The problem of the Nagas was a challenge to the British Government and continues to be a challenge to the Government of free India. No comprehensive historical study has been attempted so far of this interesting and important subject. In his "History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal", Sir Alexander Mackenzie deals with the Nagas mainly from the administrative point of view. Sir Robert Reid's "History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam" which covers the period subsequent to that dealt with in Mackenzie's work is also written from a similar standpoint. A recently published volume "British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam" by Dr. B.C. Chakravarty, deals with British relations with the Nagas in a rather sketchy manner and cannot claim to be a critical analysis of the problem as such.

The present work aims at providing a comprehensive and critical analysis of the relations of the British Government with the Nagas from 1835 to 1890. Security measures brought the British authorities in Assam in contact with the Nagas and before long they were drawn into the vortex of Naga politics. Exclusive in spirit, independent in bearing, the valiant Nagas could not tolerate foreigners interference in their affairs or their encroachments on their primordial
Hence followed raids and counter-raids which continued with occasional breaks during the period under our review. For a solution of this vexed problem there were changes in British policy towards the Nagas from tribe to tribe and from time to time. These changes have been analysed and examined in this work. Adequate attention has been given to the many-sided impact of the British on the Nagas, including that of the Christian missionaries who rendered invaluable services in redeeming tribal life from what the Westerners looked upon as utter backwardness.

This work is based mainly on official records, both published and unpublished, preserved at the National Archives in New Delhi, in the West Bengal State Archives in Calcutta, and in the Record Room of the Assam Secretariat at Shillong. Contemporary and semi-contemporary Reports, Journals and Memoirs have been utilised; besides, a large number of secondary works have also been consulted. Full references to primary and secondary sources have been given in the bibliography. It is hoped that some contribution has been made in this study to the discovery of new facts as also to fresh interpretations of previously known facts.

Gauhati, Assam

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