CHAPTER I

TRIBES: IN QUEST OF A DEFINITION

This work being an investigation into the inter-tribal relations within the Naga society, the assumption that there are tribal groups within the Naga society is inherent in the investigation itself. This calls for an understanding of the term tribe in conceptual and theoretical perspectives, so as to be able to identify the tribal groups in terms of their socio-economic and political features. The term 'tribe' is mostly used by sociologists and anthropologists in their study of primordial societies. Such a usage has mostly been ascriptive. They often attribute the term to any backward, primitive and traditional society which falls short of a modern organised state - as was the existing tradition in the West as well as in some civilisations of the Orient. There was very little attempt to make a theoretical investigation into the concept of 'tribe'.

The need to seek a theoretical perspective in defining 'tribe' arises in this study because it is important to know why Nagas are called tribes and in what political, socio-economic, cultural and historical structures these 'tribes' are
constituted. Only then, the inter-tribal relations can be understood and assessed.

Therefore, the method followed in this work has been of two major approaches. One required a comparative study of various tribes in general to get a view of what constitutes a tribe and what its common features are. This is done to bring out a working definition of tribe and also to formulate a theoretical framework within the ambit of which the basis for the analysis of the Naga society is formed. At this level, the study is based on secondary sources. The works of various scholars, their definitions and commentaries on tribes have been examined. A comparative analysis of the socio-economic, political, historical and cultural background of different tribes, based on relevant works by anthropologists and sociologists has been attempted as an introduction to the main research into the Naga society.

The second approach is directed to the Naga society. Here the focus is on the historical evolution of the Naga society from its primordial conditions to its present status. The study examines the structural and superstructural changes it underwent in the wake of the transformations that overtook the traditional socio-economic and political bases of the society. For this references are drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Apart from existing literature such as books, newspapers,
reports, government publications and records, wherever necessary, unstructured interviews have been conducted to substantiate the findings of this study.

With regard to press releases and pamphlets of various organisations mentioned in this work, it may be pointed out that references are mostly drawn from newspapers. This has to be resorted to because it is found that in most cases, organisations write directly to newspaper editors who publish them mostly as news items. The idea of collecting data through questionnaires was mooted, but it was decided that it would not be of much use as the subject of investigation seemed susceptible to biased responses.

The term 'tribe', etymologically, comes from the Latin word Tribus. Its earliest known application was to the three divisions of the early people of Rome - namely, Latin, Sabine and Etruscan. The Greeks applied it to the twelve tribes of Israel, pertaining to descent from the twelve sons of Jacob. Its earliest use in the English language was in the form of this usage.¹ Thus, initially, we can see that the term tribe was first adapted from its Roman root Tribus to mean social groups of common ancestry. Latter, it came to mean a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbaric condition, under a headman or chief.² Here,

2. Ibid., p. 339.
we can see that it denotes a stage of development of the people it describes.

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, characteristics of a tribe are common language, contiguous territory, common descent, uniform culture and rules of social organisation. It differentiates tribes which are "groups whose unity is based primarily upon a sense of kinship ties" from those societies "that have achieved a strictly territorial organisation in large states." Such a view is outdated because almost all tribes today are part and parcel of large organised states.

In International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, I. M. Lewis mentions that the term 'tribe' is derogatory and suggests that it will be preferable to use the expression "tribal society", rather than synonyms such as "primitive society" or "preliterate society". He also says that the term 'tribe' has become a technical word denoting a territorially defined political unit. The tribes today are no longer totally preliterate or primitive societies. Even the Nagas, like many other tribes today in India, have a high literacy rate. The majority in a tribe may be illiterate, but most tribes have

individuals who are educated on Western lines. Again, as many tribes have been incorporated into Western systems, the primitivism of these societies has to be newly interpreted as backward or undeveloped.

We find that the term has undergone changes in usage over the times. There exists a view that a tribe is a stage of human social evolution - "that society is not static". Ghanshyam Shah writes:

"All social groups were at one stage of the tribal society at one point of time; and no group can be treated as a tribe indefinitely. Socio-cultural characteristics of a tribe changes with the changes in the economic and political structure."

What Shah means here is that society evolves from being a tribe into other developed systems due to changes in politico-economic structures, which is why he takes tribe to be a temporary social stage. We do agree that society changes, but society is not the tribe. A society which has already been termed tribe, may continue to identify itself as a tribe inspite of the social changes it might have undergone. This is because apart from its socio-economic features, the term 'tribe' also has acquired a political connotation, and even in times of social changes, its political character can be retained, though not necessarily in its original form. This is how tribes in India,

7. Ibid., p. 5.
like the Nagas are still known as tribes inspite of the socio-economic and political changes that they have been undergoing.

This is why we need to examine tribe from a broader perspective. Roy Turner says that anthropologists use the word 'tribe' in three distinct, but related ways: to stipulate an evolutionary stage, to distinguish one type of society from others and to label any population whose members share a common culture. In such a case it will be extremely difficult to find a singular theoretical approach. The kinds of social groups which can be called tribes under the above categories seem to be too vast. This is quite true as groups called tribes by various writers differ greatly from one another in terms of socio-economic, political, cultural and historical factors, as well as population and territorial sizes. For instance, tribal societies of the Galla and the Somali, both of north-east Africa, have a population of about three millions each, and in terms of sheer numerical size they have assumed proportions of small nations. Such tribal societies may have wider internal differentiations in their political and legal institutionsthan others. There are much smaller Arabian and African tribes who partially use the Arabic language and associate themselves with the world of Islam. Even in the Indian context, it can be seen

that in many cases, social groups categorised as tribal, which are culturally and linguistically distinct, cannot be separated from the caste system and Hinduism. This is quite true in terms of many central Indian ethno-linguistic groups like Bhils, Korkus and Gonds etc., which have been singled out as tribes by the administration in view of their social characteristics and economic backwardness.

This wide ranging application of the concept of tribe gives rise to the opinion that though it is functional and "an idealised type of society", it is not "an absolute category", and also that "some societies are more or less tribal than others." The underlying assumption here is that there are various categories of tribe, undergoing a process of change towards a post-tribal society. If this is so, there must be an existing limit of development beyond which a society is no longer tribal. But such a yardstick cannot exist because tribal identity in the contemporary sense is larger than the development criteria which might have been instrumental in its initial formation. History has shown that societies that have once been called tribes have not grown out of their labeling, rather they seem to have crystallised into more identifiable entities because of the formal recognition they receive from established political

10. Ibid., p. 148.
12. Ibid., p. 148.
institutions, and as we shall see later, in India they are recognised as Scheduled Tribes. In this context, what is tribal appears to mean more than merely a society in a temporary stage of social development.

It can be seen that there is an emerging rewakening of tribes even in other developed societies. Desmond Morris and Peter Marsh write of tribes as societies which are trying to claim an identity by reverting to those social practices which were common to them when they were at a particular stage or a tribal stage of development. They write:

"In West Africa we ... find many examples of recreated tribes in the newly developed cities. They are instrumental in preserving tribal traditions, rituals, and habits in settings which may appear to be a little incongruous. Industrialisation and economic development, far from destroying tribal ways of life have both fostered the re-establishment of traditional groups and generated quite new one."\(^{13}\)

They also point out that even in North America there is a re-awakening of tribe consciousness, leading to the formation of tribal associations which seek to promote tribal interest and identity. They cite as examples the Crow Indian Tobacco Society, the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia and the Pueblo Indians, as tribes which are going back to their traditional cultural

---

practices as an attempt to redefine their identity within their new social environments.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus in defining a tribe, population, territory and developmental factors cannot be the sole determinants. There exist the postulate that social structure and social relations are important in the conceptualisation of tribe and that one has to approach it at the micro-level by being specific and subjective.\textsuperscript{15} Likewise, F. G. Bailey attempts at identifying tribes in the Indian context. He argued that tribes are not autochthones, but migrants from elsewhere. It may be noted here that all migrants are not necessarily migrants. Their weak economic conditions do not differentiate them from poor peasants in non-tribal societies. He also claims that tribal pantheon includes Hindu gods and that their religious practices are identifiable with that of the lower castes. Bailey also argues that tribal problem arises because tribal geographical isolation does not exist.\textsuperscript{16} This indicates that societies politically called tribes in India cannot be totally separated from the non-tribe mainstream because according to him in many ways they appear to be part and parcel of it. For Bailey there exist in India, a third social system which is neither caste nor tribe,

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 18.
but a result of their merger. 17 This system, according to him, is agrarian; and consists of a heterogeneous body of peasants distributed into various ethnolinguistic categories. 18

Caste and tribe are, however, apparently differentiable. To Bailey caste is organic and hierarchical, while tribe is segmentary and egalitarian. 19 Beteille points out three criteria for caste and tribe differentiation: 1. The relative isolation of tribes as compared with caste; 2. Tribes speak a variety of dialects which differ from major Indian languages spoken by various castes; and 3. Tribals are animists while caste is associated with Hinduism. 20 As we proceed, we shall show that such an interpretation of tribe is no longer relevant in the contemporary sense.

As we have already seen in our reference to Bailey above, these differences do not give a clear picture of the dividing line between caste and tribe as they exist in India. Beteille writes that segmentary systems which are small in scale and also represent a definite structural type, which is easily distinguished from the more complex social systems, cannot be applicable in the Indian context because of the problem of identifying segmentary societies. From this he concludes that

17. Ibid., p. 18.
"there is no way of defining tribal society" because if we approach it broadly, it will become inclusive of the peasantry and if we take a narrow approach it would leave out many tribes which are already regarded as tribal. 21

Both Bailey and Beteille have shown that social groups in India cannot be termed as tribes because they cannot be isolated from the mainstream social system of caste and Hinduism. However, they cannot deny that there are social groups in India which have been called tribes and furthermore, that these groups have developed a sense of identity. Tribal movements such as the demand for Bodoland and Jharkhand state are the direct outcome of tribal politics in India. This happens because they are no longer merely tribal societies, but they have developed tribe consciousness at the political level. It also can be seen that there works have been confined to only those tribes in India which have had links with the Indian mainstream. But there are many tribes in North-East Indiawhich might not have any substantial link with the central Indian culture and social system. Many tribes in North-East India were brought into contact with the mainstream only in the British era. In fact, in India tribes are so varied and are from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds that one might question as to how they came to be called tribes. We may look for the answer to this by examining the historical process under which they came to be

21. Ibid., pp. 61-62.
recognised as tribes.

II

The process of tribal identification started with the convention introduced by the British administrators to categorised certain backward groups in India as tribal. From 1930's onwards list of Indian tribes were prepared with a view to giving them administrative and political concessions. The list of Scheduled Tribes incorporated into the Constitution of India had its origin from these lists. In the 1931 Census of India, conducted by J.H. Hutton, the distinction between caste and tribe was based on religious practices. When a group appears to be clearly Hindu it was caste and, when it was 'Animist' it was treated as tribe.

It is seen that different states in India adopted different criteria in distinguishing tribals from the rest of the population. In Assam, one of the social categories identified as tribe was the people of Mongoloid stock belonging to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group, existing in a village-clan type of social organisation. The Hyderabad government considered tribals as those who lived in the forests, speaking a local

22. Ibid., p. 62.
23. Ibid., p. 63.
dialect; practising marriage by force, and for their livelihood resorted to hunting, fishing and gathering of food as their main means of subsistence.\textsuperscript{24} This approach to tribal identification was not empirical because there was no consistency. It appears that whether a social group was tribe or not depended on the state's prerogative. Beteille observes that "the same groups might be treated as a tribe in one state but not in another."\textsuperscript{25} This leads us to the conclusion that tribes in India are not sociological categories, but are politico-administrative units.

While in India the problem of tribal identification results from the caste-tribe confusion, in Africa demarcation of tribal boundaries is found to be marred by the new tribes which are "continuously being discovered" from within the "existing clusters and language groups."\textsuperscript{26} Apparently there is also a problem of anomaly in tribe consciousness. In 1960, in Ghana when the term tribe was defined as a group occupying a contiguous area, with a feeling of unity which derived from similarities in culture, having friendly contacts and a certain community of interests, a difficulty arose because members differed in their perception of their own tribal affiliation.\textsuperscript{27} In this connection, it may not be out of place to quote Henry L. Bretton at length:

\textsuperscript{24} G. S. Ghurye, \textit{The Scheduled Tribes}, (Bombay, 1959), p. 8.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 150.
One of the most misused and abused terms encountered in the study of Africa is tribe. One must suspect that frequently its use reflects mindless addiction to a labels. It may also reflect desire by Western observers -- a desire founded on ethnocentric perspectives -- to make invidious distinctions in favour of their own culture. Many, possibly all, of Africa's tribes may well be figments of non-African imagination. They certainly seem to have more substance in the eyes of outsiders than they do among indigenes. They are, in the main, products of definitional efforts not only by non-African anthropologists, sociologists and linguists but also by colonial administrators whose perception of ethnic identity appears to have been governed by administrative considerations.

In both cases, Indian and African, we find the term 'tribe' representing an ascribed classification of people into social groups by outsiders, in which the grouping was based on linguistic, cultural and territorial criteria. These so-called tribes were distinguished from non-tribal societies in respect of their primitive and fragmentary socio-economic and political systems as compared to those of the developed societies.

We find that contemporary theories on tribe are mostly attempts at defining it on the basis of the assumption that all societies distinguished from the Western concept of organised states, characterised by traditional social institutions which are more or less primitive in nature, are tribal societies. Such

28. Ibid., p. 149.
an approach seeks to conceptualise tribe by analysing its social institutions and their characters.

Likewise, tribes are said to be those ethnocentric societies in which there is "a corresponding unity and coherence in values" which are "intimately related to social institutions."29 This indicates that there is bound to be group consciousness and collective participation within the system. But such a society cannot qualify as a tribe unless it fulfills the political and ideological connotations of being a tribe. For any group to be a tribe its collective identity and behaviour must reflect the existence of the notion of a tribe. We are of the view that such a notion did not exist as it does in contemporary tribal societies, in the pre-colonial period. Our argument here is that tribe is essentially a foreign concept with which the so-called tribals came to familiarise themselves with as result of its imposition on them.

Jacob J. Kattakayam sees tribal communities as "closely knit" and "self-contained" groups which are isolated from the mainstream of society, which is why they are more susceptible to the forces of social change than open societies.30 For him tribal communities seem to be an inseparable part of a larger society, and tribal identity is realised only when it is juxtaposed

comparatively, with the "mainstream" or the modernised segments" of society. He opines that tribal societies are characterised by "traditional values and primitive technology" which are incongruent with those of the modern world. Hence, he says "governments everywhere are striving to modernise them in an attempt at integrating them with the mainstream of social life."\(^{31}\)

Kattakayam, in assuming that all tribal societies exist within larger modern societies, commits a historical blunder because societies that we call tribal existed on their own even prior to their exposition to developed societies. Here, he can only mean that a society is tribal when it becomes part of a larger system within which it retains its original characteristics. But this is unacceptable because in a multi-ethnic system any minority group can exist without necessarily being labeled a tribe. It also fails to explain those tribal societies that might have undergone structural changes and reorganisation. Also, the question of integrating tribals with the mainstream of society may not be applicable in all cases, especially with those tribes which have assumed proportions of nationalities.

It can be seen that it is not possible to generalise societies which are called tribes and arrive at a common

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 1.
definition by subjective approach alone. Such attempts have failed mostly because these societies vary greatly in many aspects from one another. We may say that a comprehensive and acceptable study of tribal societies must encompass three categories of tribes: 1. Tribes which are in their pristine stage, 2. tribes which have come under modern systems and, 3. tribes which have been transformed into nationalities or independent states.

The parameters we have traversed so far in our search for a centralised idea of tribe seemed to have only widened our perspective. For our purpose, let us at the moment agree, at the subjective level, with the philosophical proposition that different tribes are tribes "because of a network of criss-crossing resemblances." The basis of our study so far, we can bring out the following areas in which criss-crossing resemblances may occur: 1. Peoples of common ancestry and language occupying a contiguous area or migrating collectively; 2. Economically unorganised societies, using primitive technology; a production system which barely meets subsistence level; 3. Social systems are governed by traditions which exist intrinsically within the cultural and religious milieu; and 4. Consequential to the ascription of societies sharing such features as tribes, was their continuous transformation in all

aspects which developed from their merger with the developed systems.

Such subjective approach has been found to be too broad. It fails to differentiate between tribes and non-tribes. It confuses ethnic groups of similar features with tribes. In the same way, it renders no solution to a distinction between caste and tribe. But the fact remains that many societies sharing similar characteristics have been categories as tribes. As a result of being inducted with the idea of tribe, these societies have developed tribe consciousness and assumed tribal identity. This gives rise to an objective meaning of tribe, in order to understand and define which, it is necessary to examine the processes leading to its formation.

The development of the need for a distinction between tribal and non-tribal societies was essentially a result of the merger of the two. Most tribal societies got their label at the time of the imperialist expansion. This distinction becomes automatically acceptable to the so-called tribal societies as they were absorbed into the hegemonic domain of the West. Bretton explains this:

"Scholarly or not, tribe is in any case a form of culture bias, for in its current use in the African context the term is rooted quite evidently in Western social consciousness. In literary existence it is a reflection mainly of Western European demographic mapping endeavours."

Here, he is outlining the cultural implications which acted as the basis for the demarcation and identification of tribes. We cannot neglect the underlying hegemonic political impositions by way of which the so-called tribal societies were brought under the purview of Western political systems, under which they were adopted as stateless territorial societies and absorbed into the 'State' of the imperial invaders. By virtue of the presumption that imperial states were the only accepted systems, they unilaterally legalised the adoption of these societies into their states.

We can see that the term 'tribe', at the time of its origin, served as a term which is ascribed to those primordial and native societies which the Western states came into interaction with in the process of the advancement of imperialism. Initially it seemed to have served as a term which differentiates between societies on the basis of the extent of their development. This reflects the possibility that the utility of the concept tribe was simply representative of the desire of ethnocentric Western observers who made the distinctions in favour of their own culture.34 If this is so, there may be some truth in saying that "tribe has been an instrument of colonial rule."35

34. See Ibid., p. 149.
35. Ibid., p. 149.
In the relationship between the two, it was the tribal insignia which implicitly placed the Western ruler in the role of the altruistic good Samaritan, come to save the primitive tribal people and rescue them from the dark ages. In a way, the basis of this distinction is ideological. It derecognises the validity of tribal rights to self-determination and maintenance of status-quo, while at the same time it justifies the imposition of Western socio-economic and political systems upon the tribes for whom its acceptance becomes cogently binding. This was more so because imperialism also marked the establishment of the nation-state as an insuperable ideological principle. In this connection, we may mention Crawford Young's statement that "the public ideology of the colonial state was adapted to the practical exigencies of securing its hegemony."36

It can be seen that the conceptualisation of tribe has to be done in the context of its juxtaposition and relationship with the nation state. Tribal societies were chalked out on the basis of language, religion and community etc.37 This classification of social groups into tribes does not denote uniformity among them; it was done by outsiders in an arbitrary manner.38 There is a possibility that societies called tribes may differ in many ways from one another. It may be noted here that

37. See Ibid., p. 74.
what we call tribes are "administratively created" by "colonial regimes." 39

It may be said that tribal boundaries demarcated by the colonial rulers were based on administrative convenience. This diminishes the importance of conceptual considerations in the attribution of societies as tribes. Thus, initially, we may say that the reason for calling a social group a tribe was not because it had features befitting an existing idea of a tribe, but rather because it was in conformity with the administrative policy of the colonial ruler. This indicates that tribal boundaries were drawn without any references to the nature of the tribes in question. This leads us to the crux of the problem - the processes of change that led to the conceptual development of the idea of tribes as it exists today.

On the basis of our study so far, we reject casual socio-anthropological labeling of primitive systems as tribes, 40 as tribes which are no longer tribes by that definition still tend to claim its identity as tribes. The view that all societies were at one point tribal 41 and that all societies go through a

stage of development as part of their social evolution cannot be accepted because it assumes that the path of social change is calibrated - a point of which is demarcated as tribal. The objective usage of tribe, in which it is not an attribute of society, but one which defines it, assumes that the idea of tribe precedes the society so-called. Prior to being called tribes these primordial societies were having their own modes of existence regardless of what the term 'tribe' may mean. We may say that it was with the attribution of the term tribe on these societies that it began to crystallise as a concept and derive its meaning.

All societies brought under the category of tribes are not homogeneous entities. In chalking out tribal boundaries, structural aspects did not seem to have carried any weightage. The possibility of being called a tribe was dependent on the colonial administration and the question of qualification did not arise. We cannot say that all tribes originate in the same way. Some may emerge from splits in existing tribes, resulting from developments in tribal politics. A fine example of this can be seen in the emergence of some new Naga tribes. The Pochury tribe recently split from the Chakhesangs to become a full-fledged tribe; while the Chakhesangs themselves had been a tribe which resulted from splitting away from the Angamis. We shall discuss

This leads to the fact that all tribes are not created by the same determinants. Tribes have undergone tremendous changes. The term tribe has acquired new meaning and tribal societies have become complex. It must have been this that prompted Bailey to presume that tribes can turn into non-tribes systems. But we disagree and here, we shall contend that whatever forms or meaning they might have taken, we cannot deny that there are societies which have developed tribe consciousness and that tribes have come to stay. They have found a place as a political entity within the present system. Thus, the conceptualisation of a tribe and the derivation of a definition of a tribal society within the contextual limits of the subject in question, as Beteille says of Bailey's approach, is no longer appropriate. It has to be a general approach.

Now, we feel that the term tribe represents a singular concept. This is because tribes are no longer merely so in nomenclature. In most so-called tribal societies, members have begun to identify themselves with their respective tribes as they seem to have developed common socio-economic and political goals. In most cases, group consciousness and a sense of belonging to a particular tribe has developed. Not only does tribal identity exist but also group behaviour in terms of allegiance to one's

Tribe, giving rise to inter-tribal confrontations has become a reality. It can be found that this occurs mostly because tribes are in pursuit of goals within a singular system which also serves as a common resource arena. For instance, let us consider the Jharkhand movement in Bihar. Only recently the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council has been created for the tribals of Bihar. But the Paharia tribe is unhappy with their representation in the Council and they have started agitating in demand for a separate council for themselves.45

We cannot agree more with Bretton, in saying that "tribe is in dire need of reinterpretation, and that in its traditional form it is an extremely undependable analytical tool."46 Earlier attempts to define tribe have failed, we can say on account of its dependence on anthropological inferences and imperialistic distinction of societies, which can be found to be meaningful only at the formative stage. Anthropologists were not willing to reinterpret tribe and accept its new dimensional expansions. This shows in Beteille's opinion that "we no longer have tribes in their pure state but only tribes in transition."47 We reject this because if there is a "pure state" of tribes, at such a stage all tribes should be homogeneous and there should be an empirical consensus on its meaning. Besides, being

transitional is not exclusive to tribes. All societies are subject to change and the fact that tribes are in transition should not mean that tribe are no longer tribes. We believe that the idea of a tribe has come to stay with those societies which have come to identify themselves with it; and that even in transition, they do so as tribes.

As Beteille mentions of the changes that have been taking place among India's tribal people, we agree that there have been changes among tribals with respect to modes of production, relations of production, and that market economy has rendered in structural changes into tribal societies. This changes cannot be isolated from the capitalist system which was introduced into the Third World countries as result of colonial rule. The integration of tribal societies into the new world system invalidates the transitional attribution of tribal societies as isolated primitive social systems.

Theoretically, tribals are no longer animists, illiterate and traditional in toto. They have become participants in the democratic processes, capitalists market economy and also come in within the social umbrella of contemporary culture. Morris and Marsh write:

"Traditional tribes are ... fast disappearing from our planet. "Civilisation" has with ruthless efficiency waged a genocidal war against tribal cultures .... Tribes are seduced away from their traditional life style by false promises of 20th Century technological societies."  

However, we can say that this did not result in the exit of tribes. Instead, tribes seem to have found a niche as a forceful entity in modern politics. In post-colonial era, tribes have adapted themselves in the newly formed nation-states as an influential structural force. This is what Morris and Marsh have to say:

As the "primitive" mode of living vanishes, tribalism lives on. The larger and more heterogeneous modern societies become, the more people are inclined to recreate the tribe; they fashion for themselves natural units in which a sense of "belonging" is still possible.  

This is why they attempted at making a distinction between what they say are moribund traditional tribes and emerging modern tribes. But we find that they ignore the traditional and modern continuum of tribes when they say that tribes are recreated; and that groups with common social bondings, newly created out of social conditions in modern societies also can be called tribes. However, we feel that

51. Ibid., p. 9.
52. See Ibid., pp. 9 - 11.
tribe has been purely a colonial legacy and it is not possible for such new groups to develop a common consciousness and identity, comparative to established tribes which have a political orientation directly linked to their socio-economic and political history. Our present study is to examine tribes in the light of this perspective.

It is seen that the formation of tribes can be traced back to the beginning of the identification of societies as tribes by scholars and writers. But mere identification from outside cannot mean anything by itself. It was the inculcation of the notion of a tribe into the minds of the people which made it acceptable. This was done through the imposition of Western rule, along with which came Western education and its cultural influence. This destroyed the very roots of the traditional value base and the newly ascribed identity became acceptable to them as one which distinguishes them from the Western societies. The ideological implications in this distinction cannot be underestimated as it is instrumental in upholding Western hegemonic dominance. It was made rationale behind the acceptance of Western rule. Now, we may inquire into the various factors emanating from the circumstances involving such a relationship which contributed to the crystallisation of tribal identities.

The question remains - if tribes are primitive societies why do they persist even after exposure to developed
societies and their systemic merger with them. The answer to this lies in the fact that the so-called tribes have come to identify themselves as societal entities and also find political recognition as tribes within the larger systems. In incorporating these entities, systemic politico-administrative and economic adjustments occur. The tribal character itself comes into play with the social and structural changes. As we shall see later, the development of these complexities lead to the politicisation of tribes from which emerges tribalism. We may call these the process of tribalisation and examine it more thoroughly for our purpose of conceptualising 'tribe'.

The acceptance of a new political status, as tribes, within the structural periphery of the nation-state by native societies, necessitated the induction of politico-administrative caveats into the political system. This accrues from a relationship between the two in which there is a marked difference in development level. As an example we cite the Indian tribes which are constitutionally recognised as Scheduled Tribes. It seem appropriate to quote Adityendra Rao here:

"In the Indian context, tribe is ... basically a politico-administrative category and has hardly retained any of its socio-cultural characteristics. That is why, perhaps, our constitution uses the term tribe in its administrative connotation. For constitution Scheduled Tribes are those which are backward and which deserve special provisions for
Such formal provision form the basis on which tribals find identification with the new nomenclature. This makes a tribe a formal political entity and a morphological appendage of politics in general.

Joane Nagel writes that tribal identity in America is the result of a policy which recognises tribes "as geo-political units and thus foci of government programmes and legislation." This is clearly reflected in American Indian policy which suggests the maintenance of tribal sovereignty within the boundaries of tribal reservations and finds the individual tribe as appropriate units for representation of tribes at the national level. In the case of African countries where political system may be more or less entirely tribal, colonial administrators have left behind tribal identities formed on the basis of administrative considerations. All these cases indicate that in the post-colonial era, the tribe has become a

formal political unit, deeply rooted within the state political system.

It may be pointed out here that the intrinsic character of societies which came to be called as tribes might also have contributed towards the crystallisation of tribal identities. The weakness of such societies, their backwardness and their susceptibility to exploitation when merging with developed societies, rationalises the need for creating caveats to protect their interests. We have already seen that these societies are closely-knitted and bound together by traditional kinship ties. This may continue to influence tribes.\(^{57}\) On the other hand, the administrators or rulers may for their own advantages seek to sustain the traditional character of these societies, by distorting it to match their own purposes. Bretton calls this "the mummification of so-called tribal traditions."\(^{58}\)

It is seen that under colonial rule native societies have been formally constituted as tribes within new administrative set-ups. This subjected tribes to a new economic and political system - one which is dominant and assimilative and therefore hegemonic according to the Gramscian notion.\(^ {59}\) We can assume that this becomes the basis for a change in the

consciousness of the societies in question. Since consciousness is derived from "existing praxis," Here, we can say that colonial rule ushered in a change of praxis which in the Marxian sense is catalytic to society. In this case, we cannot agree more that "socio-cultural characteristics of a group change with the changes in economic and political structure." In the Indian context, Andre Beteille has pointed out that with changes in technology, tribal production system has changed and market economy has altered the socio-economic structure of the village itself. We may say these changes resulted from colonial rule and have sustained as a post-colonial phenomenon.

The changes that came about in the colonial era can be identified in the sphere of economic practices, administration, education, religious behaviour and cultural values. The impact of these changes brought about social imbalance and created social stratification. Here, it may be relevant to quote John, who says:

"An important dimension of social differentiation in colonial society is between those who participate in the new economy and those who exist outside of it."  

60. Ibid., p. 30.
61. Ibid., p. 17.
An illustration of this can be found in the writings of Pierre Francois Gonidec. According to him, colonisation helped break up pre-capitalist relationships in Africa. The African Chiefs were transformed into bourgeois by becoming landowners. On the fringe of dominant foreign bourgeoisie who controlled the mining, industrial, commercial and financial sectors, an African bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie emerged. Africans trained in colonial schools, loaded with Western values, who took over subordinate functions of the administrative set-up emerged as a bureaucratic petite bourgeoisie. And thus, "it underwent the influence of the capitalist system." 66

Tribal social stratification is characterised not only by a change in the economic and power base but also the interference of new set of values and a change in the value system. 67 This does not mean that the old values are cast away, rather they come into interplay with the new ones. 68 Therefore, in the stratification of society value aspects have considerable relevance. Since the dominant values undoubtedly Western oriented, those who represent them occupy the higher rungs of the social strata. This leads us to agree with Pradip Kumar Bose, that the existence of a tribal identity does not reflect identical economic interests, but that interests may be

contradictory among the different ranks in tribes. 69

Now, let us examine the societal milieu within which such contradictions take place in order to understand its consequences. The homogeneity of what came to be known as the tribal society was broken with the influx of aliens brought by colonial rule. We may say that tribes themselves became ethnic groups within the new multi-ethnic social systems. 70 When a society is multi-ethnic the problem of power balance between the different ethnic groups arises. In such a situation, tribal groups which are composed of subdued backward native peoples, naturally become minority groups. 71 Under these circumstances, tribal identity is likely to get strengthened, as it is confronted with other groups of conflicting interests.

This accrues from the fact that the modern state, which every tribal society has become part of, is a storehouse of common resources; and social relations are determined by access to these resources. 72 In this context, Dan R. Aronson says:

69. Pradip Kumar Bose, Classes and Class Relations Among Tribals of Bengal, (New Delhi, 1985), p. 123.
70. An ethnic group "is socially distinguished or set apart, by others and / or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or nationality characteristics." Joe R. Feagin, Racial and Ethnic Relations, (New Jersey, 1978), p. 9.
The pursuit of value alternatives within a single resource arena divides ethnic groups from other self-conscious, political, even historically permanent, groups. 73

In addition to this, in most modern states, there exist "protective discrimination" to meet the needs of the weaker sections of society which may promote the formation of new group identities. 74 Under these circumstances, as tribes become part of a plural society, vying for maximum access to resources from a common source, demands for new tribal status and stronger tribal identities may emerge.

In stratified tribal societies, the elite has come to occupy a dominant and influential position. 75 The tribal elite has their own aspirations and interests within the system, and they may use their position to mobilise tribal allegiance in pursuit of their own goals. 76 This can be seen in cases where tribalism is invoked "to mobilise support for purely factional assaults on the power structure." 77 It may also, like in the case of African petite bourgeoisie, lead to movements against colonial

76. Ibid., pp. 77 - 80.
rule, and propagate nationalist ideas among tribals. In this connection, we may say that the processes through which tribal sentiments are invoked and mobilised result in the politicisation of tribes.

It is clear from the above that politicisation of tribes takes place when the dominant and influential stratum within the stratified tribal society, attribute and interpret their behaviour in pursuit of their own goals, to that of tribes. When this happens, tribalistic considerations may begin to influence individual and group behaviours; and what ensues from this we may term as tribalism. Therefore, tribalism is a behavioural trait in an individual, characterised by tribal sentiments and prejudice, which is collectively present in social groups, in the form of a common consciousness of being a tribe.

It can be seen that tribalism denotes a conflict of interests among social groups and this has given rise to the organisation of groups into political entities, led by tribal elites, after their education in Western political systems. There is no doubt that the development of tribe consciousness can be traced back to the political history of societies which came to be known as tribes, as a result of Western imperialism - when tribes were first encountered by outsiders and categorised as

tribes on the basis of their socio-economic and political backwardness.

But since then tribes seem to have come a long way; and on the basis of the new role tribes pose in modern day politics, tribes can no longer be defined within the limits of the ascriptive parameter which accounted for its origin. We know that earlier attempts to define tribe from this perspective were unable to bring out the distinction between tribes and other social groups with which they share similar socio-economic and political features; also the emergence of new tribes could not be explained. A new and comprehensive definition of tribe must incorporate its historical development and also explain its character as a contemporary political concept. Therefore, as it is understood from our analysis, from a general standpoint we can see that a tribe is a socio-economic and political entity, operating within a larger system, apparently seeking its group interests, on the basis of its ascribed status. Finally, we may say that tribes as we find in contemporary India are political units, identified by the developed West on the basis of their level of development, and adopted by various communities, which find recognition in organised political institutions or systems, within which they act as interest groups on a formal basis.
We must admit that the definitional problem of tribe is really a huge task for a researcher and it requires much deeper study than what we have attempted in this work. It is quite obvious that we have to draw a line within the scope of this study. Our purpose is to use the above theoretical framework as an analytical tool in our investigation of politics in Naga society. And we hope for the present it will suffice to arrive at a clearer understanding of Naga society and its politics.