CHAPTER IV

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In the British era, the Nagas experienced a series of influences brought about by Western education, Christianity, modern administration and market economy. This incurred a strong impact on the traditional social structure of the people. The structural changes that ensured gave rise to new political developments. We shall now see, how the institutionalisation of tribes into formal social groups affected these developments and how ultimately, this led to the politicisation of tribes. But first, let us briefly recapitulate on what we understand of the Naga society so far.

Earlier in Chapter II, we have shown that traditionally the Nagas lived in societies which were more or less classless and egalitarian. This was so because the people were living under uniform religious beliefs and traditional practices which accorded no exception to any individual or group. Also, the village which constitutes the limits of the organised society was negligibly small. Its economy was primitive in nature. Private ownership of land was unimportant as land was available in plenty and there was neither the technology for production of surplus nor the market for its profitable disposal. The Naga
village was structured only in terms of functional divisions as necessitated by its complex cultural practices, and such divisions did not have much politico-economic significance.

The social changes brought by the advent of British rule as we have seen in Chapter III, had tremendous effect on the traditional Naga society. The Naga society which was so far closed and integrated was broken open with the introduction of British administration. It is said that the new administration did not seek changes in the basic customs and traditions of the people. But, to a large extent it freed the individual from the strict bonds of traditional social life and this gave rise to the disintegration of the village society. People began to move to urban areas, the emergence of towns and markets brought about an urban culture, and people began to adopt non-agrarian occupations by accepting government jobs in various offices.

As a result of urbanisation and opening of communication facilities, markets began to emerge. With the introduction of money economy, a few merchants began to deal in imported goods. In 1904, there were eighteen shops in Kohima, of which thirteen were kept by Marwari merchants. But the most

important point was, now payments for labour, salary and commercial transaction could be done through the medium of currency. Hence, wage earners came into existence and also the unlimited amassing of wealth has been made possible. But at the initial stage of British rule, trade and commerce was very small and its development was quite slow. Total revenue in the Naga Hills District in 1903-1904, was only Rupees 75,540.4

It is said that the Nagas who acted as porters in the Abor expedition of 1912, and who went as Labour Corps to France in 1918, came back with their accumulated earnings and affected the local economy.5 But this only temporarily enriched a few persons and its impact may be negligible. However, in the wake of World War II, a considerable amount of economic developments took place. The communication network was improved to a great extent and Dimapur, which was till then only a small railhead market is reported to have grown into a larger town.6 As quite a lot of money had circulated at this period in payments for labour and the purchase of goods, Alemchiba points out that as a result, a shift of influence and social leadership from the traditional elite to the younger generation of the nouveaux riche might have taken place.7

4. Ibid., p. 80.
6. Ibid., p. 136.
7. Ibid., p. 137.
The traditional Naga religious life was closely linked with the society and unless this link is broken to some extent, individual responses to the new socio-economic environment would have been difficult. Therefore, the role of Christianity in bringing about the disappearance of the social and communal institutions and the emergence of a spirit of new individualism which led to the erosion of family and clannish ties,\(^8\) is vital for the success of the new way of life. Christians began to defy the rigid orders of the village and break away from both the old religion and fellow villagers, hence contributing to the process of village disintegration.\(^9\) It also brought "a change in the world view, philosophy of life and perspective of spiritual and moral values."\(^10\) Yonuo writes that "Christianity was an inward machinery which brought modernisation, western ways of life, education, the renaissance of Nagaism and unity among the Nagas."\(^11\) It is quite possible that a realisation of Nagaism occurred, but we rather not call it renaissance because traditionally, a composite Naga society was not in existence.

When education was first introduced people were reluctant to send their children to school because they did not value education and also fear the conversion of their children

\(^9\) M. Horam, Naga Polity, (New Delhi, 1974), p. 120.
to Christianity.\textsuperscript{12} There was also an economic disadvantage, as the sending of children to school would mean the loss of field-hands for cultivation. The Naga families were large for social and economic reasons. The abundance of offsprings strengthened clans and facilitated the possession and cultivation of more land.\textsuperscript{13} This could have been one of the reasons why "the spread of Western education and modernism among the Nagas was not confined to any particular section of the people and the educated group of Nagas that emerged was representative of a cross-section of Naga tribes."\textsuperscript{14} It is said that Christianity and modern education were viewed with suspicion and distrust by the village chiefs and elders.\textsuperscript{15} However, a small number of Nagas received Western education and began to engage themselves in professions ranging from trading to law and medicine.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus a lot changes occurred in the Naga society during the British rule. But it must be noted that these changes only brought about superficial differences in the occupations and life of the people. The economic pattern did not undergo any major

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Khrielenuo Terhuja, "The Christain Church Among the Angami Nagas", in Suresh Singh (ed.), \textit{Tribal Situation in India}, (Simla, 1972), p.295.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 299.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Udayon Misra, "Naga Nationalism and Role of Middle Class", in B. Datta Ray (ed.), \textit{The Emergence and the Role of Middle Class in North-East India}, (New Delhi, 1983), p. 157.
\end{itemize}
changes during the British rule so much as to pose a threat to the traditional authority of tribal councils. 17 In the first decade of the 20th Century, we find that there was not much trade among the Nagas. 18 Again, though the growth of Christianity became rapid from 1922 onwards, 19 the spread of education was slow and even as late as 1941, the literacy rate in the Naga Hills was only 5.09%. 20 Hence, despite these new developments, we find that the old Naga society had not changed much, a process class formation had not taken off and the Nagas continued to live in their own tribal isolation. 21

Though the changes brought about in the Naga society did not cause the stratification of society into distinct opposing groups or classes, we find that the intensity of differences between the different categories of people engaged in the new socio-economic system, which has broken away from the traditional society with the adoption of new social life, occupations and changes in attitudes and beliefs, has increased by a cognizable margin. As a result, a new social group which is in a position to influence another on account of its newly acquired socio-economic and political status might have emerged.

17. Ibid., p. 161.
In order to understand this new society in which disparities have brought in elements of stratification, it is necessary to examine the social relations of such a society.

All societies, except primitive societies are said to be stratified into different groups or classes; and it is often assumed that all other socio-economic and political aspects have their basis on the social structure. The Marxist theory claims that every society is divided into a ruling class and one or more subject classes. The basis of this division is basically economic -- those who own the major instruments of economic production occupy the dominant position, and their political dominance is consolidated, when their hold of power over military forces and production of ideas is established.\textsuperscript{22} On the other hand, we have the elite theory which attributes the stratification of society to the different activities the individual performs in the social system and the position he occupies in the society. Pareto divides society into two strata. A lower stratum or the non-elite and a higher stratum, the elite, which again is divided into two, a governing elite and a non-governing elite.\textsuperscript{23} According to Mosca, in all societies backward or advanced, two classes of people can always be identified -- "a class that rule and a class that is ruled."\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 8.
\textsuperscript{24} G. Mosca, \textit{The Ruling Class}, (New York, 1939), p. 50.
On the basis of these theories different writers have opined that with the coming of socio-economic changes, the Naga society has been stratified into different economic classes. Zhimomi is of the view that with the coming of education, an educated Naga middle class has emerged and taken over the traditional leadership of the tribal Chiefs.\(^{25}\) He appears to be assuming that a middle class has emerged because they have education. Misra also writes that the emergence of middle class among the Nagas has greatly been influenced by Christianity and education, however, he adds that even the most educated Naga retained his link with his village and was guided by the traditional relationships of tribal life.\(^{26}\) He holds that the character of middle class among the Nagas was not born either of the landed aristocracy nor it was the result of commercial activity.\(^{27}\) It is difficult to relate the concept of middle class to this proposition as social classes arise out of the relations of production. It is said that in former colonial countries of Asia and India, educational and administrative systems were largely responsible for the creation of middle class.\(^{28}\) But these societies were either traditionally stratified or at least had developed an economic basis for their stratification. What we called the Naga middle class simply turns

out to be a differentiated group of people which have to an extent separated from the original bulk, and has gained a more or less respectful and influential position with the establishment of the educated status which came from the nature of jobs they occupy. It does not qualify as a middle class, because as Manorama Sharma says, "a class to be a class in Marxist theory must be one economically, ideologically and politically."²⁹

Besides the only purpose for the suggestion that a middle class has emerged among the Nagas seems to be for the explanation of the emergence of Naga nationalism and not so as to explain the socio-economic and political character of the Naga society, which is quite irrelevant to the use of a class concept. Misra is of the opinion that "in the process of growth of Naga nationalism, no threat was posed to the traditional leadership of the tribal councils and the village Headmen continued to play as affective a role as ever in the Naga life."³⁰ Thus, we find that the use of the term middle class does not denote social relations and social stratification in the Naga society. It turns out to be just a term used to explain the emergence of a new social category in the society. By examining the character and role of this new social category we can be in a better position to label it correctly.

²⁹ Manorama Sharma, Social and Economic Change in Assam, (Delhi, 1990), p. 4.
Socio-economic and political changes seem to have brought about three identifiable categories under which the Nagas can be grouped: Christians -- non-Christians; educated--illiterate; and rich--poor. 

It is to be noted that Christianity was common to all the three categories as both the educated-illiterate and rich-poor groups had Christian members. The difference between the educated-rich Christian and the illiterate poor Christian has to be recognised as due to Western education, there must have emerged a difference in their cultural outlook and value orientations. Therefore, the illiterate-poor Christian can be categorised with the non-Christian group. One can say that the educated were almost all Christians, as education and Christianity came from the same source, the Christian missionaries. Even otherwise, since Christianity and education are both loaded with Western values, we may say that the educated and the Christians share a similar value system. The educated were also rich because they are the salaried group as they worked in the government offices and they were the salaried group. In the same manner, those who did not come under the influence of Western education and Christianity can be said to

31. This distinction is in terms of money only and differentiates between the salaried and the non-salaried groups.
have been poor as they have no or very little monetary income.\textsuperscript{33} So let us say the non-Christians were almost all poor and illiterate.

From the above analysis we can make out two distinct social groups forming the Naga social structure—the educated-rich Christians and the illiterate-poor non-Christians.\textsuperscript{34} The basis of this distinction as can be clearly seen is a matter of social differences. Hence, we do not have two opposing groups, but two groups separated by their socio-economic backgrounds. In the previous Chapter we have seen that there was a rapid growth of Christianity among the Nagas in the first half of the 20th Century. As Christianity brought in Western culture and values, there was a growing respect among the Nagas for education. That is why the educated Nagas gained an influential position over the masses. Therefore, between the two social groups we have brought out, one may say that the educated-rich Christian group is in a position to influence the illiterate-poor non-Christian group.

\textsuperscript{33} In 1901, there were 2388 persons on Government payroll, forming 2.3 percent of the population, while those who continued in the traditional agrarian mode of livelihood constituted 93.8 percent. B. C. Allen, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{34} The purpose of this stratification is only to bring out a tentative arrangement so as to understand the basis of different social groups and they are not closed categories.
The membership of the Naga Club was made up of educated Naga youth and Government officials. They were mostly the products of Christian institutions. Again the members of the Naga National Council (NNC) is said to have been largely drawn from what has been called the newly emerging middle class, which we have already seen, has its basis on Christianity and education. A random list of twenty Naga leaders, taken from both the Naga Club and the NNC, shows that all were educated and only one was a non-Christian. It can therefore be safely said that most of the Naga national leaders came from the educated-rich and Christian stratum of the society.

The elite are "holders of a high position in a given

38. Some of the founding members of the Naga Club and the NNC are the Following: Kevichusa, Visar, Kezehol, Vizol, Mayannokcha, Nchumo Lotha, L. Lungalung, Zashei Huire, Krusiehu, Pelhoulvillie, Ruzhukhrrie, T. Aliba, T. Sakhrie, T. Haralu, Mondamo, Inkommeren, Levi, Yajen Aier, T. N. Agnami and Kukato. All these persons are found to be literate Christians except for Visar, who was a non-Christian. But as he also studied in mission schools his value orientations might have been the same. He also is said to have adopted the Christian religion in his later life.
This means that there are different positions in a society and that they exist in a hierarchical order. This can occur only in a society with organised sections. Mosca defines elite as "an organised minority, obeying a single impulse which holds domination over an unorganised majority." In this sense the elite does not just hold a high position in the society, but also dominate over the majority and organisation is key to their influence.

We have seen that the Naga national leaders mostly come from the educated-rich Christian stratum of society. They were the ones who formed the Naga Club and NNC, which are organisations through which they propagated their ideas to the masses. Therefore we can say that the educated-rich Christian Nagas became the elite of the Naga society by forming organisations such as the Naga Club and the NNC, through which they were able to hold their domination over the Nagas. It may be pointed out here that what has been most often assumed as the Naga middle class is no more than a differentiated group of people, separated from the original bulk, who have gained a dominant position due to a change in the value system, which brought their educated status and the nature of their employment to prominence. We prefer to call it the Naga elite.

As the Nagas were under British rule, the Naga elite had no control over the reins of the government machinery. Yet, they could no longer equate themselves with the common man because of their newly acquired status. They became a displaced lot in the society because they could not identify themselves with the traditional social system anymore. They were faced with an identity crisis. The only way they could assert their new status and play a dominant role in the society was by forming a Naga organisation and assuming its leadership. There is no doubt that this led to the formation of the Naga Club, and later, the NNC.

With the formation of the Naga Club in 1918, for the first time an organisation claiming to represent the interests of the Naga people came to surface.\textsuperscript{41} An analysis of the Memorandum\textsuperscript{42} submitted by the Naga Club to the Simon Commission in 1929, points to the following:

1. There was no unity among the Nagas except for the political unity which resulted from the common British rule.

2. The Naga Club sees the Nagas as a single group which can be distinguished from other ethnic groups in the region or under the British imperial rule.

\textsuperscript{41} Chandrika Singh, \textit{Political Evolution In Nagaland}, (New Delhi, 1981), pp. 31 - 32.

\textsuperscript{42} See Appendix A.
3. Members of the Club take the Naga people to be a group divided into tribes which are different from one another.

4. Each member of the Club, signatory to the Memorandum, claimed to represent the whole of their respective tribes.

It is discernible from the above that the constitution of the Naga Club reflects the formation of a single political platform of the Nagas on the basis of tribe-wise representation. As members of the Naga Club belonged to the educated-rich Christian group, which constitutes the Naga elite, we may say that their idea of a tribe was derived from their Western education and cultural orientation, which made it possible for them to accept the tribal taxonomy and nomenclature as given by early anthropologists. In the previous Chapter we have already shown how such a classification of Nagas into various tribes not only found recognition from the administration and the Christian mission, but was also incorporated into the administrative and educational systems. In this respect it may be relevant to point out that most of the early tribal history of the Nagas were written by their administrators themselves.

There is no doubt that the Naga Club laid down the foundation for a separate Naga political entity consisting of
tribes. But it was the NNC which first used the term 'national' by way of denoting the Naga people. In 1945, the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. C. R. Pawsey, of the Naga Hills District formed the Naga Hills District Tribal Council. The immediate objective of the Council was to bring about the unification of the Nagas and the repairing of the damage caused by the World War II. Later, at its 1946 Wokha Session, it was renamed the Naga National Council (NNC). Under the NNC the Nagas were brought together for the first time within a single political organisation and it contributed immediately toward the emergence of an all-Naga consciousness. Misra write: "It was the NNC which, through its social and political demands and its method of organisation, paved the way for the emergence of a modern Naga nation."

Misra is of the opinion that the organisational pattern of the NNC was based on the traditional tribal pattern and there was no clash between the emerging 'middle class' leadership of the NNC and the traditional tribal councils which gave unstinted support to the movement led by the NNC. We agree with Misra as far as the relationship between the NNC leadership and the tribal

46. Ibid., p. 161.
47. Ibid., p. 161.
councils is concerned, but it is not true that the tribal pattern of organisation is a traditional legacy. An analytical overview of the NNC will show that the tribal councils were the handiwork of its leadership, borrowed from the Western political tradition of federalism.

The working system of the NNC has been briefly put by A. Z. Phizo in the following words:

"Every Naga is a member of the Naga National Council and every Naga has the right to speak in the Local, Regional and National Council. Each Naga village is a Republic with its own people's Assembly and court of Justice. The villages are combined again to form higher Regional councils for its parliamentary works. The Tribal Councils send its representatives to the Naga National Council."

The Yehzabo or the NNC's constitution of Nagaland, clearly states that the National government of Nagaland shall be the 'Federal Government of Nagaland'. This 'Government' is to be constituted with the Naga tribes as the units of the federation. In part 1, Clause 3, of the Constitution it is written:

"Each area or territory inhabited by the communities of a tribe shall be constituted into a federated unit to be called a Region and each of the Regions shall be given autonomy to the extent of management of local affairs and administration." 50

The Constitution also provides in part II, Clause 14, that citizens will not be discriminated on the basis of tribe. 51 But what constitutes this tribe or how is a tribe to be defined? From the above, we learn that a tribe consist of communities. These communities come from a grouping of villages. In part I, Clause 7 of the Constitution we read that "the demarcated boundary between Regions or sub-Regions from the day of the British shall continue to have legal recognition of this Yehzabo." 52 Thus, it can be seen that the sole criterion of the division of Nagas into various tribes was inherited from the British administration.

It is clear that the NNC envisages a political system based on a tribal structure in which the tribe retains its identity as a distinct political unit. The NNC passed a four-point resolution on June 19, 1946, claiming that it stands for the solidarity of all Naga tribes, including those in the unadministered areas, protesting against the grouping of Assam with Bengal, and demanding autonomy, along with a separate

50. Ibid., p. 96.
51. Ibid., p. 96.
52. Ibid., p. 96.
electorate within Assam in a free India.\textsuperscript{53} These resolutions point to the fact that, initially the political aspirations of the NNC did not amount to a sovereign state. It only called for a unified Naga political realm, endowed with autonomy. But this political stand of the NNC was soon to change. The NNC also repudiated the propositions that were made to retain the Naga Hills as a Crown colony or bring it under the United Nations Charter as a Trust Territory. They began to demand a fully independent state.\textsuperscript{54}

In 1947, the 9-point Hydari Agreement was signed between the NNC and Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, who represented India. The Agreement guarantees autonomy to the NNC for internal affairs in judicial, executive and economic spheres. But this Agreement was never implemented because it failed to clearly define whether it would lead to complete severance of the Nagas from India or retained them within India at the time of its expiration after ten years.\textsuperscript{55} After this, the NNC boycotted all Indian political activities. As a result, the Nagas did not participate in the election for the constitution of District Councils, and the General Elections in 1952. The NNC also declined the invitation to send representatives to the

\textsuperscript{55} See Asielie Pusa "The Emergence of Naga Consciousness", (Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation Submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1987), pp. 60 - 61.
Constituent Assembly of India. Instead, on the eve of January 26, 1950, when the new Constitution of India was to be Communicated, the NNC declared that the Nagas will become a free nation outside the Constitution of India. In 1951, it conducted a plebiscite in which it is reported that a unanimous vote in favour of independence form India was obtained from the Naga people.\(^{56}\)

It may be said, the NNC practically demonstrated that it was determined to go for a fully independent Naga state. It rejected any consideration of an autonomous status within India. But the Indian Government went ahead to formulate constitutional provisions and under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, autonomy in cultural, religious and economic matters as well as local administration has been made. This followed the pattern envisaged in the NNC Constitution which recognises the tribal organisation as the key socio-political and economic institution. But the NNC was no longer looking for mere autonomy or the protection of its tribe-based political formula.\(^{57}\) The armed uprising that ensued as a result of the NNC's determined struggle for full independence led the Assam Government to abolish the Tribal Councils existing under this scheme.\(^{58}\)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{56}}\) Ibid., pp. 61 - 62.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{58}}\) Ibid., p. 53.
The NNC went on to proclaim the establishment of a 'Federal Government of Nagaland' on March 22nd, 1956, and declared Nagaland as a 'People's Sovereign Republic'. This was followed by an armed confrontation which went unabated for years together, as the Nagas went underground and took up arms against India.

It is said that the sufferings and the violence became unbearable. This prompted a moderate group of the NNC to look for an alternative solution to the problem. They formed a Reforming Committee at Kohima, on February 18, 1957. These moderates opposed the violent methods of the NNC. In August 1957, they organised the first Naga people's Convention at Kohima. They demanded that the present Naga Hills District of Assam and Tuensang Frontier Division, along with the reserved forests of Naga Hills District which was transferred to Assam in 1921, should be constituted into a single administrative unit. The Indian Government responded by creating a new administrative unit called the Naga Hills Tuensang Area in 1957.

The desire for the establishment of a state of Nagaland within the Indian Union was brought up for the first time by the moderates, consequent to the Naga people's Convention held at

62. Ibid., p. 170.
Ungma, in May 1958. This came in the form of a Sixteen-point proposal which was adopted in the third Naga People's Convention held at Mokokchung from 22nd to 26th of October 1959. On January 24, 1961, Nagaland (Transitional Provision) Regulation was promulgated. It provided for an Interim body to act as the legislative body of Nagaland and an executive council to act as its Cabinet. The demand for statehood was realised in 1962, when the Thirteenth Constitution Amendment Bill and the Nagaland State Bill were passed by the Indian Parliament and the President of India was granted his assent. On December 1, 1963, the State of Nagaland was finally inaugurated.

It must be noted that the Sixteen-Point Agreement is not a digression from the tribal model of government which was the handiwork of the NNC. The proponents of this Agreement were only a moderate group of the NNC itself. The only difference was in the status of the government. The NNC wanted a sovereign state of Nagaland, independent from India. The moderates opted for a state within the federal Constitution of India. It is a fact that the Naga People's Conventions, organised by the moderates were attended by delegates who came as representatives of the various Naga tribes. It became quite evident that the tribe as a

63. Ibid., pp. 67 - 69.
64. Ibid., p. 77.
65. Ibid., pp. 86 - 90.
political unit as envisaged by the NNC was beginning to crystallise. It is no gainsaying that the moderates contemplated a Naga state on the same principle.

An examination of the Sixteen-Point Agreement reveals the continued desire to model the state of Nagaland within India in the lines of the tribal system of government propounded by the NNC. In Clause V of the Agreement we find that the Legislature is to consist of elected and nominated members who are to be representatives of different Naga tribes. According to Clause VIII, the Tribal Council is to constitute the main unit of local self-government. On the same basis, the Interim body constituted as a step towards statehood, was to consist of forty members according to the following tribal distribution: Five from the Angami tribe, four from each tribe such as Ao, Lotha, etc., and two from each minor tribe. Today the Nagaland Legislative Assembly consist of sixty members. Initially, for a period of ten years it was provided that the total number of seats was to be fortysix, with six of them allocated to Tuensang.

We can say that the attainment of statehood brought about a lull in the independent movement. This is because in it

the Naga elite found a role playing field. It partially fulfilled their need for an organised political system through which they could exercise their dominance over the masses. By taking over the government and assuming the seats of power, its status as the ruling class found materialisation. Thus their identity as the elite of the Naga society was crystallised.

It is already evident from the tribe-wise representation in the Naga Club and the NNC, that the Naga elite has accepted the tribe as the basic political unit of society. The roots of this can be traced back to the influence of British administration and the Christian missions. Tribal divisions among the Nagas were first identified by Westerners on the basis of language, costumes, territory and the like. But most of all when these divisions were formally incorporated into the administrative system and the church organisation, it found substance. The Naga elite came to realise their place because of the education they received from the Christian mission schools and their association with the administrative system. This more or less explains the process under which the Naga elite came to adopt the concept of tribe.

The organisation of Nagas on the basis of tribal identities has been a major characteristic which has resulted from the acceptance of such a concept. The organisation
of the Church and political entities such as Naga Club and NNC have been founded on the same tribal basis. In the formation of the state of Nagaland this tribal factor found reinforcement. It found a permanent political arena within which it could nurture itself. Since the state recognises the tribe as a political entity, it cannot function without making frequent references to it. Thus the tribal composition of society becomes a major determinant of the functioning of the government.

Therefore here, we have a State where politics is run by an elite, divided by their affiliation to different tribes. In such a case the elite may invoke tribal support and mobilise their respective tribes as a means to achieve certain political ends. This is further strengthened by the multi-tribal character of the state. Hence, tribes are no longer mere ethnic groups. The politicisation of tribes has taken place and this give rise to the emergence of inter-tribal politics as we shall see in the next Chapter.