Chapter 5

Homeland, Son-of-the-Soil and the Emerging Sub-territoriality: An Overview

The vernacular geo-sophies of ethnic communities as discussed in the previous chapter have undergone significant changes especially in terms political imaginations of territories in the North-east India over the period. The post-Independent North-east India especially after late 70s has witnessed a backlash effect as simmering sub-nationalism\(^1\) began to gather momentum under the aegis of various categories of ethnic movements.

A common feature of the sub-nationalist movements that emerged and consolidated against the homogenizing project of the Indian State in the North-east India is the demand for “homeland territory”. These movements in various forms and nature such as autonomous/secessionist/irredentist are exclusively involved in demanding territorial stakes. Not only in terms of various forms, these movements display a wide spectrum of scale of territorial attachments/detachments from the local, state and regional level that cut across not only the conventional district/state/regional boundaries but also often evoking transnational ethnic soli-

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\(^{1}\) Noted Assamese scholar Sanjib Baruah uses the term to refer to “a dynamic essence that makes it inherently differently from nationalism, but describes a situation at a particular historical moment”, Baruah, *op. cit.*, p. 6.. While Baruah usages the term sub-nationalism in the context of Assamese aspirations and assertion of separate identity around the Assam Movement the usage of the term has been contested by other scholars. Marxist scholar Hiren Gohain refers to it as “Chuvanism”*Gohain, op. cit.* while historian Amalendu Guha has termed it as “Little Nationalism”*Guha, op. cit.* for the purposes of this study the term sub-nationalism is used to refer and specify the “geographical scale” of “sub-state” rather than with a wish to make a distinction between “nationalism” and “sub-nationalism”.
clarity and thus demanding territorial stake outside the territories of Indian union.

The importance of “territoriality” which has come to occupy the centrestage of the sub-nationalist movements indicates the simultaneity of the process of the process which has given rise to an en equivalent ethnic sub-territoriality. This display of attachments to the vernacular geo-bodies over their territorial stakes over the national territories, has led to costly internal conflicts both of local and sub-regional nature. As discussed in an earlier chapter in the context of the ceaseless territorial aggression of the Indian State under its inherited “territorial regime” from the colonial power, the emerging ethnic sub-territoriality can be best understood as a “backlash force” that has already come to have a grip in the collective imaginations of both of larger and smaller ethnic communities in the whole North-east Indian region.

The persistence of incessant sub-territoriality in the region and the conflict that it inspires run counter to one popular view of the consequences of growing globalization: capital, goods, and populations display increased mobility, and their detachment from territory should reduce/dilute the importance of vernacular spatialities. Quite contrary to this view, territorial assertions and contestations have persistently increased that have often turned into violent conflicts over the decades making the region a boiling cauldron for brewing of group-politico-territorial identities. Therefore, the emergence of the ethnic sub-territoriality in the North-east India demands an indepth introspection of sub-nationalist movements and its relations relationship to proliferation of group-politico-territorial identities with the changing social, economic and political circumstances. In this context

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2Samir Kr Das defines it as a site where the nation state is completely replicated and as a result contested. According to him in more negative term, it does not refer to subsumption, whether real or potential, of ethnic sub-territoriality under the abiding framework of state territoriality. The 'sub' - of the word is used in the case as a sub-text that underlines the so called territoriality of the modern state see Samir Kumar Das, “Ethnic Sub-Territoriality and the Modern State: The Case of North-Eastern India,” in Kanti P Bajpai and Siddharth Mallavarapu (eds.), International Relations in India: Theorising the Region and the Nation (Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2005), p. 287
this chapter attempts to provide a general preview of the simultaneous rise of sub-nationalism and sub-territoriality in the region in changing socio-political context in the context of post-Independent North-east India.

5.1 The Emergence of Group-Politico-Territorial Identities

In the context of the Indian State grappling well the problem of ethnic sub-territoriality with a broad modernist framework, where territory is seen as an exclusive principle and its maintenance and management being a prime task of the nation-making project particularly in the wake of what Sankaran Krishna terms as “post-colonial anxiety” had its own rippling effects on the peripheries like the North-east Indian region. As discussed in a previous chapter dealing with the territorial engagement of the post-Independent Indian State, where there had been drives to de-territorialize and subsequently re-territorialize the people and their territories through multiple strategies towards national integration that occasionally attempted to ran roughshod over the rights and aspirations of so-called peripheral minorities (religious, linguistic, regional, or other).

The very attempts of national integration in the region stimulated a backlash of sub-nationalist movements that emerged around a putative majoritarian identity often contesting it violently. The secular nationalist belief that land and territory are tied with a sacred organic unity began to melt down with the emergence of myriad group-politico-territorial identities vying for separate homeland territories. This section firstly discusses in brief about the linkages between the peculiar geo-ethnic and socio-economic context of the North-east Indian and the

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3He uses this term to refer to the mimetic social constructions of past, present, and future for state elites and educated middle classes in the third world as what has supposedly already happened elsewhere: namely, Europe or the west; see Sankaran Krishna, Post-Colonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Nationhood (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 19
emergence of group politico-territorial identities. Secondly, it attempts to provide a general overview of the prevailing nature of sub-nationalist movements and their expressions into insurgency leading to widespread violence in the whole region.

5.1.1 The Geo-Ethnic Character

According to David Harvey spatial practices 'take their meanings under specific social relations of class, gender, community, ethnicity or race' and get “used up” or “worked over” in the course of social action. Referring to Lefebvre, Harvey goes on to note that tension and conflict arise within society over the uses of space for individual and social purposes and the domination of space by the state and other forms of class and power. This conflict can give rise to social movements whose aim is to liberate space by resisting the processes of domination. Such conflicts are grounded in particular places, since place is the arena where social structure and social relations intersect, giving rise to relations of power, domination and resistance.

The multiethnic and multi-cultural setting of India and India’s struggle to define its nationhood since the nationalist movement provided a fertile soil for the development of sub-nationalism and other forms of identity-quest. Closely linked to, and in some way encapsulated in, the idea of sub-nationalism became more popular political terminology called “regionalism”, which is prevalent in many parts of India. With the ebb and flow over time regionalism has almost become a household term in the political space of post-Independent India as it is pulled asunder by regional and sub-national feelings and movements in all parts of the country.

The failure of a disintegrating central power to uphold the federal fabric is reflected in the increasing use and abuse of emergency provisions being applied frequently during the 70s and 80s period of the last century. As observed frequently

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since it has not settled the notion of its identity in a manner convincing to all the people-groups within, India as a “nation” also suffers acute identity crisis. To put more precisely in G. Aloysius’s observation, Indian nationalism, so far, has failed to construct the nation in India5.

Although, the North-east India what came to be represented as a homogenized region- a product of the post-Independent engagement of the Indian State as discussed in details in chapter-3, it hardly provides an impression about the geo-ethnic character of the region. The seven states of the region displays a wider spectrum of geo-ethnic character both within and between all the states. Topographically, these seven states can be broadly divided into “plain” and “hill” states, depending on their topography and culture of the people living in them. Looking from this perspective Assam and Tripura is the dominant “plain” state; remaining four are strictly defined as “hill” states.

However, the separation of plain and hill is more than topographical. The Assam valley has a majority Hindu population, while the hill areas are dominated by a variety of Christian and non-Christian and non-Hindu animist groups. More importantly one can note that religious differences have not created deep divisions between the plain and the hill areas. This may be because the “plain” state of Assam that serves as a hinterland connects the North-east region to the rest of India, and maintaining good relationships between the states is the crucial for enabling smooth and continuous exchanges through neither the narrow corridor, which is no more than a mile wide in western Assam.

Since Assam through an ephemeral connection with the Indian mainland especially what came to be known as the “chicken’s neck”, the administrative division between hill and plain states -a colonial legacy of mapping and boundary making persisted after the independence, which was subsequently adopted by the Indian State as a benchmark for regional administration. As discussed in details

5G Aloysius, Nationalism without a Nation in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).
in chapter-3 this dubious distinction is often emphasized for administrative pur-
pose under various policy heads. The North-east India often looked through the
eye as region marginally connected to the Indian union having ethnic population
of dubious loyalties reflects the singularity of the Indian government’s perception
and vision.

While there is no denying the contemporary geographical reality of the North-
east India, yet the complexities are bound to arise when the term is used as an
umbrella connotation involving political and cultural aspects as well. It is true that
the states which constitute the North-east region emerged out of the undivided
Assam and still happens to share certain commonalities. For these states not
only possess distinct cultural-historical traditions, but economically they too are
in different stages of growth. Present-day Assam, made up of primarily of the
Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, for example presents a very different picture when
placed with the neighbouring states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura,
Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Assam had a deep and wide-ranging cultural
intercourse with the rest of the Indian sub-continent centuries before the other
neighbouring hills regions came to know of the “mainstream”.

Historically, when most of other regions were living on a subsistence economy,
Assam was engaged in trade and commerce with neighbouring Bengal and state
formation had taken place. Of all the hill tribes, it was only the Khasis and the
Jaintias who had a moderately developed economy, with the Khasis engaging in
vigorous trade with the present-day Bangladesh, while Manipur also underwent
the process of state formation from relatively early times. Compared to the well
documented history of Assam from the fourth century A.D. onwards, little is
known about the hilly regions of the North-eastern region which today forms the
part of states of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura, and Manipur.

The lone exception seems to be Meghalaya, made up of Khasi and Jaintia
Hills, where agriculture and trade were relatively developed, with primitive tribal
stable order, which ironically had been quite alarming and disturbing. In a polymorphic society like the North-east, the backlash effect of ethnic identity against the centrally sponsored territorialization move mainly garnered for regional administration has been significantly widespread. Such attempts reflected government’s conscious efforts to “tribalize” the ethnic faultlines by utilizing colonial imageries (a gift from the colonial power) in order to temper with the fuzzy geographies through consigning them particularistic regional and ethnic identities. This effort got intensified after independence through manipulative politics of instrumentalist action\textsuperscript{11}. Similarly, through state-sponsored “national geographic” portrayal of lifeworld of ethnic communities in media made to freeze in terms distinct “thin narratives”.

5.1.2 The Backlash From Periphery

Although, existing as a nation-state for the last sixth decades, India has been struggling to find the central integrative force for centripetal force that can bind it together as a “nation”. While the dominant Indic culture at the centre continued its quest for self-identity on the basis of its religious and cultural identity, those in the periphery have been reacting to such potentially hegemonic and oppres-

\textsuperscript{11}instrumental action has been extremely important in producing geographies of identification in the case of the North-east India. Following Independence, the governmental approach to tribals was radically altered. The old policy of maintaining status quo and isolation was replaced by a policy of development and integration. The post-Independence period has been one of acceleration in the pace of social change and modernization of various tribal groups and their effective induction within the framework of the nation-state. However, it is also during the last five and a half decades since independence that the freeze effect in the various social formations became more vivid, functional and effective in turning tribes, castes, communities and language groups into ethnic blocks. Many groups have shown varying degrees of strain in accepting and adjusting to the demands of integration, which often has an assimilation overtone, made on them. Thus, while the pre-colonial setting was fluid and flexible, the colonial and post-colonial settings have been less so and the societal boundaries became more rigid, doing in the process distinct cultural orientation the phenomenon what we call ethnicity. Societies in the North-east India became ethno-political blocks. In addition, this period is characterized by revivalist trend so that the various social formations looked to their primordial cultural assets to define and consolidate their boundaries see A C Bhagawati, Ethnic Identities in North-east India, N K Bose Memorial Lectures. Vihangama - Vihangama, IGNCA Newsletter, 2002
sive movement. As the contemporary imagination of the Hindu elites rooted in the imagination of India in terms of the doe eyed Bharatmata\textsuperscript{12} of the Akhand Bharat\textsuperscript{13} rules the roost in their attempts to find the religio-cultural basis of the nation of India, peripheral regions like the North-east India exhibits an uncertainty and vulnerability with regard to such integrative forces and its effect is evident in the whole region.

Since India’s independence in 1947, there hardly seems any single decade of calm political atmosphere in the North-east Indian region. Instead, each decade saw new movements of political unrest, most of which turned to violent revolutions turning the whole region into a boiling cauldron for ethnopolitical movements to the extent that in the political parlance of contemporary India, the very term “Northeast” has almost come to denote a region characterized by violent deaths, fear and retribution. A prominent feature of the post-independent period in the political space of North-east India is a cessus-belli\textsuperscript{14} - a fervent outcry with the emergence of larger and smaller ethnic groups for separate homeland territory

\textsuperscript{12}The Bharat Mata is personified as a mother goddess. She is usually depicted as a women clad in orange or saffron saree holding a flag and sometimes, accompanied by a lion. In fact, there is a popular cartography marked by the convergence of two modalities of seeing India a disenchanted geographic habit in which its territory is visualized as a geo-body, and an enchanted somaticism in which India is the affect laden body of Bharat Mata see Ramaswamy, op. cit., p. 152

\textsuperscript{13}The term Greater India refers to the historical spread of the Culture of India beyond the Indian subcontinent proper. This concerns the spread of Hinduism in Southeast Asia in particular, introduced by the Indianized kingdoms of the 5th to 15th centuries, but may also extend to the earlier spread of Buddhism from India to Central Asia and China by way of the Silk Road during the early centuries CE. To the west, Greater India overlaps with Greater Persia in the Hindukush and Pamir mountains. Historically, the term is also tied to the geographic uncertainties surrounding the “Indies” during the Age of Exploration. According Sumathi Ramaswamy while ‘India’ might well have been discursively Sanskritized, Aryanized, and Hinduized thus through Puranic construct of ‘Bharat’, it is notable that in the cartographic practices of popular-and-official nationalism, no effort is made to return to the Puranic shape of this imagined territory. In fact, the national geo-body continues to be indebted to the disenchanted colonial enframing of ‘India’, even in patriotic visual practice. During the Swadeshi movement a young group of Bengali men resolved to sacrifice their life fighting for independence from colonial rule by making a pledge to Bharat Mata in front of a map of India. Most strikingly, in an English translation of Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra’s Annandamath which incorporated the hymn, ‘the motherland’ is presented explicitly in cartographic terms as it is unambiguously identified as ‘India’ both significant departures from the original Bengali text see Ramaswamy, op. cit., p. 170-171
demanding autonomy through the political mobilization of local based forces.

The question of fragmented identities remained dominant across politically defined territory that became a fertile ground for the multiplication of ethnic identities probing questions of their "self" and "other" identities. The emergence of homeland ethnicity is a reflection of how indirect and sub textual "deep culture" that has acquired the capacity of local actors to contribute to the making of history of their territories. Homeland ethnicity is a collective identity based on residence in the homeland. It forms the basis for ethnic nationalism (or ethnonationalism), which develops when a homeland national group aspires to state power\(^\text{14}\). The shared elements between multiethnic sub-nationalist movements include the tendency of both to ground their autonomy-seeking assertions in a historical territorial claim. Such claims are typically rendered in patterns of mobilization that incorporate a broad variety of localities and leaders and villagers within the region in their claim for adherence to a common ethnic group.

Insurgency, an extreme form of ethnopolitical upsurge, has rocked five of the seven states at one time or another, and the remaining two states are highly poised for a similar movement. It took roots in Nagaland and Manipur in the early fifties, immediately after the establishment of the Republic [of India], those in Mizoram, in the sixties, in Tripura in the seventies, while in the case of Assam it has arrived in the eighties. Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh are just now menacingly militant, not yet insurgent though, Karbi Anglong\(^\text{15}\) too is equally poised.

These movements since the very beginning have been aiming to widen the degree of political autonomy of a particular region to achieve outright territorial autonomy demanding either separate state within the Indian Union or independent state outside Indian Union or separate autonomous districts or states within the state. For instance sub-national movements emerging from differ-


\(^{15}\)a district of Assam
ent parts of North-east India such as the Naga National Movement, Mizoram Movement, Manipur Movements (Zellingrong, Mecitei State Committee, Kukiland Movement), Tripura Upajati Juba Samity, All Party Hills Leaders' Conference, Bodoland Movement, Mishing Autonomous District Movement, Karbi Anglong Sperate State Demand, Khasi Movement etc. are engaged mostly in demands of various degrees ranging from autonomy to secession.

The slow process of socio-economic change, the transforming ethnic dimensions of power the structure, the policies and strategies and tactics have found new meanings in the emergence of group-politico-territorial identities. The inward-looking self definition of identity as an ethnonational entity now not only effects the people’s relations with “the outsiders”, but also the inter-ethnic groups’ relations within the region. The expectations to achieve economic and political liberation on the basis of ethnic groups have led to feuds between the people groups within the region. Although a common enemy is still strongly felt to be “the outsiders”, in their attempts to define one’s ethnonationality within the struggle for “autonomy” and “liberation”, the more powerful neighboring ethnic groups came to be identified as obstacles.

Unlike communist insurgencies, which are inclusive of their disposition, the smaller and larger groups operating in the North-east India are mostly ethnic in character. Only insurgents groups like United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) claim that they uphold the interests of the all inhabitants of Assam and Manipur respectively. Most others while active in particular regions within the existing states\(^{16}\) or have their base in more than one North-eastern states\(^ {17}\) basically represent the interest of their political communities. Identity and security of the communities to which they belong are their major

\(^{16}\)for example insurgent groups like the Dima Halam Daoga (DHD), United Peoples' Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), National Democratic Front for Boros (NDFB) operating in Assam

\(^{17}\)insurgent groups like the National Socialist Council for Nagaland (NSCN), Kuki National Volunteers (KNV), Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) etc.
concern. They usually feed on the belief or myth that historically, racially and culturally the indigenous community in the North-east India are different from the Indians and that they had nothing to do with India before the arrival of the British. They hold the Indian State responsible for the dilemmas and sufferings of their communities and try to seek the support of their community people by convincing them that only through armed struggle they could secure independence/autonomy from/within the Indian Union.

Over the period of time, large number of the autonomy movements have turned into “secessionist” in nature often adopting violent methods with widespread engagement with militant activities and thus taking arm against the state. A look at the data sheets maintained by the South Asia Terrorist Portal depicts that the decade of 1990-2000 had been quite a violent one(Figure:5.1,p. 211). Majority of the North-east Indian states have witnessed heavy loss of human lives along with unparalleled economic, socio-psychological cost. Considering the three worst hit states of militant sub-nationalism Assam, Manipur and Nagaland, although, the spread sheets depicts the gradual slant in the overview of the violence since 1997 other states like Meghlaya and Mizoram has witnessed considerable increase in violence after 2000.

However, it is observed that contemporary intelligence agencies have a tendency to exaggerates the actual situation by branding most of the militant outfits as “insurgents.” In actual sense militants who are taking arms with avowed objective of seceding from the Indian Union establishing their own sovereign states engaged in actual insurgent activities are less in numbers as often quoted in government reports and statistics. Nevertheless, the geographical linkages between the largely virtually unadministered areas which are most outside the pale of the state coupled with the tribal affinities across the various Union Territories

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and States across in the region such as to make militant groups interaction feasible (Figure 5.2, p. 213). If the virtually unadministered areas Burmese tribal and hilly areas adjacent to the North-east provides a heaven for them as well as relatively safer trekking route to China, the poorly mannered borders of the tribal populated and somewhat turbulent Chittagang Hill Tracts (CHTs) also provide a refuge to their co-ethnics. While all of them may not have desired secession (e.g. the Chakmas), all of them seem to have one thing in common: an acute sense of relative deprivation and grievance vis-a-vis the institutions of power and the authority at the local and central levels.
Figure 5.1: Overview of Incidence of Violence in North-east India

(a) Assam

(b) Nagaland

(c) Manipur

(d) Meghalaya

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal http://www.satp.org/ (accessed on 12.01.2009)
5.2 Naga and Khasi Movement: A Historical and Political Outline

As discussed in the previous section one immediate response to the rush of events and the insecurity and fears generated in the minds of the communities in the North-east India was to politically assert themselves. It was realized that to safeguard their interest and aspiration they must come out of their insularity and thus get involved in demanding their rights. Associated with such responses were certain political events more specifically “moments” which were equally important in defining and guiding the emergence and course of these movements.

Every movement emerges out of certain historical, social, economic and political context which is important for understanding the nature and character of the movement. Both the Naga and Khasi movement bears the unique stamp of these processes. In the previous section a general overview of different sub-nationalist movements prevailing in the North-east Indian region had been presented. The major focus of the thesis being on the Naga and Khasis demands more elaborate and detail treatment of historical, political and social backdrop under which these two movements emerged with its own distinct character and nature. This section presents a the historical, social and political canvass of these two movements which has underwent many distinct phases.

5.2.1 The Emergence of Naga Movement

The Naga struggle for a homeland territory is one of the oldest ethnic movements of post-Independence India which took an insurrectionary form in the early fifties. Prior to becoming a full-fledged state of the Indian Union in 1962, Nagaland was just a district of Assam. The demand for a separate Nagaland was first raised when the Naga Club which was formed in 1918 submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1919. It was formed under the experience of World War I to which approximately 2000 Nagas, recruited for Labour Corps in France, had been
Figure 5.2: Map of Spatial Location of Some Prominent Terrorist Groups in North-east India

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal http://www.satp.org/ (accessed on 12.01.2009)
directly exposed. The memorandum, actually drafted by Ruzhukrie, a Naga school teacher, with the help of a few friends including Khasi gentlemen who worked in the Deputy Commissioner’s Office, said that “our Hills may be withdrawn from the Reformed Scheme and placed outside the Reforms but directly under the British Government”.

The memorandum went on to explain that they did not “wish for reforms”. Before the British government conquered our country in 1879-1880, we were living in a state of intermittent warfare with the Assamese of the Assam Valley to the north or our country and the Manipuris to the south. They never conquered us, nor were we subjected to their rule”. The memorandum concluded “leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times”. The demand of the Naga though not fulfilled but it successfully laid the foundation for their future emergence of movement for separate Nagaland. The club’s effort to collect signatures of leading persons belonging to different tribal groups itself spread the seeds of Naga concept of Nationality and aspiration for building independent Naga nation which acted as the driving force for the movements19.

Prior to the formation of the Naga National Council (NNC) the Naga Club was the main centre for social and political gatherings. In fact it was was the first sign of aspirations of the Nagas to nationhood. Charles Pawsey, a civil servant working in the Naga Hills for years together established the Naga Hills District Tribal Council which united all the Nagas and merged all the Tribal Councils that existed among the various Naga tribes20. But the fast changing political

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19 Although the Naga Club claimed to represent as many as twenty tribes, it was clear from the memorandum that there was not much of political interaction between the tribes and the idea of a common approach to Naga issues was quite a new one. For the memorandum said: “Our country within the administered area consists of eight tribes, quite different from one another with quite different languages which can not be understood by each other and there are more tribes outside the administered area which are not known at present. We have have not unity among us and it is only the British Government that is holding us together” quoted in Udayon Misra, The Periphery Strikes Back: Challenges to Nation-State in Assam and Nagaland (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2000), p. 28

20 Towards the end of British rule in the territory of Naga dominated areas saw some visible
scenario in the subcontinent threw Pawsey's plan into quandary and his incipient Tribal Council got turned into the Naga National Council at a meeting held by representatives of different tribes in Wokha, the centre of the Lotha Nagas on 2nd February in 194621.

The ideas and efforts of the movement for an autonomous state began to take concrete form after the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed in 1945 at the initiative of the then Deputy Commissioner C.R. Pawsey. The main objective of the Council, however, was to unify the Nagas on modern lines and it received official patronage as a unifying and moderating influence22. So, enamored by the new found unity among the Naga tribes, Hutton a colonial administrator who spent much of his life in the Naga Hills in various capacities being an anthropologist and an Indian Civil Service Officer from 1909-1935 writing in 1965 observed:

"To one living and working in the Naga Hills in daily contact with various tribes from all parts of the district, as I was roughly from 1913 to 1930, the differences in language, custom, dress, appearance and psychology, seemed so marked that the inherent unity of the Naga tribes tended to be obscured by their differences. This extended even to villages, so that after a time it was often possible to guess at a man's village by his general appearance and his face, and, after a longish

shifts regarding the perspective of the Britishers towards Nagas. In Peter Robb's interesting account regarding such shifts in British Policy towards ruling the Nagas holds that motive behind formation of new administration and governance mechanism which drastically contrast the earlier stand of leaving the Nagas to isolation reflected the motive behind which not only needed to define and defend British territories but also the need to identify people who were to be treated as British subjects Robb, op. cit.,p. 262

21 It is to be noted that the term 'national' was being used for the first time

22 Opening the hall of the central tribal council on 27 November, 1946, P. Adams, the Subdivisional officer, Mokokchung stressed the importance of unity among the Naga tribes. Concluding his speech: "List of all", he said, "I should request you to stop the use of hot words, but you must remember that these words always delay the unity of your people. Try to settle all affairs and misunderstanding amicably. By doing this you will make yourself a nation" quoted in Asoso Yomuo, The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study (Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1974),p. 162

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acquaintance with the district, if one could guess that, one could not infrequently guess the business that had brought him. All this rather meant that one could not see the forest for the trees. Now after another thirty years or so it is possible to look back and take a wider view and see the Nagas as a people rather than an assortment of tribes or even of villages, though what I have to say now must be read subject to the proviso that I am writing of the Nagas as I knew them over thirty years ago.23

The NNC primarily aimed at representing the Naga interests and mobilizing support to the British officers working for the social, political and cultural development of the Nagas. Originally it consisted of 29 members24, representing the various tribes and published a monthly newspaper entitled “Naga Nation”25. In December 1946, Imti Aliba, the president of the NNC, declared at Kohima:

“The NNC stands for the unification of all the tribes and their freedom. Our country is connected with India, connected with many ways. We should continue that connection. I do not mind whether future India be a Congress Government or a League. But as a distinctive community, as I stated before, we must develop according to our genius and taste. We shall enjoy home-rule in our country, but on the

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24 According to A.Z. Phizo, 4/5 th members of the NNC were government servants see Verrier Elwin, Nagaland (New Delhi: Spectrum Publications, 1997(rpt.)), p.52. regarding the composition of the NNC one also gets an idea of the inter-tribal character when one looks Kohima Central Council and the Mokokchung Central Council. While the Kohima Council of the NNC had seven Angami members out of a total of twelve, the Mokokchung Council had five Aos, four Semas, and three Lothas, two Sangtams and One Chang. It is quite clear that right from the beginning, certain tribes like the Angamis and the Aos had an edge over others within the NNC set up. Incidentally, the Angamis were the first to adopt government reforms carried during the British period like adoption of terrace cultivation and western education and thus reaping benefits out of it see Misra, op. cit., p. 29
broader issues be connected with India. We must fight get it, keep on watching.\textsuperscript{26}

In fact, the Naga struggle took a direction with the formation of Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946. It is this organization which expressed and modulated the “Naga sense of nationhood”. This was the beginning of the modern phase of Naga movement\textsuperscript{27}. Right from the beginning the NNC claimed that, except for seventy or so years of British control from the 1880s onwards, the Nagas had never formed part of what today constitutes the Indian nation. This feeling of separateness from the rest of India was widely shared that what initially appeared to be a demand for autonomy aimed at safeguarding the Naga “way of life” soon snowballed into people’s revolt led by the Naga National Council. Under Phizo’s leadership the NNC emerged as an amorphous middle-class\textsuperscript{28} organization wedded to the idea of sovereign Naga homeland\textsuperscript{29}.

Autonomy and not secession, was the initial demand of the Naga people. For instance, when the Cabinet Mission Plan was published, the NNC meeting in Workha in June 1946 adopted a resolution demanding autonomy within Assam and opposing the proposals for a Crown Colony as “Grouping Scheme”\textsuperscript{30}. The imminent departure of the British coupled with the lack of any clear cut on the


\textsuperscript{28}The Naga middle was the result of western education and the monetized economy. Almost all the leaders of the NNC were drawn from this class. They carried the chiefs and the tribal councils with them by raising apprehensions about a threat to their powers and privileges as well as to overall Naga pattern of life from outside forces see Misra, op. cit., p. 42

\textsuperscript{29}The Naga demand for full-fledged independence was published in Orient Press of India, dated 23rd December 1946, according to which Messrs. A.Z. Phizo and T. Sakrie in an interview with the special correspondent of Azad, stated that the Nagas stand for a separate independent state of their own. The of its authenticity was raised in Legislative Assembly by Seth Govind Das with Jawaharlal Nehru, replying in affirmative. However, Nehru dismissed the demand, saying that the statement had no particular importance and also did not represent any substantial opinion cited in Sema, op. cit., p. 153

\textsuperscript{30}Chaube, op. cit., p. 69.
part of the Congress leadership deepened apprehensions in the Naga mind, with some of the leading tribes bent on securing a Naga homeland which would fit in with their idea of tribal self-sufficiency and independence. Accustomed as they were to a life of fierce independence, the Naga chiefs were naturally apprehensive of any moves initiated from outside; and in mobilizing the opinion of the chiefs the small section of the educated Nagas played a decisive role. While the Ao leadership was in favour of autonomy clearly within the Indian Union, the Angami leaders were more intransigent.\footnote{Misra, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 27.}

After the formation of NNC one of the first acts of the NNC after Phizo took over was to reject the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which provided for wide powers to District Council which would be elected bodies and replace the traditional tribal councils. Nevertheless, the support of the village chiefs and tribal councils for the NNC was amply demonstrated during the "plebiscite" for Naga independence which Phizo organized from May to August, 1951. During this period NNC volunteers visited remotest of Naga villages and collected signatures and thumb impressions and administered oaths in the tribal fashion for the fight for independence. This was followed by a total boycott of the 1952 General Elections, with no nomination papers being filed in the Naga Hills. However the virtual crackdown of NNC by government of India using armed forces and active participation of Naga people in the electoral process marked the start of a new era of Naga territories as part of Indian Union.

Never for once did the Congress nationalist did seriously ponder over the emerging Naga movement. Rather the Congress Nationalists were sharp and unsympathetic. Jawaharlal Nehru, then president of the Indian National Congress had set down his views in his letter to the NNC President that the Nagas were backward people, who would require considerable help for their all round development and also that the land was too small to stand by itself politically and economically. He
the effect of the failed 'peace talks', which in turn led to the politics of Naga tribalism. Suspicion developed in the rank of the FGN set up. This was evident as, when the talks reached a deadlock, the Tatar Ho Ho (National Parliament) had its session from October 14-16, 1967 at Shapoumaram in Mao Division of Manipur.

Six rounds of talks between the insurgents and the Centre resulted in a deadlock and the Peace Mission was dissolved in 1967. In 1972, the Centre banned the NNC, the NFG and the NFA as “unlawful associations” under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967. The Shillong accord in 1975 became another watershed and a section laid down their arms. However, the subsequent failure of the Shillong Accord to strike peace between the Nagas and the Indian government led to factionalism among the movement leaders. The controversies surrounding the Shillong Accord which was signed between the representatives of NNC and the FGN and the Government of India in 1975 created further ripples and factions among the Nagas involved in the struggle.

Following the signing of the controversial Shillong Accord between the representatives of the NNC-FGN and the Government of India, a section of the Naga political leadership marked the attempts to reorganize and consolidate its remaining forces. National Socialist Council for Nagaland emerged as a major force to lead the Naga struggle with Thuengaling, Muivah, Secretary; S.S. Khaplang, Vice Chairman and Isack Chisi Swu as the Chairman. It is be noted here that the Shillong Accord was rejected both by Phizo and a section of the NNC leadership led by Thuengaling Muivah and Isak Swu. The NSCN issued its manifesto in 1980 in which it declared the Phizoite NNC to be a spent force which had turned “treacherous and reactionary”. It affirmed its commitment to a sovereign,
independent Nagaland which would be "socialist" and Christian in character.

Though the NNC split after the Shillong Accord of November 1975 and the NSCN was born in 1980, the later was soon to be engulfed by internal dissention. As Udayon Misra notes it also marked a where the political wing of the Naga struggle (Tatar HoHo) got gradually marginalized and it was virtually armed wing of the movement Naga Federal Army which now calls the shot. With emergence of Nagas within the Manipur in Ukhrul, Chandel and Tamenglong District, the idea of "Greater Nagalim" emerged which not only proposed to include the territories of Nagaland but also Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram as well as Burma. It also marked the clashes between Naga rebels with Meiteis and the Kukis which were drawn into a vortex of narrow ethnocentric politics.34

5.2.2 The Emergence of Khasi Movement

The genesis of the Khasi Movement for an exclusive Khasi homeland territory is after post-Independence unlike the Naga movement which was started before the Independence of India. The Khasis's had been quite discontent under the British rule because of the exploitative colonial administrative policies. As early as 1829 the Khasi chiefs had revolted against the interference with the traditional rights on land and forest and the imposition of new taxes. The Khasi and Jaintia Hills which had been tugged to the Province of Assam for longer duration were administered by colonial officers and local elites especially the Assamese and Bengalis elites who harbored the view similar views regarding the separation of backward "hill" territories from the progressive and profiteering "plain" territories as a part of administrative reforms in the last phase of colonial rule. The attitude of the Assamese elite can be gauged from a remark made by a responsivist during a legislative discussion:

34Misra, op. cit.
“Before long Assam Valley will have to see its own way to disjoin itself from the hill district.”

J.H. Hutton, a high ranking colonial administrator and anthropologist, vehemently argued for the separation of hills from the plain territories. In a note prepared for withdrawals of the Hills Districts From Assam to be placed on the Reform Council he observed that the interest of the hills must be sacrificed as:

“...their population is impecunious unlettered, rural and much too simple to complete with plainsman in legal or political finesse.”

According to Hutton, observed that there is a marked difference from cultural point view. He observed that the tribes are Indians only in “barest geographical sense” though they are included within the “political boundaries of the Indian Empire.” He also observes that the Hills are an unprofitable possession and a deficit area within the exception of Jaintia Hills. According to him the Hills are occupied by the English to protect the plains.

The reforms initiated during the last phase of British rule had different reactions emerging out in the erstwhile two hill districts of Khasi and Jaintia hills and the Garo Hills which formed with Shillong and Jowai as its headquarters. With regard to the Crown Colony Plan while Rev. L. Gatpoh who represented the Jaintia hills in Assam Legislature hoped that hills would come into the colonial protectorate while his friend and colleague and minister in Assam Government, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy who was returned on a Congress ticket from the Shillong Constituency took the opposite stand. He informed the British Cabinet Mission

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36 Ibid., p. 184.
37 Ibid., p. 185-186.
39 Ibid.
that “the people of the hills who are educated and who had experience in this political rule are greatly against such a rule.” He opined that the Protectorate idea would be economically viable. “When the whole India would be independent,” he told the Mission, “the hill people of Assam should also get their share of independence and they should be connected with the Province of Assam.” 40. Three Garos representing their people filled with dismay to hear the rumours that there was a plan of some British officials in Assam to exclude their district from Assam and India41.

Nichols Roy argued that there should be no difference between Khasi States and British Area. Secondly, the Treaties entered into between the Khasi States and the British Government should no longer in force. Thirdly, the administrative set in the Khasi State should remain as they are, though with the exception that they may be reformed to bring them to the properly constituted administration which should be more advanced. He prepared a draft for the future administration of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. According to the draft, the Khasi States and the British areas from all parts of the district would form ‘The Khasi and Jaintia Federated State’. This ‘State’ would consist of twenty five Khasi States, thirty one British Areas, Jaintia Hills with twenty Ilaka Dolois and two Ilaka Sardars, and two Nongwah consisting of thirteen villages42.

The movement surrounding the unification of hills areas slowly gathered pace with increasing feeling of insecurity and alienation among the tribal leaders. Initially the Hill Leaders Union was formed in 1945 at Shillong who resolved to work for the welfare of the then Assam. Prominent leaders of this movement were from the Khasi and Jaintia and Garo hills like Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Capt Lyngdoh and J Marak. There was also a move to unify the hills and plains which got artic-

40Ibid.  
42cited inGiri, op. cit.,p. 228
ulated into the formation of The Plains and Hills Tribals and Races Association in 1945. However, most notably both the organization pattered out within few years\textsuperscript{43}. However, Nichols Roy’s ideas had many contenders also. The opposition mainly came from another political organization -the Khasi Jaintia Political Organization with Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh as Secretary who challenged the authenticity of Nichols Roy to speak for the Khasis\textsuperscript{44}.

The overemphasis of the separation of the Hills and the Plains initially set forth by the colonial policy and later by Assamese elites came to grip the political articulation of the Khasi leaders also. MacDonald Kongor the President of the ‘Hills Union’ and the Khasi National Durbar stressed that the Federation of Khasi States should be given equal status with other Provinces within the Indian Union. He argued that the Hills and the Plains could not be united together, because in origin, the Khasis are different from that of the plains in customs, traditions, language, beliefs and usage. He felt that the Hills and the Plains could not work hand in hand. The Plains according McDonald looked down upon the Hills as the savages, while the Hills regard the Plains as the cunning. He hold the view that the Khasi States Federation should be given the right to self-determination to secede from a Federation of their own, which would be given given equal status with other Provinces. In like manner another view was expressed by the Khasi ladies, K. Kharsati, Blantimai Syiem, Dr. Estherly Laloo and others who strongly stood up for the preservation of the matrilineal society. About six hundred of them went to the Governor with Memorandum given to him which concludes:

“The world has given birth to these hills, like a line demarcating and dividing valleys, they will not vanish away or sink into valleys.”\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43}Nag, op. cit., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{44}Giri, op. cit., p. 231.
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., p. 237-238.
In the meantime, the Khasi States People's Union emerged under Professor G.G. Swell, MacDonald Kongor and Dr. S.R. Boney which supported the cause of the Federation of the Khasi States from the Province of Assam and that they should be placed in direct relation with the Indian Union. To pacify the demands of separate Hill territories through constitutional Amendment the Sixth Schedule was introduced to provide a single administration to make distinction between hill territories and plain territories. Under it the Khasis were allowed to retain their traditional institutions, customs and usages of the people. The very basis of the Sixth Schedule was that tribal communities should be left to decide for themselves. The District Council was given power under specific provisions to make laws with respect to necessities of the situation. On the eve of Independence the Khasi leaders formed the Federation and jointly signed the instrument of Accession to the Dominion of India.

The Sixth Schedule felt short of aspirations of the the deep rooted problem around the division of Hills and the Plains became which became focal point for brewing of discontent among the Khasis. During the 1957 the local parties in the Khasi and Garo Hills swept the polls on the basis of the demand for the Hill State. The preponderance of crops, better communication and higher literacy as Sinha holds raised the aspirations of the local people. In 1960 the All Party Hill Leaders Conference amalgamating all local local parties was formed. In the 1962 general election 53 percent of the hill people voted for the Hill State. However, in 1965 the Pataskar Commission was appointed to make recommendation for autonomy to the hill people. The commission rejected the idea of a separate administration for hill areas. In opposition to its recommendations the Hill Leaders' Conference rejected its suggestions and persisted their demand for a separate State. Ultimately a separate state of Meghalaya was created in January 1972 consisting of the Khasi, Jaintia and the Garo Hills.
The Khasis scene to some extent differs from the Nagas to some extent with possibility due to more direct western contact through English education and the emergence of an educated middle class engaged in white collar professions. This educated section were also engaged in trade. While the role of ascriptive leaders like the Nokmas and Laskars of Garo Hills; the Syiems, Wahadadars and the Sardars of the Khasi Hills and the Dolois of the Jaintia Hills got diminished by their respective their respective autonomous District Councils that of the modern leaders got increased due to their achievement-orientation in the various fields of profession like business, law, and teaching. Incidentally in politics of ethnic groups most of the earlier leaders came from the British areas who represented mostly in democratic institutions who continued to be at the helm of affairs even after Independence. Meanwhile the traditional leaders got further away from the mainstream ethnic politics and had always carried a sense of separate identity in smaller groups. The political integration of the Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos could not take place even with the attainment of Meghalaya as a separate State.

The emergence of an exclusive Khasi homeland movement got built up on successive students movements most of which during the initial period was non-political nature. The Khasi Students Association (KSA) was launched on July 30, 1955 with the objective of nurturing the spirit of cooperation and mutual help among the local students to elevate the standard of education, to nurture politeness and work for social and cultural development of the Khasi Hills. It also pledged to be non-political and uphold the commitment of the students. The KSA was mostly absorbed with its own activities and did not venture out of its academic and cultural walls. In 1960 another student organization, the Hill Student Union (HSU) was formed. This organization went beyond the social and cultural programmes as adhered by the KSA and was associated with the setting of up Shillong Law

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College in 1964.

Similarly, during the late 60s the Khasi Jaintia Students Union (KJSU) was formed. At a public meeting held at the Khasi National Durbar Hall at Mawkhar sharing platform with the leaders of the Hill State Movement on September 30, 1968, pressed them not to accept anything short of a full-fleged State and later burnt effigy of the Autonomous Hill State at a public rally held at Madan Iewwrynghap (Nonthymmi). The KJSU also took exception to the attempt made by then Government of Assam to impose Assamese language in the hills. Two moths after the formation of Meghalaya as an autonomous state, students in the capital organized themselves into the Meghalaya Students Association (MSA) on May 23, 1970, to serve as an apex body at the top of all students associations in the state. The Shillong Students Union which came into early 70s along with the other objectives focused on the preservation and development of Khasi heritage of the land. Its scope was limited since the membership of the organization was limited to the only to the bona-fide students of schools and colleges within the territorial limit of Shillong city. On November 29, 1972, the SSU protested against draft bill on the Indira Gandhi University meant for the hills and wanted the term hill or hill areas not to extend beyond the geographical limits of the hills. The tactics of the SSU was mostly included presentation of memoranda, holding demonstration, strikes and meeting the Government for talks47.

In 1975 another students organisation -the Meghalaya Students Union (MSU) came into being which for the first time took up the issue of identity. Under the banner the MSU, students demanded for the detection and deportation of foreign nationals especially those coming from Bangladesh in the wake of the war Bangladesh liberation in 1971. The issues taken up by the MSU was very much linked to the issues taken up later by the Khasi Students Union later. The

formation of the Khasi Students Union (KSU) was a watershed in the demand for separate homeland territory for the Khasis. The Khasi Students Union formed in 1978 came with the motto “for the welfare of the State and the Community” in the initial period. However, the emerging shift and focus on anti-foreigner which reached a feverish pitch in later stages led the motto to be changed to “Mait Shaphrang Khur ka Ri”.

Subsequently the word “national” appeared in the amendment of the Constitution of the KSU on April 4, 1993 which was released at the Khasi National Awakening Day wherein it clearly spelt the demand for a separate Khasiland in its reformed objectives -“to achieve peace in Khasi land within the framework of the Indian Constitution by placing it on the same level as Jammu and Kashmir”.

The KSU which was formed prior to the intense foreigner’s issue in 1979 became an effective pressure group with the major thrust on the anti-foreigner movement the focus being on non-Khasis in general. In the 1980s and 1990s KSU led agitations around the core issue of the control of the economy, polity and land by the “natives of the Meghalaya”, the Khasis. Naturally this aroused suspicion and fear among other tribes (Jaintias and Garos) and non-tribal communities living in the state. In 2005 a demand for the Khasi leadership to restructure Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBOSE), whose head office is located in the Garo Hills, was opposed by the Garo organizations. The protest culminated into police firing resulting into the death of nine Garo protestors. The apparently innocuous issue of restructuring the MBOSE is thus revealed to the implicated in the politics of homeland ethnicity which spearheaded the KSU demand for the bifurcation of the Meghalaya- one for the Garos another for the Khasis and Jaintias.

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49 meaning strive ahead children of the soil
One of the demands by the KSU is the introduction of the Inner Line Regulation system in the Meghalaya, which would restrict entry to the "outsiders" into the state. The system currently operates in the three states: Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. The demand on the part of the KSU is a piece with the increasingly xenophobic tenor of the many groups in the region. As the demand for a separate Khasi homeland territory got intensified the Khasi movement for a separate homeland gave rise to armed struggle against the Indian State. The Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALC) was the first insurgent group and later got split into two groups. The Khasis and Jaintias faction within the HALC formed the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) demanding an exclusive Khasi homeland (Khasi and Jaintia Hills) with a common fight against the dkhars and the Garos forming the Achik National Liberation Council which aims to curve out a homeland called the "Achik Land" in the areas of Garo hills. The proposed Achik Land comprises the present districts of Garo hills in Meghalaya and a large chunk of Kamrup and Goalpara district of Assam. The ANVC differs from the other Garo separatist organization like Garo National Council which aims for a Garo state comprising only the district of Garo hills.

To conclude considering the social and political background of the various sub-nationalist movements persisting in the North-east India one gives an impression of a different celebration of "territoriality" which has often been identified as a "sub-territoriality" by some scholars as discussed in the chapter. The question that arises here is as how to see this emergence "sub-territoriality" in an increasing globalizing world especially in a peripheral region like the North-east India. Scholars like Arjun Appadurai suggested that considering the changing lifestyle of communities with increasing migration pattern in modern nation-states has produced "mobile sovereignties" where "territoriality" actually has been replaced through strong "de-territorializing" forces of globalization. According to him because of the rapidly growing distance between the promiscuous spaces of
free trade, tourism, where the national disciplines are often relaxed and, therefore, the particularities of the home, soil and roots have have been increasingly divided creating disjunctured spatial registers of affiliations\textsuperscript{51}.

Though, Appadurai’s conception provides theoretical understanding in a globalizing world, however, given the the strong prominence of “sub-territoriality” with the rise of sub-nationalist movements in the North-east India as discussed in this chapter provides a different dimension. To trace the political trajectory of various homelands movements in the North-east India especially the Naga Movement and Khasi movement discussed in details started with the demand for autonomy in the initial period. During the initial period “territoriality” the expression of “territoriality” was quite latent. But under changing social and political circumstances especially the rise of local intelligentsia and the changing tactics of the Indian State to thwart the progress of these movements, “sub-territoriality” emerged as a counterhegemonic strategy to resist and contest the state-sponsored official “territoriality” where the drives of “de-territorialization” and “re-territorialization” being primarily determined by the logics of instrumental action.