, the ethnic identity could be enlisted for political purposes. These imply that ethnic entities are nation-states within a nation-state and they are like those nation-states under colonial rule. The newly independent nation states inherited predecessor colonial boundaries, which enclosed many ethnic entities or nation-states. Those who struggled as nation states under colonial rule attained independent but ethnic movements within nation states, which are inherited from their predecessors are viewed as illegitimate. Further, many other social scientists show that ethnic movements are synonymous with the national movements under colonial rule. However, the national movements of 19th century and the middle part of 20th century against colonialism and imperialism were regarded as legitimate and today, they are independent nations. But ethnic movements of today’s world are viewed with misgivings and regarded as illegitimate genre though they are the same as the national movement of 19th and mid 20th centuries.

UNPO defines a nation or people as a group of human beings, which possesses the will to be identified as a nation and to determine its common destiny as a nation and is bound to a common heritage, which can be historical, racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and territorial. Representative body, liberation movement or other organ of leadership, whether in the territory of the Nations or in exile, recognized as such by a substantial section of the people. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization has recognized the Naga movement and the latter is its member. The other movements in Northeast are also fit with the definition of UNPO but unlike the Naga movement they are yet to get membership of UNPO.

*International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences* defines Ethnic movement as goal-directed action sustained by a group whose identity is recognized by the presence of ethnic markers. These markers typically include skin pigmentation, ancestry, language, and history of discrimination, conquest, or other shared
experience.” It also broadly distinguished into three categories: “a) Territorial sovereignty movements that demand regional autonomy, separatism, diaspora settlements, and/or secession b) Protests that demand expansion of a group’s civil and economic rights or demand an end to discrimination and c) Collective attacks ranging from genocide, ethnic cleansing, and mob violence, to symbolic threats.” According newspaper report, “the speakers at the UNWGIP (United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Populations) meet pointed out that the indigenous struggle for self-determination follow two paths – quest for full independence and demand for genuine autonomy.”

Considering the above statements when one look into the nation-state of India and the case study – the Nagas and the Kukis. India was under the colonial rule for about two hundred years. When India got independence, there were many princely kingdoms, areas administered under ‘exclusively’ and ‘partially exclusive categories’ and areas beyond their colonial administration but claimed as theirs. Further, the ‘mainstream’ India enclosed many ethnic identities that were concealed during their struggled against colonial ruled. Thus, ethnic entities within the mainstream India were bound together by common goal i.e. to eliminate common enemy- colonial ruler. At the same time, there were many ethnic entities like Nagas in northeast India who were not included in the common goal of India but demanded their own independence from colonial rulers. According to Th. Muivah, for the Nagas- “Nagalim independence is not at all a question of separatism or secession, for such question comes only when there has been a union. Therefore, Nagalim being free since time immemorial and was/is never a part of India either by conquest or by consent, India’s projection of Nagalim as an integral part of India and the Nagas as Indians is totally unfounded.”

82 Ibid., p. 4796.
The Nagas movement

According to Baruah, "The Nagas movement is one of the longest movements and least known in the world." The Naga movement is more than fifty decades now. The objective of the Naga movement is sovereignty. According to M. S. Prabakara, Indian state has always adopted both conventional and highly orthodox way to tackle every kind of challenge to its authority. In the case of the Naga insurgency, for instance, viewing its convoluted path with the last 41 year or so, every one of the classic ‘four fold approach’ of ancient Indian state craft – holding talks, offering inducement, creating splits and resorting to coercive force has been selectively employed to tackle the insurgency.” To this classic ‘four fold approach’ one also can add - a policy of using one ethnic or the other against the movement, maneuvering or manipulating media to portrait them as terrorists and rebels and then branded them by different names like terrorist so that they are condemned by the international communities. This will also hide their Human Right Violations and make a good image of the country to the world communities and weaken or destroy the movement externally as well as internally. This means that the Naga movement vis- a- vis Indian Government is surviving despite the harsh reality. In fact, it is stronger and its base has widened internally and externally: the Naga movement represented by NSCN (IM) is a member of the Hague-based Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO). “The NSCN securing membership of the Hague-based Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation. This was a sort of international recognition to the underground movement for sovereign homeland for the widely known indigenous people of the region-the Nagas." It is also a member of Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) based at Bangkok, which was formed in 1988. In a recently formed North-East Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Forum (NEITPF), Naga movement is not only a member but also plays a key role.


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The Naga movement could be traced back to Naga club of 1918. “During World War I, in 1917 over 2000 Nagas from all tribes were deployed in the war theaters in Europe as part of the Labour Corps. In their voyage to France, the enemy damaged the ship and their ship was about to sink. Hundreds of other Volunteers (British, Chinese, Ceylonese, etc.), were badly shattered, but the customary fortitude and the equanimity of the Naga spirit stood united in their stride and they extended their helping hands to other shattered companions. This has left a deep impression upon the Nagas and they developed an insight of nationalism that they were of one race and a sense of inner compulsion for unity for greater altruistic service was developed. Accordingly, after their return in June 1918, drawing officials, ex-army men and members from various villages formed an association known as the “Naga Club”. The Naga Club was political in nature, social in welfare and re-creational in game and sports.”

“The objectives of the CLUB were primarily to formulate and thereafter consolidate a distinct Naga Nationality, to develop fraternal feelings of the various inhabited tribal areas, to look after the welfare and unity amongst the various tribes of Naga areas. Thus, its formation paved the way firmly to the establishment of the needed political foundation to the various Naga tribes and therefore a concrete symbolic and fore-runner of political organization that had existed during the British rule in NAGA COUNTRY administered areas.” The Naga Club, however, was not a mass based, yet, it articulated the grievances of their peoples and also represented them on many important occasions with important issues concerning the Nagas.

When the Royal Simon Commission visited Kohima, Vilavor Liegise writes, “the commission asked the Naga tribal leaders whether they would like to join the NEW REFORMED SCHEME OF INDIA. In reply by letter dated 26.3.1928 to their question the members of the Naga Club who met the commission as representatives of the various Naga tribes refused to join but warmly welcomed British rule as the British Government

88 White Paper on the Naga Integration, Published by Hekhevi Achumi, Secretary (Finance), Naga Hoho, Nagaland, 2002, p.23.
safe guard their right and freedom against all encroachments from outside."90 "The beginning of the said NAGA CLUB who met marked by the submission of a memorandum on 10.1.1929 under the name and style of Naga Club on behalf of the various inhabited Naga tribes as well as on behalf of their own respective various tribes by the 20 (twenty) members of Naga Club to the Indian Statutory Commission which began (quote) 'we the undersigned Nagas of Naga Club at Kohima who are the only person at present who can voice for our people have heard with great regret that our Hills included within the Reformed Schemed of India without our Knowledge'. However, they ended their historical declaration by stating that (quote) 'We should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never subjugate us, but leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient time'. In response to the memorandum on 10.1.1929, the British House of Commons in London declared the various Naga Tribe inhabited areas as "Excluded Areas" in the NEW REFORM SCHEME OF INDIA during May 1935 in the British-India Acts 1935. Thus in 1936 the British-India government directed the Governor of Assam Province to act as more or less Care Taker of the Excluded Areas of the inhabited various Naga tribes areas, and therefore to look after their affairs with effect from the 15 April 1937."91 In the White Paper on Naga Integration says, "on January 10, 1929, the Naga Club submitted a political memorandum to the Simon Commission with 20 signatories and demanded exclusion of the Nagas from the ‘Reformed Scheme of India’."92 "The Simon Commission submitted its reports as per the demand of the Naga Club, which was eventually debated upon in the House of Commons in May 1935 resulting in the exclusion of the Naga inhabited areas. From the purview of the provision of the Government of India Act, 1935 and made it as "Excluded Area" (Bill 17 p.56-57). It was neither “INCLUDED” in Indian Union-leaving the administration at the discretion of the Governor of Assam Province."93

“In 1941, Sir Robert Reid, the former DC of Naga Hills District, and the Political Agent of Manipur and later the Governor of Assam, seeing the possibility of forming the

90 Ibid., p.27.
91 Ibid., p.28.
92 White Paper on Naga Integration, Published by Hekhevi Achumi, Secretary (Finance), Naga Hoho, Nagaland, 2002, p.24.
93 Ibid., p.24.
Nagas into a nation, strongly advocated the creation of a “Crown Colony” ENCOMPASSING THE Naga inhabited areas to be controlled directly from the White Hall... The principles of the plan were:

a. The Basis- Consolidation of all the Nagas into a federal structural.
b. The responsibility for the structure – “The Crown Colony”.
c. The system of Governance – The Naga tribal system of self-governance.
d. The means to do it – By formation and extension of Tribal Councils."94

However, it failed as it went unattended. This was revived by Sir Reginald Coupland, in 1946, which is known as “Trust Territory” or “Coupland Plan”. In recognition of the services rendered by the Nagas in World Wars I and II, Sir Reginald Coupland, a British Constitutional expert, revived Sir Robert Reid’s earlier proposal of Crown Colony, and proposed Coupland Plan. The Coupland Plan envisaged the Government of India and Burma would have a treaty with British Government to share the responsibility for the Naga inhabited areas as “Trust Territory.”95 However, it was rejected by the Nagas that “the ‘British must quit’; it was also not agreed by Sir Andrew Clow, the then Governor of Assam.”96 Moreover, labour party in England did not want to retain colony. During the Second World War, many Nagas joined a war against the British imperialists. In the A Brief Historical Account of the Nagas, it says, “the World War II, which was also fought on the Naga Soil left a lasting impact on the minds of the Nagas. For the first time many Nagas joined forces with Japanese Army and the Indian National Army (INA) with the hope to liberate the Naga territory from the British dominance.”97

At the same time, many of the Nagas stood for the British Government at Kohima battle field as a result of this, “Mr. Charles R. Powsey, DC of Kohima rewarded these

94 Ibid., p.25.
96 Ibid., p.26
97 A Brief Historical Account of the Nagas, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights, p.5.
committed gestures of the Naga with the formation of NHDT on April 1, 1945. Mr. Mayangnokcha was the first President. The aims and objects of NHDT were:

- To unite the Nagas;
- To repair the damage done during the World War II;
- To train the people for self-government;
- To encourage the existing tribal council of the Naga tribes;
- To administer their own local affairs; and
- To consider possible reforms."  

"After the formation of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council, all the tribes had a full discussion on the future of the Nagas for creating greater cohesion, and NNC was formed in 1946." This ultimately became the first political organization of the Nagas." In December 1946, the president of NNC Mr. Imti Aliba declared, "the NNC stands for the unification of all Naga Tribes and their freedom...."  

On the eve of transferring power from the British ruler to the Indian government, there was a question over the Nagas. "On 10 February 1947, the NNC requested His Majesty’s Government to appoint India to act as the guardian power over Nagaland for a period of 10 years, at the end of which it was proposed that the question of the political future would be left to the Naga people themselves to decide." In June 1947, the British India government entered into an agreement known as ‘Hydari Agreement’ or ‘9 Point Agreement’. The contention between the Nagas and the Government of India in this ‘Nine Point Agreement’ is Article nine of the Agreement. This Art.9 of Hydari Agreement states that the Governor of Assam as the agent of the Government of Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of this period the Naga National Council will be

98 White Paper on Naga Integration, Published by Hekhevi Achumi, Secretary (Finance), Naga Hoho, Nagaland, 2002, p.25-26.
99 Ibid., p.26
100 A Brief Historical Account of the Nagas, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights, p.5.
101 Ibid., p.5.
102 Ibid., p.5
asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended future period, or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga People arrived at. The execution of Nine-point agreement failed, “India flattered the Nagas into believing that all the material provisions of the ‘9 Point Agreement’ had been incorporated in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.” Had the Hydari Agreement been implemented, today, there would have been a different history of the Nagas.

“On 19 July 1947, the Nagas leaders led by Mr. A.Z. Phizo met Mahatma Gandhi at Delhi and informed that they have resolved to declare Naga independence on 14th August 1947. Then the Nagas declared their independence on 14th August 1947. On first January 1951, in pursuance of the resolution passed by NNC Assembly the Government of India was given official information to send its representatives and observers to Nagaland to witness the holding of plebiscite. In May 1951 NNC held plebiscite, 99% of the Nagas voted for independence. This result surprised the Indian Government but refused to accept it. The Nagas boycotted the general elections of 1952 and 1957. “Since nobody went to vote, they were returned to India empty.”

“On March 30th 1953, Prime Minister J. Nehru visited Kohima for a meeting with Unu the then Prime Minister of Burma. Large congregation gathered to welcome the two Prime Minister with the hope that Nehru would listen to their demand and grievances but he failed and the congregation left. It was after this incidence, Nehru started deploying the armed forces in the Naga territory since then mass arrests and tortures of NNC members and the Naga people.”

“Following the Naga mammoth walk out on March 30, 1953, Disturbed Area Act was imposed on the Nagas Hills on April 4, 1954. The Naga territory was handed over to the Indian Army and draconian laws – the Armed

103 Ibid., p,17.
104 Ibid., p.6.
105 Ibid., p.6
107 A Brief Historical Account of the Nagas, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights, pp, 6-7.
Forces (Special Powers) Regulation, 1958 (No.2) and the Assam Maintenance of Public order (Autonomous Districts) Act 1953- were imposed in the Naga areas.

From the above narrations one could easily perceived that there always was something wrong in dealing with the Nagas. This unwanted situation would have been avoided had there been sincerity in dealing with the Nagas issues. Then there was reign of terror in the Naga inhabited areas.

The first incidence of reign of terror began “on October 18, 1952, the Nagas on a peaceful public demonstration in protest against the reported torture of a minor boy by the police at Dimapur. Mr. Zasibito was not a demonstrator but a judge of the Kohima Center Court and he was shot by a sub-inspector of Indian Police.”

Kaka D. Iralu narrates the events since 1955 to 1958 in his letter to India,

“Those of you who took part in that carnage will remember that out of more than 800 Naga villages existing in those days, more than 600 were burned to ashes with their granaries by Indian army...... Nagaland burnt like a wild forest fire in those years. You may have forgotten, but we can never ever forget the humiliation we suffered as India’s mighty army marched into Nagaland leaving behind them a trail of blood and tears, a people forever desecrated under their rifle butts and boots. Forever etched into our memories are the cries of our women raped to death, our fathers and brothers torture to death for refusing to betray one another. We still remember the sights of green uniforms marching into our villages, burning them to ashes and herding the population into open grounds where in some cases fathers were lined up and shot in front of helpless mothers and children. Yes, we remember the horror of stories of villages like Yingpang, Longpha, Setsu, Matikru, Yangkli and Oinam. Here again the list can go on and on. We also vividly recollect the sight of our whole nation fleeing into the mountains, ravines and jungles of Nagaland, fleeing from burnt villages and granaries. A nation on the run with only the clothes on their bodies, of children crying, unable to comprehend what had happened, of fathers and mothers worrying what to feed their children with. Yes, we remember the relentless army pursuits, the mortar, artillery and aerial bombardments that pursued us even into jungles where we tried to hide. We also clearly remember our children and the elderly dying from starvation and disease. We remember helplessly watching them die, for we had nothing to offer them except water to wet their parched lips. We also remember the offer of general Amnesty as we hid in the jungles. We remember the leaflets that were dropped from helicopters and

108 White Paper on Naga Integration, Published by Hekhevi Achumi, Secretary (Finance), Naga Hoho, Nagaland, 2002, p.31.
109 Ibid., p.7.
Dakotas, the loud speakers blaring the call for us to return to our villages or face further bombardments. Yes, we remember the offer of amnesty that was no amnesty but camps of concentration where we were herded inside barded wires for one year with machine guns pointed at us. There again, we died in our hundreds and thousands. INDIA, we remember all these horrors with bitterness and tears. They still haunt our memories even to this day. The toll in this period alone was in the range of ninety thousand out of population that was then hardly 5 lac...Empowered with inhuman laws like the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953, The Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955, The Armed Forces Special Powers Regulation, 1958, etc, etc. Your soldier invaded Nagaland burning, raping, torturing and murdering innocent villagers. All these heinous crimes were done in the name of Law and Order, sanction by law and protected by law and even immune from any legal prosecution. When we took up arms to defend ourselves, you slapped on us further Acts and regulations like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, the Nagaland Security Regulation Act 1962, etc, etc. He also says, “We hope to God you are not going to enter this peace talks with the same attitudes again. If you do so, this third peace talks will yet again be just another useless exercise like the peace talks of 1964 and 1975. Please admit that the Naga struggle is not American Missionary, Pakistan or China-instigated as you had earlier tried to portray. Please admit that the Naga political struggle is a self-impelled, self-committed Naga people’s movement. The plebiscite of 1951 with 99.9% Naga thumbprints is a clear witness to the fact that the Naga desire and stand bear the signature of the Naga Nation. Copies of this plebiscite are with you as well as the UN. Please admit that the Indo-Naga war that erupted as a result of your refusal to recognize this plebiscite is not an internal law and order problem, but a war between two distinct nations. We would like to make it very clear that this was not a war Nagas wanted. We knew the terrible toll in human lives and sufferings that we would have to undergo. The National Council did everything possible to prevent this war. They even went to Mahatma Gandhi, The father of Indian Nation, to plead with him and were assured that India would never invade Nagaland...But to quote, one time Nehru's Personal Secretary, B.N. Mullick's words:”(Indian) troops moved into Tuensang by October 1955, and the war with the Nagas started from then”. As a result, we are force to take up arms to defend our rights and ourselves. You will remember that the motto of the Naga army was and still is ‘YIELD NOTHING TO FORCE TAKE NOTHING BY FORCE’.

The above words of Kaca D.Iralu shows the Indo-Naga relations and the sufferings of the Nagas in the period between 1955-1958 i.e.three years of 1950s. The Naga movement is more than fifty years now. The suffering of Nagas till today is indescribable.

111 Ibid., pp.60-61.
One fact is that INNER LINE PERMIT OF 1873, i.e., of British era, continues even today. This Inner line permit applies to the states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Those who possessed Inner Line Permit are allowed to enter into these states. This has also been used in such away that those who are suspected to record Human Right Violations in Nagaland or any one suspected to sympathize with the native cause are harassed or never given. These make the things, which are going on there could not be made known to outside world of the Nagas. Further, the foreign missionaries working in northeast were also terminated by 1950s. One reason was that they suspected them of helping the Nagas and others.

Underground Organizations of the Nagas

From April 1953 onwards the Government of India resorted to mass arrest, torture of the NNC members and the Naga people. As a result, A.Z.Phizo and other members of the NNC were forced to go underground. And declared the “Naga Federal Republic” on the March 22, 1956 and organized the “Naga Home Guard” to defend the Sovereignty of Nagaland.” Then, proxy-war began between the government of India and the Nagas led by Naga Federal Republic. For the Nagas the period between 1953 and 1958 is remembered as one phase of reign of terror. If one hears the story of what happened to the Nagas during this period, I am sure there will be tears to the listeners. So, far nobody has written exact picture of this period, of course many have touched the sufferings of the people during this period, for instance, Kaka D. Iralu- I have included one excerpt from his book in the previous heading. In A Brief Historical Account of the Nagas, it writes, “the Nagas experienced a reign of terror, as many innocent villagers, church leaders, became victims of the armed forces. The security forces uprooted and burned down many villages and churches and rendered thousands homeless. These atrocities of the security forces were brought to the notice of the government of India.”

113 Ibid., p.7.
Owing to the worsening situation in the Naga areas, in 1956 Nagas Peace Committee was formed. The first Naga People's Convention was held in August 1957, which proposed the creation of Naga Hills Area comprises of Naga Hills district and Tuensang to be under the external affairs ministry. This proposal came into effect in December 1957. The third Naga People's Convention held at Mokokchung in October 1959 decided to propose that Nagaland state within Indian Union be created, which to be under the control of the External Affairs Ministry. In July 1960, Naga delegations and Prime Minister in New Delhi reached the Sixteen Points Agreement. On 1st August 1960, it was announced in the parliament by the Prime Minister to create Nagaland state and on 1st December 1963 Nagaland state, the 16th state of Indian Union, was inaugurated by President RadhaKrishnan. The Naga Federal Government denounced the created Nagaland state. This did not improve the situation. So with the initiation from the church leaders, the Peace Mission was formed. On February 1964, B.P. Chaliha, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Shanker Rao Deo and Rev. Michael Scott were nominated for the Peace Mission. But Shanker Rao Deo declined it. The three members of the Peace Mission were successful in bringing cease-fire between the Government of Indian forces and the Naga Federal government and followed by series of peace talks between them but this ended abruptly. The members of this peace committee were suspected and ruthlessly treated by the Indian Government. After the failure of the peace initiatives, the undeclared war or proxy -war continued between the Nagas and Indian Government. This resulted into severe sufferings of the Nagas and the Government also paid heavily. Thus, peace path was pursued again in the mid 1970s.

The outcome of peace initiatives in 1970s was, on 10th and 11th November 1975, the Shillong Accord was signed between the Government of India represented by L.P. Singh Governor of Nagaland and six members of underground organization. However, the Nagas outrightly rejected the Shillong Accord. The NNC and Federal Government

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114 Ibid., p.7.
115 Ibid., p.7.
116 Ibid., p.8.
also condemned the Shillong Accord. This Shillong Accord is regarded as a betrayal to
the Nagas by a handful of Nagas. Thus, the Shillong Accord came to be nothing.

The refusal of this peace accord led to the emergence of the National Socialist
Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980. But it split up into two factions in 1988– National
Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issak-Muivah) and National Socialist Council of
Nagaland (Kaplang). Today, there are four groups i.e. after Shillong Accord viz., Naga
National Council headed by Adino, Naga Federal Government headed by V. Yali,
National Socialist Council of Nagaland headed by Issak-Muivah and National Socialist
Council of Nagaland headed by Kaplang. The main objective of these groups is same i.e.,
to achieve sovereignty of the Nagas’ land or Naga Ancestral Homeland or Nagalim,
which is compact and contiguous. It was divided by successive rulers between two
countries viz., India and Myanmar: In India, they are, now, in four states - Arunachal
Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, and Nagaland and in Myanmar Sagaing sub -division and
Kachin state. The movement is making a progress. In 1997, cease-fire agreement was
signed between the Government of India and NSCN-IM. The ‘Indo- Naga Peace Talks’
between NSCN-IM and Indian Government since 1st August 1997 is still going on. In
1997, after decades of bitter fighting, the two sides declared a cease-fire and over the last
eight years they have had 41 rounds of talks.118 In Come, Let us Wage Peace, the three
principles of engagement are: 1. Unconditional 2. At a highest level i.e., at the Prime
Ministerial level 3. In the third country.119

In the process of ‘Talks’ between Government of India and the National Socialist
Council of Nagaland (IM), “the Government of India recognized the ‘Unique History and
Situation of the Nagas’ on 11th July 2002”.120 This is the first time in history the leader or
the government of India has recognized the uniqueness of Naga history.121 “The then
Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee said that ‘the Naga political history

120 See Ibid.
121 BBC Hard Talk with Th. Muivah, General Secretary National Socialist Council of Nagalim, 29th April 2005,p.2.
has its own unique that requires proper understanding towards bringing political settlement'. He said this during his official visit to Kohima on 27 October 2003. Mr. Th. Muivah, General Secretary, NSCN (IM) also made a public announcement at Dimapur Airport on 14th December, 2004 that 'the Naga political settlement will be made on the basis of the uniqueness of the Naga history'. In a Memorandum submitted to the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh by the Naga Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assembly from Manipur, "At outset, we the undersigned democratically elected Naga leaders, wish to express our deep appreciation to the Government of India (GOI) for acknowledging the "Unique History and the Situation of the Nagas" and progress of the talks in the right direction."

Civil Organizations of the Nagas

The Naga civil organizations, which work for the protection and promotion of the Nagas' interests, are noted down in the followings:

1. The Naga Hoho

It is an apex body of different Naga tribes/Hohos. "The Naga Hoho is a federation of all Naga tribes and is the third institution of the Nagas." The first institution is the Naga Village, "The Naga Village is a unit of peoples' sovereignty and is the first institution of the Naga." "The Naga tribe is the second institution of the Nagas. It is an institution of a group of villages of one language known as Hoho and it has been in existence since time immemorial. Every Naga tribe has its own tribe organization with functions without any external interference, not even from another Naga tribe. There are

123 Memorandum submitted to the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh by the Naga Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assembly from Manipur, for strengthening the ongoing peace negotiation between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM), New Delhi, May 27th, 2005.
124 White Paper on Naga Integration, Published by Hekhevi Achumi, Secretary (Finance), Naga Hoho, Nagaland, 2002, p. IX.
125 Ibid., p.IX.
altogether 66 (Sixty six) Naga tribes and sub-tribes in India and Myanmar.\textsuperscript{126} This excludes some of unrecognized tribes of the Nagas. “Naga Hoho was formed on 25\textsuperscript{th} of June 1994 at Wokha and its constitution was adopted during March 11& 12, 1998 sessions at Zunheboto. The Naga Hoho is a tribe-based apex body of the Nagas under the traditional system and practice of the Naga people. The main objective of the Naga Hoho is to uphold the solidarity of the Nagas, to rebuild the Naga family, to safeguard and protect the Naga system and tradition, to promote the social, culture, economic and political heritage and to facilitate early settlement of the Naga issue.”\textsuperscript{127}

2. The Naga Students Federation (NSF)

The Naga Students Federation (NSF) is an apex Naga students’ organization. It is composed of the Naga tribes’ students’ organizations.

3. The Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR)

The Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) was founded on 9 September 1978, at Delhi by the members of the Naga community resident, then at the time. It was in response to the long felt need for an organized movement for the protection and maintenance of their basic universal human rights.\textsuperscript{128} The Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights takes upon itself the task of initiating organized effort for protecting and enhancing the following.

To ensure and safe-guard:

- The right to life;
- The right to work;
- The right to live together as a people, and unification of all Naga Land;
- The right to hold and communicate ones beliefs;

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p.IX.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p.IX.
\textsuperscript{128} A Brief Historical Account of the Nagas, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights, p.13.
• The freedom of movement, assembly and association;
• Free access to all places of learning;
• Maximum participation of the people in the decision or decisions affecting their lives;
• Freedom from socio-economic exploitation, political domination and military repression;
• Against anti-democratic practices and the dismantling of institution and social values which legitimize and perpetuate these within our society;
• Against the practices of arbitrarily arrest, detention, torture, execution, and the use of unconventional weapons; and
• Against the imposition of undesirable alien legal systems and socio-cultural concepts and ways of life.¹²⁹

4. The Naga women organizations

There are Naga women organizations in every Naga tribes. They have an apex bodies in their respective states. However, according to the sources available there is no apex body encompassing all the apex Naga women organizations of the states in Northeast India. In Nagaland, the apex women organization is Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA). It was formed in 1984 at Kohima. In Manipur, an apex Naga women organization is called as ‘Naga Women’s Union, Manipur’ (NWUM). “It was established in December 1993 in Kohima and received immediate recognition from United Naga Council (UNC). The NWUM and the Mothers’ Association (NMA) started their association since 1995. The Union is the apex body comprising of all the women of Naga tribes of the state.”¹³⁰The Constitution of the Naga Women’s Union, Manipur, which was adopted on 7th January 1994, specified their aims and objective of the NWUM:

1. To stand for the rights and dignity of the Naga women in general.
2. To promote the traditional values.

¹³⁰ See Raisunriang, (Newslink), Naga Women’s Union, Manipur, Senapati District, Manipur, 7th issue, 2004, pp.1-5.
3. To promote education of Naga women and women in general.

4. To improve the living standard of the Naga society.

5. To educate ourselves physically, mentally, socially and spiritually by conducting awareness programmes training both short and long terms.

6. To undertake all such other activities which are as conducive to the attainment of all or any of the objective of the Union.\textsuperscript{131}

5. The United Naga Council (UNC)

It is an organization of all the Naga tribes of Manipur. It is for the protection and promotion of the Nagas’interest in Manipur. It is an apex body of Naga organizations in Manipur. It is working under the Naga Hoho.

The Kukis’ Movements

The Kuki uprisings or rebellions were witnessed during the British ruled in India, the most important and serious uprising was the ‘Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919’. However, these uprisings ended in failures despite their stiff resistant against the ruler. The Kuki movements, after Indian independence differed in many aspects to that of sporadic rebellions. The air of ethnic nationalism of mid 19\textsuperscript{th} century also touches the Kukis though persistence mass movement with persistence goals lacked in their movements. However, there have been some sorts of Kuki ethnic movements with their demands, which are within the Constitution of India. Recently, Kuki undergrounds have also emerged with a demand for Kuki homeland. With this backdrop, Kuki movements will be discussed, which will be under two headings viz., Civil Organization /over ground and underground movements.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{The Constitution of the Naga Women Union, Manipur, Senapati District, Manipur, 1994, p.1.}
Civil Organizations of the Kukis

The existence of Kuki National Assembly (KNA) traced their origin to Kuki Chiefs' Association of 1935-36. This association was formed with an objective to promote and protect the interest of the Chiefs. They demanded the abolition of 'pothang', begar system and fight against the corrupt Lambus i.e. the hills’ peons. Kuki National Assembly was officially established on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1946, with Mr. Zavum Misao Chief of Tongkoi village and T. Kipgen as secretary.<sup>132</sup> In October 1946, the KNA declared their future policies, “taking into consideration the various aspects of the vexing problems of the hills and the valley it is the desire of the Kuki National Assembly to announce that the Kukis should come under the Darbar provided the conditions are satisfactory but failing to obtain satisfactory condition, the Kukis regretfully, will have to follow footsteps of their hill brethren in demanding full secession. The problem they upheld was on the Land ownership”.<sup>133</sup> “Its activity started since then,” says S.K. Ray.<sup>134</sup> He further says, “The nature and activities of the KNA was colored by its own ethnic consideration”<sup>135</sup> though “it is perceptible that the ethnic based organization - KNA had no big mass base.”<sup>136</sup> These show that KNA was the first sort of organization formed on the eve of India’s independence i.e., on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1946. The policies and the objectives of Kuki National Assembly since its inception revealed that it was for the welfare of the Kuki communities. Right from its formation, it was concerned for the land including land settlement between the Kukis and the Nagas. Looking into the prevailed situation on the eve of India’s independence and the Kukis, KNA did some remarkable for the Kukis except that persistence policies and goals lacked to achieve it. Further, the KNA did not represent the voices of Kukis masses as it was dominated by the Chiefs of Thadous and connected families. It was also mainly to protect and demand chieftains’

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 118-119.
<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 113.
<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 116.
<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 121.
interest, of course, to certain extend the Kuki masses were also touched. KNA, later on, became a recognized political party.

In 1960, a memorandum was submitted to Prime Minister of India by the KNA, in which they demanded the Kuki state. In 1970, “Kuki Chiefs Zonal council voiced a demand for a separate district for the Kuki people.” KNA also supported them. Thus, KNA and Kuki Chiefs' Zonal Council in collusion demanded separate district for the Kukis but somehow it was not achieved, as the Center Government did not want to give a district naming after tribe or ethnic-Kuki. KNA till 1975 was not a political party, it was recognized as a political party only in 1975 by the state of Manipur. According to L. Jeyaseelan, “Actually, the KNA is a regional party which (jurisdiction is said to be the whole of North-East India) has the unique distinction of being the only government recognized tribal political party in Manipur. However, due to lack of a clear-cut or consistent policy and leadership, it is not successful as it should be. Hence, it has become only a means of electioneering for the Thadou Kukis.”

Due to some misunderstanding among some of the cadres of the party; T.N. Haokip, one of the main pillars of the party broke away from KNA and formed Kuki National Assembly Democratic (KNAD).

Today, there are many Kuki organizations working for the protection and promotion of the Kukis. The most important are: Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) Kuki Students' Organization (KSO) and Kuki Peoples' Forum for Human Rights (KPFHR), etc.

1. Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM)

Kuki Inpi Manipur was formed during the Special Kuki Tribal Leaders' Meet at Kuki- Inn, Imphal, on 29-6-1993, attended by 232 leaders of the tribes of Manipur. In this confabulation, the need for an organization was felt due the prevailing circumstances

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137 Ibid., p.12.
139 Ibid., p.195.
particularly the Naga-Kuki violent conflict. "Taking due from the various speakers he (Convenor) made it known that there were three proposals for the name of the organization as below- (1) KUKI INPI (2) KUKI SECURITY COUNCIL (3) KUKI ZOMI COUNCIL. When "KUKI INPI" was being announced, there were some practical suggestions from the floor that "Manipur" should be added, and accordingly KUKI INPI MANIPUR (KIM) was unanimously adopted. And thus the convenor announced reviving of the old institution."\(^{140}\) The Resolution no.4 passed during this confabulation writes- 'the Kuki Inpi Manipur be authorized to bring all the Kuki Tribal Groups together in all matters affecting the community as a whole. It is further resolved that all organizations working for the welfare and safety of the Kukis should work only AFTER having full understanding with the KUKI INPI-MANIPUR.\(^{141}\) "Kuki Inpi is not a political party in a formal sense but can say a lot about politics and it is intended to be a storehouse for all shades of opinion which could be processed for the benefit of the people."\(^{142}\)

The Kuki Inpi is also found in the states of Nagaland and Assam, etc. According to the K. Changsan, ‘Kumpipa’ is an apex body of Kuki Inpi in different states of North East India. The present president of ‘Kumpipa’ is Athong Limthang Sompijang. The present president of Kuki Inpi Manipur is P. Gangte, Kuki Inpi of Assam is V.Changsang and Kuki Inpi Nagaland is Asat Doungel\(^{143}\).

"In a press release on 13 March 1994, the Kuki Inpi of Nagaland categorically stated that the Kukis of Nagaland are not a part of the Kuki movement that is taking place elsewhere."\(^{144}\) According to P.S. Haokip, "The Kuki National Organization explicitly states that issues concerning Kukis in Nagaland are separate from those related to Kuki in other parts, such as in present day Manipur, Assam, Tripura, and Burma."\(^{145}\)

\(^{140}\) See The Paper Anniversary souvenir of the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), 1994, the Souvenir Committee of KIM, 1994, editorial pages.
\(^{141}\) Ibid., p.4.
\(^{142}\) The Address of the President, Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) on the occasion of the First Session of KIM Assembly on the 1st MAY, 1995, Department of Communication, Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), 1995, p.2.
\(^{143}\) An excerpt from an interview of K.Changsang, Kohima, Nagaland.
\(^{145}\) Ibid., p.23.
2. Kuki Students’ Organization (KSO)

The Kuki Students’ Organization is an apex organization of the Kuki Students’ Organizations. If ones look at many of the Kuki Civil Organizations, Kuki Students’ Organization (KSO) stands apart amongst many of the Kukis’ Civil Organizations particularly for surviving till today despite many ups and downs. “The Kuki Students’ Organization (KSO) was formed in the year 1979 bearing registration no.2991 at Imphal. It was established to unite and look after the general interest of all the students of all Kuki tribes and sub-tribes. It was also meant to connect all the Students of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (CHIKIM) tribes. The KSO with its General Headquaters (GHQ) in Tuiboung-Lamka, Churachandpur, Manipur, has branches and units in all parts of the country, branches like Shillong, Guwahati, Kohima, Delhi, Calcutta, Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune, etc. Though primarily founded for the benefit of students’ fraternity, the KSO has also time and again addressed the needs of the general public, especially that of the CHIKIM tribes. A new constitution was adopted at Haipi village in the Sadar-Hills in 1992. In 2000, the KSO, HQ had set up the office of the General Heaquaters as the apex body of all KSO branches and units. Thenceforth, KSO Manipur ceased to exist, and in its place KSO (GHQ) was formed (2000-2002).”

Underground Organization of the Kukis

The late 1980s show emergence of Kuki militants for the first time. Prior to this, the Kukis never had their own militants. The Kukis joined Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1960s till Mizo Peace Accord was signed in 1980s and Naga National Council (NNC) with its armed wing Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) since its formation till today many of them are there in various Naga underground organizations. “During the last one year many Kuki militants outfits have been formed. Today, there are more than 

146 An excerpt from an interview of Mr. Donny, Information &Publicity Secretary of Kuki Student Organization (KSO).
half a dozens organization such as Kuki National Army (KNA), Kuki National Force (KNF), Kuki Commando Force (KCF), Kuki Front Council (KFC), Kuki Defence Force (KDF), Kuki Independent Army (KIA), Chin-Kuki Revolutionary Force (CKRF). Most of these organizations are supposedly fighting for Kuki Home-Land. While the KNO and KNA are demanding an autonomous state for the Kukis in Sagaing division of Myanmar, the KNF and KDF want a Kukis homeland comprising the whole of Chandel district, the south western part of Ukhrul district, the Sadar Hills area of Senapati district, the south eastern part of Tamenglong district, parts of Churachandpur, and parts of the valley including Imphal, Bishnupur, and Thoubal districts and Kukis inhabited areas in Nagaland and Assam. To add to the above mentions Kuki underground organizations are – Reorganization and Confederation of Kukis (ROCK) with an armed wing Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA) and United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF). Some of the important Kuki underground organizations are discussed below:

1. The Kuki National Assembly (KNA)

“Mr. Henglen, President of KNO (with its armed wing called Kuki National Army) claims ‘his organization was formed on 5th August 1987’. Thus, Kuki National Army was established in 1987-8. It is “primarily based at Myanmar border.” Tarapot says that “underground Kuki National Army (KNA), aims at achieving an independent sovereign Kukis state by carving out the Kuki –populated areas of Myanmar and some portions of Thoubal, Ukhrul and Chandel district of Manipur where Kukis have settled over the past decades.” The president of KNO writes, “Kuki-Gam (Land of Kukis) is located half in present Burma and the other half in India. The area in Burma (Myanmar) exists in the present Sagaing Division of Burmese territory with its boundaries as Chindwin River in the east, India in the west, Nan-ta-Lait River in North, Myitta River also called Manipur River in south. The area which falls under India are,

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148 ‘Manipur; the Kuki vs. the Nagas’, The Hindu, 9th April 1993.
150 Ibid., p.171.
namely, Churachandpur District, Chandel district, Sadar Hills, Tamenglong district, Ukhrul district in Manipur state and NC Hills and Karbi Anglong in Assam.”\(^{151}\)

2. Kuki National Front (KNF)

Kuki National Front (KNF) according to chairman Nehlun, his “organisation was established on 18 May 1988 in Molnoi. The objective of KNF is Kukiland in Manipur. The resolution of KNF stated that it is “resolved that 3½ districts of Manipur shall be made as Kukiland and 4½ district be left for the Manipur so that there shall not be disharmonies between old, new and modern Kukis and other neighbours.”\(^{152}\) Kuki National Front (KNF) split into two factions—one group known as Kuki National Front—president (KNF-P), and Kuki National Front-Military Council (KNF-MC). Both the factions have a common aim of fighting for a ‘separate state for the Kukis to be known as ‘Kukiland.’\(^{153}\) “The Kuki National Front (KNF) and Kuki Defence Force (KDF) want a Kuki homeland comprising the whole of Chandel district, the south western part of Ukhrul district, the Sadar Hills area of Senapati district, the south eastern part of Tamenglong district, parts of Churachandpur District and parts of the valley including Imphal, Bishnupur and Thoubal district and Kuki inhabited areas in Nagaland and Assam.”\(^{154}\)

3. Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA)

“K. Hangsing formed the Reorganization and Confederation of Kukis (ROCK) with an armed called Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA) on 29th December 2000 at C.Aison village in Sadar Hills (east) along with colleagues of about 30. Its aim and objective is sovereignty for Kukiland which comprises India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Secondly, to unite the scattered Kukis all over in North East India (India), Chin Hills (Myanmar), Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh), etc., thirdly, to revive their old


\(^{152}\) ‘KNF call boycott of Indian Republic day’, *The Freedom*, 17th January 1993.

\(^{153}\) Ibid.

independent status they had enjoyed earlier, which is to free the Kukis from imperialism and colonialism of Indian Government and fourthly, it is also for the preservation of Cultural Identity of the Kukis."  

4. United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF)

S.S.Haokip formed United Kuki Liberation Front in January 2000. Its aims and objectives are: Kuki re-unification and for the peace and harmony of the Kukis and Nagas. This organization seems to be formed to bring an end to the Naga-Kuki violent conflict and bring a lasting peace and harmony in their relations. It was the first Kuki underground organization to take initiatives in bringing peace and harmony between the Nagas and the Kukis by entering alliance with NSCN (IM). When SS.Haokip parted from conventional path of this period and entered alliance with NSCN (IM), many Kukis and Nagas applauded the founder and the organization as the Naga-Kuki violent ethnic conflict was dragging on affecting both the ethnies. Later on, NSCN and other Kuki militants also signed an agreement for ceasefire and to end Naga-Kuki Conflict.

The Kukis undergrounds are divided broadly into two- Kuki Nationl Council (KNC) and outside Kuki National Council. "Kuki National Council (KNC) was formed in April 2003. It is a common platform for Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF), Kuki National Front (T. Samuel), Kuki National Front (Germany), Hmar People Council (Democracy). KNC holds its meetings annually but if any, exigency arises, it holds meeting anytime." According to recent news reports, "KNC is deadly against KNA, which is considered Myanmar based and Indian Government stooge. KNC issued statements that they are going to flush out KNA from Churachandpur and other parts of India".

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155 Excerpt from interview of K. Hangsing, the founder, and L. Jacob Khongsai, Administrative Secretary of KRA, dated, 12th April 2004.
156 Excerpt from an interview of SS.Haokip.
157 Excerpt from an interview of L. Jacob Khongsai, Administrative Secretary of KRA, dated: 12th April 2004.