CHAPTER VI

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In the previous Chapter we have shown that when distinct tribal identities are brought within a common political arena as socio-political entities, inter-tribal politics come into play. Such an interplay of tribal politics in the Naga society finds manifestations in the Naga national movement, state politics and other social organisations, including those related to the Church and student bodies. We shall try to understand the nature of tribal interplay within these socio-political areas. Also by looking into specific cases of tribal conflicts and confrontations, we shall try to bring to light the consequences of inter-tribal politics for the Naga society. It may be noted that the number of such cases available for analysis are by far too many. We shall only choose some important ones for illustrating our points within the ambit of this Chapter.

We have shown that the formation of the state of Nagaland has catered to a centralised resource arena for the Naga tribes. This does not mean that the inter-tribal relations are to be seen only in this context. It is already seen that the formation of tribal identities took place much before statehood. The emergence of Nagaland may be said to be a direct outcome of
the Naga national movement which was led by the NNC.¹ Naga nationalism encompasses "all Naga inhabited areas between Chinwin in Burma and the Brahmaputra in Assam", as Misra puts it. This is quite true, as many Naga tribes are left outside the boundaries of the state of Nagaland. Our study is not necessarily confined to Nagaland, and it includes even those Naga tribes which may be found outside of it.

The evolution of a tribe-based socio-political system and the conditions under which inter-tribal politics occur resulted in the demand for new tribal entities. Before going any further, it may be appropriate to indicate the processes which give rise to the emergence of tribes that become socio-political units of distinct identity within the Naga society.

In view of the preceding Chapters, we may say that prior to the coming of the British, there was no tribally organised socio-political or territorial entities. The collective terms used to describe various groups and sub-groups³ were not universal in usage, but localised. This is why different groups have different names for the same group. The

tribal names which came into formal use had various origins. For example, let us take the case of the Rengma tribe. This group was known unto themselves as Njonyu. It had a sub-group comprising of Nsunyu, Tseophenyu, Kotsunyu villages called Ethiyia. The term Rengma is said to have come from an encounter of a Britisher with a villager from this area. It is told that in order to frighten the Britisher, this villager introduced himself as reme, meaning 'nightmare' in Rengma.\(^4\) In the same way the tribal name Konyak is said to have come from a man who told a Britisher that he was Khaonyak, which means 'man' in his dialect. The Konyaks are known to themselves as Wanchos and in Arunachal Pradesh, they are still called by this name.\(^5\) However, we find that not all British names have been retained. The tribe which the British called Kalyu Kengyu, which means slate-roofs, after the way they built their houses, came to be known in their own term as Khiamnniungan, meaning 'great source of water'.\(^6\) Also there are tribes wanting to change their names. The Sema tribe has applied for a formal change of its name through a government

4. Source: Thomas Kent. See Interview at Appendix B. It is difficult to find proof of this, but people do talk about them and may be in many varied versions. Anyway, this serve our purpose because we only want to illustrate that names like these are given by outsiders and that they are in no way cognatic.


notification, from that of the British designated Sema to the traditional Sumi. 7

We can understand that tribal identity formations took place on the lines of tribal names given by anthropologists and British administrators. These names were both of traditional origins and accidental christenings. The tribal boundaries of these tribes, we may say, were determined by the following factors: identification on the basis of anthropological and administrative ascription; the level of tribe consciousness dissemination; and influences of inter-tribal organisational conditions. It may be said that the need or the demand for the formation of new tribal identities emerges due to the quintessential condition raised by the tribe-based socio-political system which survives on the interplay of tribes.

Verrier Elwin observes that "the tribal groups of Nagaland are forming new affiliations and using names hitherto unknown to anthropology." 8 We shall now elaborate on this and show how as a result of inter-tribal politics, the demand for the formation of new tribal alliances and identities emerged.

There may be some truth in what B. B. Ghosh has to say. We quote:

"Originally Nagas were not known by the names of the tribes as they are known now, but by the name of a group of villages. Gradually they have settled down to the tribe names as they are found now, but still then the process of amalgamation or separation is going on. For example, Phoms were formally included in Konyak tribe but now they are separate. In as late as 1948, some three tribes such as Chakrima, Khezhama and Sangtam together formed into one tribe called Chakhesang. This name was formed by taking Cha of Chakruma, Khe of Khezhama and Sang of Sangtam." 9

What Ghosh says here, may not be a general rule for the emergence of all Naga tribes. But it clearly demonstrates that the Naga tribes as they exist today are not entirely based on ethnicity. Some tribes have obvious political origins. To understand this further, we shall study the Chakhesang tribe in detail.

Wezhulhi Krome, a founding member of the Chakhesang tribe claims that the name was first coined on 10th January, 1945, at old Phek village, in a meeting attended by members from all the three groups -- Chakru, Kheza and Sangtam, represented in the acronym Chakhesang. He is of the opinion that the formation of the Chakhesang tribe was necessitated by the tribal pattern of organisation adopted by the NNC. At this time there were no tribal animosity. It was only the tribal system of administration envisaged by the British and its adoption by the NNC which

required the Nagas to be grouped into various tribal entities.\textsuperscript{10}

Of the three groups forming Chakhesang, Chakru (also known as Chokri) and Kheza were known to early anthropologists as Eastern Angamis.\textsuperscript{11} When this new tribe was formed, many Chokri villages such as Viswema, Kezoma and Khuzama, etc. were left out. These Chokri villages continue to remain within the Angami tribe till today. Not all Kheza villages too could become part of the Chakhesang tribe. Jessami, Krowemi and Khotsami, which are Kheza villages were left out. These villages fall outside the boundary of Nagaland and they are in Manipur. Instead three Poumai villages -- Zemai, Chobama and Zeluma became part of the Chakhesang tribe, as they fall within Nagaland. The bigger bulk of the Poumai people lives in Manipur.\textsuperscript{12} This Poumai group, as we can see, are not represented in the acronym.

The third group in Chakhesang, the Sangtams were earlier referred to as Eastern Rengmas by writers. This group claims that they were wrongly called Sangtams (which is the name of a tribe in Tuensang district). J. P. Mills identified the villages of Meluri, Sehunyu and Lephori as Eastern Rengmas and Sangtams as their neighbours on the South.\textsuperscript{13} This group is the

\textsuperscript{10} Wezhulhi Krome, Ex - M. L. A., (Chakhesang), See Appendix B.
\textsuperscript{11} Sipra Sen, \textit{Tribes in Nagaland}, (New Delhi, 1987), p. 47.
\textsuperscript{12} Tsopelo Kapfo (Kheza), See Appendix B.
\textsuperscript{13} Also see \textit{Statistical Atlas of Nagaland}, (Kohima, 1991), pp. 50 - 54.
smallest of the three constituting Chakhesang. They began to call
themselves as Puchori. This is again an acronym representing
three clans, namely, Pu, Cho and Ri.\(^{14}\) The Puchori group sought
separation from the Chakhesangs and approached the Government for
recognition as a formal tribe. This was opposed by the
Chakhesangs. But the Home Department of the Government of
Nagaland has already issued a Notification recognising the
Puchori as a separate tribe in 1990.\(^{15}\) Even then, till today the
name Chakhesang is still retained and has not been changed due
to this development.

Within the Chakhesang tribe there were four language
groups, namely, Chokri, Kheza, Poumai and Puchori. All these
languages are not 'inter-intelligible.' Of these Chokri and Kheza
are the two major groups. Their languages are used in schools and
also in All India Radio programmes. But because they belong
to the same recognised tribe, the Education Department has
placed them under the same Language Officer. This post has been
held by a Chokri and this has caused resentment to the Kheza
group. They feel that this post should be held by the two groups
alternately.\(^{16}\)

14. Visier Sanyu, "The History of Village formation Among the
    Angami Nagas: A Case Study of Kohima and Khonoma
    Villages", (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis Submitted to
    dated 19th April, 1990.
16. Stated by Ruluonuyiu Pusa, Language Assistant, Directorate of
    School Education, Kohima, in a discussion on 14th
    April, 1994.
In All India Radio, Kohima, the Chakhesang programmes are broadcast alternately in both Chokri and Kheza. Of these two languages, Kheza is quite different but Chokri speaking people can understand Angami, a language which is also used by All India Radio, Kohima, and hence, its use seems superfluous. The Station Director, Miss V. Sekhose, clarified this by saying that the tribal pattern of the Nagaland Government has been followed. By this she means that Chakhesang language has been used because it is a recognised tribe, separate from the Angamis. In fact, language seems to be the real problem facing the Chakhesangs today. Neither the Kheza nor the Chokri group is willing to accept the language of the other. This is why they combinedly use the Angami Bible and Hymnal in their churches.

The Chakhesang tribe proves beyond all doubts that this tribe is not an ethno-lingual group, but it is a political entity, emerging out of the socio-political environment created by the processes of socio-economic and political changes in the Naga society. In other words, the emergence of inter-tribal politics is partly or largely responsible for the emergence of new tribes.

Another tribe which deserves mention is the Zeliangrong. This tribal name is derived from the prefixes of

17. Stated by Miss V. Sekhose, Station Director, All India Radio, Kohima, in a discussion on 20th April, 1994.
three individual tribal names -- Zemai, Lingmai and Rongmai.¹⁹ These three groups claim to be descendants of three brothers of the same parents who migrated together.²⁰ Earlier the Zemais and the Liangmais were known to the British as Kacha Nagas, and the Rongmais as Kabuis.²¹ There is also the contention that Kabuis and Rongmais are two separate groups.²² The Zelaingrongs can be found to be inhabiting the South-Western part of Nagaland, the Tamenglong area in the South Western part of Manipur and also the North Cachar Hills of Assam.²³

In Nagaland, this tribe is officially recognised as Zeliang,²⁴ as the Rongmai group belongs to Manipur. The coming together of the Liangmais, Zemais and Rongmais as Zeliangrong is said to have taken place on 15th February, 1974, with a view to furthering their economic, social, educational and political advancement.²⁵ Hence, we know that their interests were far beyond ethnicity. The Zeliangrong people went on to demand a common administrative unit curved out of their inhabited areas in all the three states on Nagaland, Assam and Manipur, in the form of a Homeland, from the Government of India.²⁶

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²⁰. Ibid., p. 4.
²¹. Ibid., p. 5.
²⁵. Ibid., p. 127.
²⁶. Ibid., p. 159.
The Naga tribes of Tuensang represent another case of supra-tribal regional separatism. These tribes, namely, Chang, Yimchunger, Phom, Sangtam and Khienmungan are in the present day Tuensang district of Nagaland. However, they were not part of the Naga Hills District of Assam in the pre-statehood period. At the time of India's independence there were uncontrolled areas belonging to these tribes. It was only in 1951, that they were consolidated into the administration of the Tuensang Sub-division, which was brought under North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA), presently Arunachal Pradesh.27

Thus the Tuensang district had a political history of being at one time separate from the rest of Nagaland. The demand for the unification of the Tuensang division of NEFA, with the Naga Hills District into a single administrative unit, to be called the Naga Hills Tuensang Area came about in a resolution adopted at the Naga People's Convention of 1957.28 After statehood, arrangements were made so that Tuensang could be represented in the Legislative Assembly for an interim period of ten years, with six members indirectly elected by its Special Regional Council.29

These historical developments have their significance

for the eruption of a separatist movement from the tribes of Tuensang district. On the basis of being an unadministered area in the time of the British, they began to claim being a Free land Area. As a result, the Tuensang District Students' Federation (TDSF) was formed, and in 1972, the student bodies of the Tuensang tribes withdrew from the all Naga body, the Naga Students' Federation, (Although, later the Yimchungers left the TDSF and rejoined the NSF). This marks the existence of a separate political identity of the Nagas in Tuensang. Recent political developments have even led to the demand by these tribes for separation from Nagaland.30

The question arises as to why these separatist regional bodies such as the Zeliangrong and the Tuensang tribal groups occur and whether inter-tribal politics has any part in it or not. This can be understood in the context of our theoretical postulate that the centralisation of resources leads to inter-tribal conflicts. In the case of the Zeliangrongs, it may be noted that though they are distributed in three different states, the role of each state as a distribution agency of resources is homogeneous. We do admit that the demand for separation may include socio-political reasons other than being entirely economic. The Zeliangrongs, for instance, in their Memorandum to the Government of India, demanding a separate

30. Stated by Toshi Wongtong, TDSF Founding Member, in a discussion on 2nd June, 1994, at Kohima. See Appendix B.
administrative unit, cited reasons ranging from political, administrative, historical and geographical factors to that of common culture, religion, custom and language. However, it is possible to show that the economic factor plays a major role in evoking group sentiments leading to such demands.

Rani Gaidinliu, the leader of the Zeliangrong people, in her meeting with Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, in 1972, clearly stated that the real grievances of her people emanate from the apathetic stand of the state governments regarding their development. She lamented the lack of schools, dispensaries and communication facilities in the Zeliangrong inhabited areas of Assam and Manipur. The fact that there is uneven development may also be true in Nagaland. In his Republic Day address, the Governor of Nagaland, Dr. M. M. Thomas said: "During my visit to Mon and Tuensang district (sic), I got an impression that the people of these districts feel that they are neglected by the Government".

Uneven development is undoubtedly the cause of resentment among the people and it can be said to be a major cause of regional separatism among tribes. The fact that various tribes may feel there is unequal distribution of state resources

32. As quoted in Ibid., pp. 169 - 170.
seems to have its repercussions on inter-tribal relations, the dynamics of which may cause both centripetal and centrifugal tribal political affiliations. As we shall see later, such movements may be led by interest groups within the Naga society.

It can be found that the correlation between the distribution system and the tribe-based Naga society results in tribal infighting which materialises due to the alleged inequitable distribution of resources and the struggle for favourable access to state resources. Such a state of order may have its political implications, especially when the distribution policy of the Government itself is designed for accommodating such elements. The Compact Area Development Scheme of Nagaland Government, for example, leaves much room for politicisation of distribution, as it is drawn up on the basis of Assembly Constituencies, with politicians directly involved in the distribution process. 34 This has been replaced by the District Plan, a scheme which again, is built on the same lines as its precedent. 35

In addition to this, the administrative set-up of the State seem to have been structured on tribalistic patterns. The

34. See Government of Nagaland, Compact Area Development Scheme, 1991, Department of Planning and Co-ordination, Kohima, (Booklet).
districts are carved out on the basis of tribal boundaries. And even where multi-tribal districts exist, demands for separation are coming up. In these districts too, tribes are politically bracketed into different Sub-Divisions. The district of Mokokchung, Wokha, Zunheboto and Mon, are single tribe districts belonging to Ao, Lotha, Sema and Konyak tribes respectively. In multi-tribal districts such as Kohima, we find tribal Sub-Division such as Tsemenyu which is inhabited by the Rengma tribe and Peren which is inhabited by the Zeliangs. Such a tribe-based administrative set-up co-exist with sixty Assembly Constituencies, almost all of which are dominated by a single tribe, except for one or two cross-tribal ones which may occur in urban areas such as Kohima, Dimapur, etc., where there is a mixed population.

The prevailing system, no doubt, has become a boiling cauldron within which inter-tribal conflicts get cooked up at the slightest provocation. Such problems arise when Government distributes on the basis of tribal considerations. The tribal criteria which was relied on by the Government for selection of candidates to the seats under state quota for technical studies was not very well received by all sections of the student

community. This was vehemently opposed by the Angami Students' Union which demanded that selection should be done only on the basis of merit.39 This is how the editor of Nagaland Observer comments:

"This is a serious precedent and could prove dangerous in a state like ours where tribalism frequently rears its head. However, it is not fair. It is no fault of a candidate that he happens to be born in a certain tribe and it would be unfair to deprive an able student because his tribal quota has been filled."40

However, regardless of tribal considerations there is every likelihood that any distribution system may be taken as lopsided by the recipient tribes. The protest launched by the Angami Students' Union, demanding for a review of the list of beneficiaries under the educated unemployed scheme by the District Industries Office, Kohima, is the result of such a case.41 Many tribes feel that equal opportunities are not given by the Government for their development. The Chakhesang Students' Union, Kohima, issued a Press Release, lamenting that there is not a single Head of Department from their tribe in the state capital.42 The Tuensang tribals too feel that they have been deprived of privileges in matters of employment and development

and that the development funds meant for them have been diverted to other areas. 43

It is no wonder that tribal organisations often come to interfere in even the smooth functioning of the Government by meddling in its affairs relating to transfer and posting of public servants or disciplinary actions against them such as suspension from service. The Tuensang District Students' Federation strongly opposed the transfer of a Lower Division Assistant and a Typist, along with their posts from the executive Engineer's office of the Irrigation Department in Tuensang. They called for immediate cancellation of the transfer Orders and threatened to take their own course of action if this was not done. 44 A good example of interference by tribal organisations in the suspension of an officer by the Government comes from the case of Mr. Ato Sangtam, a police officer. The Sema students started an agitation demanding his suspension, alleging that he had atrociously treated two persons from their community. When their demand was acceded by the Government, the United Sangtam Students Conference submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Nagaland, demanding that the suspension Order be revoked. They accused the Semas of turning the case into a communal issue. 45

It will not be wrong to believe that the 'ethnic factor' plays a decisive role in the elections. Mr. Neiphi-u Rio, pointed this out in his assessment of Lok Sabha election in 1991.\(^{46}\) In this election Imchalemba exceeded his nearest rival Shikiho, by 19387 votes in the Constituencies belonging to his own tribe, the Aos; while Shikhiho polled 6519 votes more than Imchalemba in his own Sema Constituencies.\(^{47}\) This tribe-biased voting is made more credible because Nagaland only has a single Lok Sabha seat. The chances for tribal alliances and connivance are more here. Also, despite the tribal Constituencies, there is every likelihood that individuals may choose to vote for the political party in which their tribes have an edge. In the 1993 Nagaland Legislative Assembly Election, the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Mr. S. C. Jamir, an Ao, won nine out of ten seats from the Constituencies falling in Ao area.\(^{48}\)

It can be seen that there is tribal awareness in party leadership. There even exist opinions that the leadership in political parties should be rotated among the tribes. In 1991, when Dr. Setu Liegise, an Angami, contested for party president

post of the Congress (I) party in Nagaland, he justified his candidature by saying that tribes from the districts of Kohima and Phek have not been fairly represented in the party leadership. He voiced that since people from other tribes such as Mr. Hokishe Sema, Mr. Chiten Jamir, Mr. Khyomo Lotha and Mr. Shikiho Sema, have already served as party president, the post should be given to one from the Angami, Chakhesang, Zeliangrong or Rengma tribe.49

Tribal considerations may even bypass all party norms and democratic principles at times. When Mr. Vamuzo had to win a bye-election in 1990, in order to retain his position as the Chief Minister of Nagaland, the Chakhesang Public Organisation went all out to elect him unopposed. Mr. K. G. Kenye, then a minister of State for Irrigation, representing Chizami Assembly Constituency in Phek district, resigned his seat to make way for Mr. Vamuzo.50 On this Mr. Nirendra comments:

"The Chief Minister's earlier decision to contest from Tening, Mr. T. R. Zeliang's stronghold, was spiked when Mr. Vamuzo's Chakhesang tribesmen transformed the issue into one of prestige and would not allow him to contest from any constituency other than Phek district. If Mr. Vamuzo contests at all from Phek district, he is expected to be a consensus candidate in spite of differences existing since the fact that he is the first Chakhesang Chief Minister overrides all other considerations."51

Mr. Kenye's resignation from office is symbolic of his tribal leanings. But he was not alone here. It is quite possible that he was, being junior politician, under pressure from his tribe. This is because the Chakhesangs were so keen on retaining the Chief Ministership that they went to the extent of turning the bye-election into a tribal issue. They crossed all party lines in favour of the candidate from their tribe. As a result the Chakhesang Public Organisation itself came out publicly to mobilise tribal support. It is said that the Chakhesang public leaders even physically attempted at preventing other candidates from filing their nomination papers. 52

It has become evident that Naga politics has always been affiliated with tribalism. There are instances in which major tribes feel sidelined when they are not given a berth in the Cabinet, while minor tribes demand for equal representation in the Council of Ministers. In a letter to Nagaland Post Editor, R. Yanthan, Chairman of the Lotha Hoho, wrote that the fact that a Lotha has not been included in the Cabinet of S. C. Jamir's Ministry has been resented by them. He feels that the Lothas are a major tribe and they should not be marginalised because they equally constitute the state of Nagaland with all the other tribes. 53 Also, some party workers from the Rengma and Zeliang

tribes accused the Chief Minister S. C. Jamir, for not carrying out his commitment to have equal representation of all tribes in his Council of Ministers. The non-inclusion of representations from their tribes in the Council of Ministers was viewed by them as negligence of the weaker sections of the society. These tribal pressures may become effective. It may also become imperative for a Government to react and give in to such pressures for fear of being toppled by dissidents. Mr. S. C. Jamir went on to expand his Ministry and induct five new ministers. After allocation of portfolios, while on his way to Delhi, he is said to have told The Telegraph over telephone that the expansion had been made to grant proper representation to all tribes, and that Mr. Sedem Khaming, was inducted from the hitherto unrepresented Khiemnungan tribe.

Thus, there is a lot of interference in the political processes of the State due to the active politicisation of tribes. Under these circumstances it is difficult to rule out the existence of tribe-biased practices in the political arena and its party system. The behaviour of politicians may be influenced by tribal pressures. This is more so because they need the support of their tribes to stay in power and pursue their own interests. The recent allegation against Mr. K. L.

Chishi, the Finance Minister, making payments amounting to Rs. 1.3 crores, exclusive and preferential in favour of his own tribal district of Zunheboto stands out as a glaring example.\textsuperscript{56} When Mr. Vamuzo was Chief Minister, as opposition member, Mr. S. C. Jamir lashed out at him, accusing the Government of having political reason to develop Phek district which is that of his tribe.\textsuperscript{57} Also, it is not unusual for a member of the Legislative Assembly, to bring up special demands for his tribe in its sessions, like Mr. Azu Newmai, who brought up questions relating to the declaration for their recruitment to Government jobs in the Eight Session of the Assembly.\textsuperscript{58} We may also mention the controversy over the selection of Lumami, as the cite for the Headquarters of Nagaland University. Many feel that this cite was chosen purely on tribal bias as it is in the interior of Nagaland and unfit for the purpose.\textsuperscript{59}

Since the Naga society has evolved such a system in which the tribe has become the nodal socio-economic and political unit, and has become a major determinant in the distribution of shared resources, it is axiomatic that sub-tribal groups would aspire to gain recognised tribe status and create

\textsuperscript{58} Assembly Proceedings, Eight Session, (Second Assembly/ 18th to 29th March, 1971, Assembly Secretariat, Nagaland, (Kohima, 1971), p. 37.
propensity for the proliferation of tribal entities. It is under these circumstances that many new tribes come into existence.

One such tribe is the Phoms. This tribe was formed on the 6th of June, 1952, which is observed every year as the Phom Day. Prior to this they had no tribal identity. They were loosely distributed in different areas of Mokokchung and Tuensang districts, as well as Konyak and Chang areas. A large chunk of Phom people live outside Nagaland, in the Sibsagar district of Assam. It may be noted that the Phoms were an amorphous group of people living in various villages as was the Naga society in the pre-British period. But as civilisation came to them, they might have borrowed the concept of being a tribe from the other Naga tribes which were already well-organised. Earlier, we have already seen that the Chakhesangs were formally part of the Angami tribe. Now, we find that a new tribe call the Puchori has emerged after splitting from the Chakhesangs.

The demand for recognition of new tribes is still continuing among some sub-tribal groups. At present we find the Tikhirs trying to part ways with the Yimchungers, a tribe which claims to be its parent tribe. But the Tikhirs dispute this and asserts its identity as a full-fledged tribe. This controversy got out of hand and erupted into wide-spread clashes in 1989, between the two groups. As a result, the Tikhirs Baptist Church

at Shamator, was also burnt down.61 In a Press Release, the Tikhirs, stated that the Tikhirs cannot be disclaimed from being a tribe just because they are not officially recognised by the Government and other tribal organisations of churches because the Tikhir tribe was created a tribe by God.62

The Naga tribes of Poumai and Mao of Manipur are also facing a problem of the same nature. The Poumai group is refusing to be included within the Mao tribal identity. It is seeking recognition as a separate tribe by pan Naga bodies both in Manipur and Nagaland. The Mao Students' Union objected to the inclusion of three persons from Poumai tribe to the executive body of All Naga Students' Association, Manipur. They claim that the Poumai tribe is legally and officially known as Mao tribe. The Poumais do not accept this and argue that they constitute three-fourth of what the Maos claim to be the Mao tribe. They refused to be called Maos and are seeking recognition from pan-tribal bodies, including the Naga Students' Federation of Nagaland.63

There is all likelihood that tribes which have been formed as a result of certain sub-tribal groups integrating for

collective benefits, may due to the pursuit of parochial interests by individual members again disintegrate. This is because we find that these sub-groups tend to assert their individual identities, and also in some cases even form organisations at their own level. The Zeliangrong which is seeking recognition as a single tribe, consisting of Zemai, Liangmai and Rongmai, has a fourth group, the Kabui, which has been represented within the Rongmai group. But G. G. Kamei, a Kabui Naga, wrote that the Kabuis are the fourth member of the Zeliangrongs, distinct from the Rongmais. He claims that all the four have their identities, including separate dialects of their own. When the Rongmais were accused of disintegrating the Zeliangrongs in forming the Kohima Rongmai Welfare Society, G. G. Gamei, who is also its president, said that it is a temporary organisation and it would stand automatically defunct as soon as the Zeliangrongs as a single tribe finds recognition in the hands of the Nagaland Government. This corroborates our point that the State has a role in the emergence of tribes.

The mushrooming of tribal entities has ushered in a state of affair in which inter-tribal conflict has become inevitable in most cases of societal interaction. There has developed a tendency to interpret almost every individual or

collective social action in tribal perspective. The all-pervasive tribal pattern of organisation in which tribal identities find subsistence are even surfacing at micro-social levels. We find that even in individual colleges, tribal unions are being formed. The Chakhesang Students' Union of Alder College, Kohima; the Dimapur College Ao Students' Union are fine examples. As such, we are tempted to agree with Sebastian Zumvu, when he says that the tribal question plays a vital role in college elections. In Kohima, when residents of Agriculture, Electric and Forest colony, held a meeting on 25th July, 1991, they resolved that one member from each tribe should be represented in their committee.

As tribe consciousness has become a strong bond with the growing importance of the tribe as an interest group, each tribe is beginning to juxtapose itself with the others on the basis of being equal socio-economic and political entities in a larger system. But like any other plural system, such an equilibrium cannot exist and when it is broken tribal conflicts as it appears is bound to ensue. It will not be out of place here, to cite a few cases of tribal conflicts by way of

illustrating our point. It may be noted that there may be umpteen instances of such conflicts and it is beyond the bounds of practicability to cover all of them, except for some important ones.

The Changs and the Konyaks were living together in separate Thinuo of Tobu village since 14th November, 1949, when the village was first formed. When the Government announced the upgradation of Tobu, from that of a Sub-Division to Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters, bringing it within Mon district, the Changs were infuriated because earlier Tobu was within their district, Tuensang. They claimed that their land was being given away to the Konyaks. This led to a bloody tribal war between the Changs and the Konyaks, in which many lives were lost. A similar situation developed between the Angamis and the Semas over the Ghaspani I and II Assembly Constituencies. The Angamis were against the transfer of these two areas from the jurisdiction of Additional Deputy Commissioner, Dimapur, to that of Kuhuboto Sud-Division, which falls in the Sema region.

It may be said that the role of tribes as pressure

groups has become an inevitable outcome of the prevailing system. Since the system is multi-tribal in character, very often we find that pressure input from one group results in counter-pressure from another, giving rise to inter-tribal conflict. The Government is found to have capitulated to such pressures. In the case of the conflict between the Semas and the Sangtams over the suspension of a police officer which we have mentioned earlier, the Government responded to pressure from both the parties by suspending the officer and then withdrawing it. The officer was transferred, but before long, again a suspension Order was served on him. 72 Here, tribalism seemed to have prevailed over the rule of law which is a Liberal Democratic concept.

Tribalisation of service matters are not unusual. The Zeliangrong Students asked for immediate revocation of the suspension order on Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, D. K. Zeliang, blaming the Government of getting rid of a person from a minor tribe to make way for one from a major tribe. 73 The Kohima Town Lotha Women Hoho appealed to the Government to reconsider the relegation of T. C. K. Lotha, from the post of Chief Secretary to a lesser post. 74 When Abong Imlong, was removed from the post of Chief Secretary, the Chang Tribal Council took

it as an insult to their tribe and pressurised him not to hand over charge to the new incumbent. The Government is not given a free hand to consider each case in terms of merit due to tribal pressures.

As the tribal factor has become a strong influence on the socio-economic and political character of the society in Nagaland, it evolves into a tribal system where tribal organisations become more powerful and the dissemination of tribe consciousness is maximised. This is why tribes may take up issues where group interest is not necessarily involved. Mrs. Imtimenla, an Ao lady, was accused of being a drug peddler and was assaulted by a mob. She was arrested and hospitalised for treatment when some unknown gunmen killed her on the 8th of August, 1989. The Kohima Ao Union took up the issue and in a Memorandum, threatened to take the Government to court if it fails to pay a compensation of Rs. 25 (twenty five) lakhs, to the next of kin of the deceased.

The Angamis also took up the case of Pudil Hibo and Vimechol Hibo of Khuzama village. They were allegedly murdered by the Kukis in the village of Taphou. As a result, the Angami

Public Organisation declared that the Angamis shall cease to have peace with the Kuki village of Taphou. The Angami Youth Organisation issued a 'Quit Notice' to all Kukis residing in Angami territory. An indefinite economic blockade of the Imphal-Kohima highway by the Angamis took place. When 'General' Povezo of the 'Federal Government of Nagaland' was assassinated on 20th June, 1995, the Chakhesang Public Committee of Phek town issued a similar 'Quit Notice' to the Tangkhuls for their alleged involvement in the assassination.

The complex nature of tribalism makes it incomparable to similar problems such as communalism. Tribes are closed cognate entities, but communal groups are not -- their membership is liable to change as it is subject to individual choice and cross-communal allegiance is possible. In a tribe or its components of sub-tribes, where a strong tie of common history, ancestry, language and traditional unity is claimed, individual allegiance is not volatile, as it is not likely to occur outside the tribe. This is why communalism may be restricted to communal issues, but tribal issues are apparently all-pervasive. In other words, all tribes are communities, but all communities are not tribes. This could be one reason why the present day multi-tribal

Naga society has become so vulnerable to inter-tribal conflict. This is true not only in the domain of state politics. Even the underground 'Governments' are found to be afflicted with it.

We have already shown that the organisation of Nagas into various tribes first found formal political recognition when they were accorded the status of constituent units of the "Federal Government" which was formed in the process of Naga national movement. This movement has not been without inter-tribal afflictions. We shall examine the consequences of inter-tribal politics on the various organisations, originating out of the Naga national movement and involving it.

There was no political unity among the Nagas prior to the formation of the NNC. At the initial stage, the Naga struggle led by the NNC was largely responsible for the unification of the Naga people. It generated among them a sense of national unity. But with the growth of tribe consciousness, the NNC which was the sole organisation of the Naga national struggle became infested with tribal animosities. As a result factional infighting ensued.

Internal crisis in the NNC started after the failure of six rounds of peace talks with the Government of India in Delhi. On November 1, 1968, Mr. Khughato formed a Revolutionary

Government, becoming its president, with Mr. Scato as Prime Minister. They blamed the policy of the NNC for the failure of the peace talks. But it is apparent that the Semas were not happy with the dominance of the Angamis in the NNC. At the same time, when "General" Kaito Sema revolted, it was purportedly said to be a move against the 'hegemony' of the Angami tribe. Incidentally, this accusation against the Angamis was further strengthened, when in response to the crisis, Mr. Mhasi-u, an Angami, arbitrarily dissolved the 'parliament' and declared himself the head of the Naga 'Government'. Another faction comprising of the Tuensang group, led by Mr. Thongdi Chang, broke away from the 'Federal Government of Nagaland' in 1968 and formed the 'Hongkin Government'. Both these groups surrendered in 1973, thus leaving the NNC, once again in full control over the movement.

But this was to be short lived. On 11th November, 1975, a section of the NNC signed the Shillong Accord, Clause Three, Section One of which is as follows: "The representatives of the underground organisations conveyed their decision, of their own volition, to accept, without condition, the Constitution of India". This created a rift in the NNC. In his speech on the

84. Ibid., p. 132.
85. Ibid., pp. 143 - 144.
86. Luingam Luithui and Nandita Haskar, Nagaland File, (New Delhi, 1984), p. 158.
Twentieth Anniversary of "Naga Independence" on 14th August, 1976, Isak Chishi Swu, Chairman, Executive Committee, of the "Federal Government of Nagaland" accused the signatories of the Shillong Accord of entering into an agreement with the enemy, saying that it was an act of cowardice and total capitulation, and will not find the approval of the Naga people. Mr. Isak Chishi Swu, also issued a joint statement with Mr. Th. Muivah, General Secretary, NNC condemning the Shillong Accord, on the 16th of August, 1976, at Suphao.

The President of the NNC, A. Z. Phizo, did not endorse the Shillong Accord, nevertheless, Th. Muivah began to defy him. On 16th August, 1976, he censured the NNC Vice-President, Mr. Imkongmeren, and nominated Mr. Isak Chishi Swu to take his place. Eventually, in a meeting on 2nd August, 1978, at Sikba village, Th. Muivah passed resolutions rejecting the leadership of A. Z. Phizo, and his policy as was adopted by the NNC. This led to the house arrest of Th. Muivah and Isak Chishi Swu, along with some others by the Naga army. After their release, they were able to convince the newly elected "Federal" President, Khaplang Heimi, to adopt their "New Line Policy" of socialism and take control of the "Government". On 2nd February, 1980, Th. Muivah, Isak Chishi Swu and Khaplang Heimi, made a joint declaration that

88. Ibid., pp. 185 - 186.
89. Ibid., pp. 196 - 197.
the 'Federal Government of Nagaland' would be replaced by the 'National Socialist Republic of Nagaland'.

The Nagas were divided on the socialist policy initiated by Th. Muivah. W. Shapwon Heimi, who was 'Finance Minister' of the 'Federal Government' at that time writes that this policy was strongly resented by the Khiamnungsans, Aos, Konyaks, Maos, Chakhesangs, Angamis and Heimis, while it was supported by most of the Semas and Tangkhuls of the organisation. This division was made worse and almost erupted into a tribal war, when the Muivah-Isak faction decided not only to assert its policy, but also decided to use force and started a spate of political killings. A high percentage of those killed by the Muivah-Isak group apparently turned out to be from the Ao and Chakhesang tribes. Thus, inter-tribal conflict has taken its toll, indicating the disruption of the Naga national movement by tribal elements, and threatening the very unity of the Naga nation.

The development of Muivah's opposition of Phizo, can be seen as not so much on the difference of policy, as much as it was against the Angami tribe, the one to which Phizo belongs. Muivah's rejection of Phizo's leadership has been said to have started when he was angered by Phizo's use of the Angami language.

91. Ibid., pp. 5 - 9.
92. Ibid., pp. 4 - 9.
in an official letter addressed to him. This reflects that Muivah was aware of the dominance of the Angamis in the NNC, and he interpreted Phizo's letter as the imposition of the Angami language on him. Not long ago, on 21st March, 1990, Mr. Isak Chishi Swu, who is now Chairman, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in his 'Republic Day' speech, accused the NNC of drawing their support from the 'Tenyimias' (Angamis and their related group of tribes).

Thus, it can be seen that tribe consciousness was a divisive factor in the Naga national movement. It was for the same reason that there was a further split in the NSCN, in 1988. The new faction was led by the erstwhile 'Federal' President of the NSCN, Khaplang Heimi, and it came to be known as NSCN(K). It is found that this split occurred due to the grievances of some tribes which felt that the NSCN is dominated by certain tribes, which filled up all the higher rungs of the organisation. The new faction, the NSCN(K), overtly expressed their unhappiness over the alleged domination of the pre-split NSCN by the Tangkhul tribe. The NSCN(K) even went to the extent

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93. Ibid., pp. 2 - 3.
of issuing a Quit Notice to the civilian Tangkhul Nagas from their strongholds of Mokokchung and Zunheboto districts in Nagaland. 98

The NNC, which continued to exist even after the Muivah-Isak faction parted ways, also isolated the Shillong Accordists. In a meeting held from 28th - 29th August, 1981, under the banner of Naga National Workers' Conference, chaired by Thinoselie Keyho, it was resolved that the Shillong Accord does not have the consent of the Naga people and it can not form the basis for solving the Naga problem. 99 On 28th July, 1989, a group of Nagas claiming to represent seventeen tribes, issued an Open Letter reaffirming the resolutions. 100 This more or less divided the NNC into two groups. However, this division did not affect the real structural arrangement of the NNC. It was only after the death of its President, A. Z. Phizo, that tribal colours within the party became prominent.

This happened mostly due to the election of a candidate to the post left vacant by the demise of A. Z. Phizo. On 7th June, 1990, in a meeting of delegates from the NNC, at Mokokchung, under the Chairmanship of 'Gen'. Merentoba, the election of Adino Phizo, the daughter of A. Z. Phizo, as NNC

100. Ibid., pp. 234 - 238.
President, was declared unconstitutional and as such null and void.\textsuperscript{101} In a subsequent meeting on 17th July, 1990, at Mokokchung, by the same group, Khodao Yanthan was elected the new President of the NNC.\textsuperscript{102} This went on in spite of the fact that the Adino Phizo supporters held a meeting at Tuensang, on 10th July, 1990, and reaffirmed her appointment as NNC President.\textsuperscript{103}

The Naga tribes were divided on this issue. The Lotha Regional Council of the NNC, issued a Press Release in favour of Khadao Yanthan, who himself is a Lotha Naga, and also claimed the support of the Angami Region.\textsuperscript{104} On the other hand, most of the tribes from Tuensang district, refused to acknowledge the leadership of Khadao Yanthan. In a meeting of regional authorities, representatives from the Chang, Sangtam, Yimchunger and Khiamniungan regions, decided to boycott a meeting called by Khadao Yanthan, at Wokha, as they felt that he had no official authority to do so.\textsuperscript{105} Also, in a Press Release, the Chakhesang Regional Council of the NNC, expressed its support for Ms. Adino Phizo.\textsuperscript{106} This problem still remains unresolved.

Therefore, we can say that tribalism has posed a threat

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 165.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., pp. 272 - 273.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 271.
to Naga national unity. It is largely responsible for the
disruption in the Naga national movement, and subsequently, its
decline. The roots of all these can be traced back to the
arrival of British administration, Christianity and Western
education. It was at this period that side by side with the
emergence of Naga nationalism, the tribal division of Nagas into
distinct socio-political entities began. The development of these
tribal identities, as it is seen, had an adverse impact on the
political unity of the Naga people, but it could not be cured
because the emergence of a strong tribe consciousness, nurtured
by an organised culture began to have a serious influence on the
socio-economic and political system of the society. However, this
work will be incomplete, if it fails to point out some positive
aspects of the tribe-based Naga society.

The tribal organisations led by the new elite, have
become potent bodies and are able to command high respect from
their members. The advantage of such a situation is that they
become affective in handling internal problems at their own
levels. To a certain extent they are able to police themselves by
acting against social vices such as immoral traffic, bootlegging
and extortion, etc. On 17th February, 1992, the Sema community of
Zenheboto, excommunicated two girls for their suspected immoral
behaviour.\textsuperscript{107} A statement issued by the Sema community in

\textsuperscript{107.} \textit{Hill Express}, Vol. VII, No. 9, (Kohima, 10th March, 1992),
p. 1.
Kohima, warned of taking strong action against members of their community who may be found involving in extortion of money.\textsuperscript{108} In a meeting at Kohima, the Phom tribe too decided to take stern action against members of their tribe, if they were found to be indulging in drug trafficking and abuse.\textsuperscript{109} These are not mere threats because tribal organisations are strong enough to enforce them.

Earlier, we have already established that tribes are effective as pressure groups because they have political weightage. This is why the Government cannot ignore tribal organisations when they take up issues of public interest. The Sumi (Sema), Hoho submitted a memorandum to the Governor on 23rd February, 1994, demanding a high level inquiry into an alleged misappropriation of a large sum of money which was sanction for the construction of an Indoor Stadium at Zunheboto.\textsuperscript{110} Complaint from tribal organisations against improper functioning of the Government offices cannot be undermined. An organisation of the Tuensang tribes submitted a very strongly written memorandum to the Government on irregularities and absenteeism prevalent in the Government offices of Tuensang district. They warned that they

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would conduct surprise checks and take their own course of action. The Angami Students' Union even volunteered to take on governmental responsibilities in improving the deteriorating condition of Government schools in the Angami area.

The emergence of tribe consciousness also has a unifying influence on those tribes which have been divided by different national and international political boundaries. The Konyak Tribal Union, recognises all Konyaks living in Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal and even across the international border in Burma, as people of the same "flesh and blood". In the same way, we cannot question the fact that the Khianmungans in Nagaland and those in Burma, are aware of their common identity. The Khianmungan Tribal Council, in a meeting on 4th April, 1970, at Pangsha, adopted a resolution not to recognise the Indo-Burma boundary which divided them.

While on one side, tribalism has caused the break up of Naga society, due to the stiff competition that arises among tribes, in their search for socio-economic and political advantages in a multi-tribal society, for the same reason, there

has also emerged a tendency for related tribes to seek a common platform. A recent example of such a union is the Konyak-Wancho Tribal Union, which came into being only in January, 1996.¹¹⁵ Not long ago, the Tenyimia Union was formed, comprising of seven tribes, namely, Angami, Chakhesang, Mao, Poumai, Zeliangrong, Pochury and Rengma.¹¹⁶

There is no doubt that individual tribes do seem to assert themselves, but we cannot undermine the positive role played by pan-Naga tribal organisations in the Naga society. These organisations play a vital role in settling inter-tribal conflicts and maintaining harmony. The Naga Council of Dimapur, has proved to be an outstanding performer in this regard. It mediates between feuding tribes and co-ordinates inter-tribal activities. Its contribution in maintaining tribal harmony in Dimapur is noteworthy.¹¹⁷

It may be true to some extent that the tribe-based organisation of the Nagas helps them to sustain their cultural inheritance. This is because tribe consciousness involves the continued use of tribal symbols, customs and traditions. Also since tribes are well-established and tribal boundaries are

defined, it is less likely for outsiders to come and dilute the society. In fact, they are closed social categories where membership is possible only by birth. The Naga society in the pre-British period was disorganised. This is why the emergence of tribal organisations was a welcome sight, as it represents the coming of a feasible and manageable socio-political system in the Naga society.

The *locus standi* of tribal organisations in the state political system is non-governmental. Tribes are recognised as ethnic groups and not as politico-administrative units. This is why the positive role of tribe in the state structural system is of less importance. Rather, the politicisation of tribes, the interference of interests groups and the inter-tribal competition for shared resources, which take place within the state, have far greater impact on its system. Therefore, the negative dimension of the tribal system, which comes as a disruptive force and caters to inter-tribal conflict, is far more hazardous to society and its development.