Chapter 3
Sending Out the Spears

"The Meiteis have their King, the Indian! (Tajongmei) have their rulers, why should we not have our own King? The white men and we are all human beings. Why should we be afraid of them? All men are equal. We are blessed people. Our days have come. Our powerful weapons are kept hidden by God at Zeliad. We shall pray and worship God. With His grace we shall become rulers."

- Jadonang, Muh from Puiluan village

"You are the only people who have ever conquered us and, when you go we should be as we were."

- A member of Naga Club to the Simon Commission, 1929

In the early 1930s, some men from Khonoma had come in touch with a movement against the British in the north-west hill tracts of Manipur. It was led by a Rongmei Naga named Jadonang. They were keen to extend their solidarity. After all, Rongmeis and Angamis traced their origins to the same ancestor and had also maintained close economic relations with one another. There was no reason why the Angamis should not join them to overthrow the British. However, the Khonoma village council remained rather hesitant to express their solidarity with the movement. After a series of intense discussions, it resolved that an alliance with Jadonang would be unwise. They felt that while it was legitimate to fight the British, the whole concept of a kingdom that Jadonang proclaimed was inimical to the existing Naga political life that centered on village councils. Eventually the British would be driven out, but wouldn't it be replaced by Jadonang's rule rather than by true independence? Another factor that may have hindered the village council from expressing its solidarity with the movement could have been its preference for another initiative that was put forward around the same time for forging greater elation to what remained of the Zeliangrong movement in the 1950s and 60s. The

1 Quoted in Kamei, The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 150.
2 Quoted in Elvin, Nagaland, Shillong, 1961, p. 49.
Club. Some of the Khonoma villagers were part of the Naga Club and their influence would have been immense.

Clearly, Khonoma was divided on how and who to express its solidarity with. There was much speculation and debate. Many other villages bordering on the Naga Hills and Manipur at the time also grappled with similar concerns. While all were agreed on the immediate political need to forge unity amongst the several Naga tribes and ward off colonial incursions, there was much debate in each village on how one should go about it and what kind of political entity they should be putting in place for themselves. Pulled into the cultural and political whirlwind of the time, triggered by colonialism, these debates about their political future represented the birthpangs of a nation in the making. Moreover, although united in their aspiration for a political entity of their own, these debates echoed the deep divisions the new religion had caused within Naga society.

The movement among the Zeliaongrong tribes, which included the Rongmei, Liangmei and Zeme Nagas, under the leadership of Jadonang and later, Gaidinliu, until her arrest in 1932; and the initiatives taken by Naga Club, a group comprising largely of an emergent middle class from the Naga Hills, were two of the early attempts among Nagas to think of themselves as a political entity, which in subsequent periods came to be defined as a nation. Both events occurred in the late 1920s and early 1930s. While the movement among the Zeliaongrong tribes occurred primarily in the Naga inhabited hill tracts in the north-western portion of Manipur, the Naga Club was active in the adjoining Naga Hills. Although kept under two different administrative jurisdictions that were carved out by the British and the Manipur Raja in the 19th century, namely Naga Hills and Manipur, the Nagas in both regions not only lived in close proximity geographically, maintaining close economic relations, but also drew their ethnicity from a common ancestor.

Following the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-19, the colonial officials in Manipur felt that “a change in the method of administration is necessary, so that the control of
Government over the tribes may be strengthened."4 This led to the colonial state asserting far greater control over the hill areas of Manipur. The hill areas were divided up into three sub-divisions - South-West, North-West and North-East areas with Churachandpur, Tamenglong and Ukhrul as their respective headquarters. Each Sub-division would be administered by a Sub-divisional Officer, under the control of the President of the Darbar and the Political Agent at Imphal. The Sub-divisional Officers would either be British or Anglo-Indians.5 As the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Nicholas Beatson-Bell indicated, "these men, working under the British President, would reside in their areas all the year round, open up roads, administer simple justice, set up schools and hospitals, and generally act as fathers to hillmen and restore their confidence in the British Raj."6

The colonial officials felt that "one of the great obstacles to proper touring in the hills, and therefore to proper dealings with the tribes, has been the difficulty of moving at all owing to the want of roads and paths."7 Therefore, opening up of roads and bridle-paths through the hills was highly recommended. And the state would rely on the free forced labour of the villagers in the building of these roads.8 In the North-West Sub-division, which was inhabited largely by the Rongmeis and Liangmeis, the villagers had to render free labour for the repair and maintenance of the Cachar Road from Bishnupur to Jirighat.9 Besides the building of roads and bridle-paths, promotion of education and medical facilities were seen as effective ways of creating an appreciation among the hill people for the British rule and for

---

5 Reid, History of the Frontier Areas, p. 83.
6 Sir Nicholas Beatson-Bell, Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Lord Chelmsford, 19 April 1919. Revised rules for the future administration of the Manipur State, including the dependent Hill tribes, Foreign and Political, Internal – A, October, 1919, Nos. 191-196, NAI, New Delhi.
7 Mr. J. E. Webster, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, Revised rules for the future administration of the Manipur State, including the dependent Hill tribes, Foreign and Political, Internal – A, October, 1919, Nos. 191-196, NAI, New Delhi.
8 Mr. J. E. Webster, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department. Revised rules for the future administration of the Manipur State, including the dependent Hill tribes, Foreign and Political, Internal – A, October, 1919, Nos. 191-196, NAI, New Delhi.
this the Chief Commissioner hoped “to obtain aid from the missionaries who already have a footing among the Tangkhul Nagas.”

The imposition of a heavy taxation and the demands of free and forced labour made on the villagers however represented the harsher physical experience of the administrative incursions of the colonial state into the hills. The house tax of Rs. 3, which was forcibly imposed and collected on all houses in the hills, and the levy imposed on villages to meet the costs of government officials touring the hill villages, known as *pottang senkhai*, was too high for most villagers to pay. Colonial officials themselves admit that the revenue derived directly from the hill tribes in the form of house taxes consisted of about Rs. 70,000 a year while the expenditure on the hills ranged only between Rs. 17,000 and Rs. 19,000. Failure to pay taxes and other levies was often met with imposition of forced labour. Earlier, the Manipur kingdom practiced a system called *lallup*, wherein forced labour was imposed on the hill people. Although the British abolished it, it soon came to be replaced by another system of forced labour known as *pothang begari*, wherein villagers had to provide services to all touring government officials and soldiers. The services could be from carrying the baggage to doing any other work the touring officials required them to do.

Under the colonial state, the government officials who wielded real power and related to the people at the local level were the lower wrung government officials such as the *lambus*, road *muhorris* and peons. While the *lambus* were interpreters or intermediaries between the colonial officials and the people, road *muhorris* supervised the road building, repair and maintenance. Caste was prevalent among the Meiteis and because of which, as one of the colonial officials commented, “in the eyes of a Manipuri a hillman is on altogether a lower plane of human life”.

---

10 Mr. J. E. Webster, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department. Revised rules for the future administration of the Manipur State, including the dependent Hill tribes, Foreign and Political. Internal – A, October, 1919, Nos. 191-196, NAI, New Delhi.

11 Mr. J. E. Webster, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department. Revised rules for the future administration of the Manipur State, including the dependent Hill tribes, Foreign and Political. Internal – A, October, 1919, Nos. 191-196, NAI, New Delhi.

Considering most of the lambus and the muhorrirs were Meiteis, caste very much shaped their oppressive attitudes and actions towards the hill people. It was common for the muhorrirs to often subject the people to flogging and other forms of physical abuse during road repairs.\textsuperscript{13} The lambus were infamous even prior to the assumption of British control over the hills as they were used by the Manipur kingdom to extract as much tribute as possible from the people, supervising the lallup system and were instrumental in pitting one community or village against the other in case tributes were not paid.\textsuperscript{14} After the British assumed political control over the hills, the lambus continued to be state functionaries having an important role in the administration of the hills. They had become immensely corrupt and being protected by colonial power, their urge to exploit and control the hill people as they carried out their multifarious responsibilities on behalf of the colonial state went unchecked.\textsuperscript{15}

The migration of the Kukis towards Cachar, Manipur and the Naga Hills, and the subsequent state policies towards the settlement of Kukis over the 19th century also created much conflict and tension over land among the hill people. It was in 17th century and more prominently from the second half of 18th century onwards that the Kukis began migrating to the south-eastern portion of what may be referred to today as Manipur.\textsuperscript{16} In 1780s, the Manipur Raja, Jai Singh conducted two expedition against the Kukis to dispel them from the region. Although the Raja is said to have been victorious in his mission at the time, in the 1830s British Captain, R. B. Pemberton writes about how Kukis had in fact taken up residence in the region stretching from the southern borders of the Manipur valley to the northern limit of the kingdom of Arracan.\textsuperscript{17} By the 1830s, one hears of Kukis gradually migrating northwards, towards north-west Manipur, North Cachar Hills and Naga Hills, in large numbers. Pemberton writes:

\textsuperscript{13} Kamei, The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{14} Reid, History of the Frontier Areas, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{15} Kamei, The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{16} Kamei, The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 63.
“From the accounts of the Kupooee tribe it appears certain, that the Kookies have been gradually advancing for years in a northerly direction, and have hitherto established themselves on the ranges which were originally occupied by more northern tribes, or committed such fearful aggressions upon the latter, as to compel them to retire and leave an unoccupied tract between themselves and these formidable opponents.”

Mackenzie cites the advance of a “more powerful people from the unexplored country between British territory and Burma”, which most probably would have been the Lushais, as the principle cause of this migration northwards. In the 19th century, two major waves of Kuki migrations to the hills of North Cachar happened, one in 1846-47 and the other in 1851-52. With the increasing migration and remarkable changes in the demography, the colonial state was keen to settle the Kukis and there was an overwhelming feeling among the colonial officials that Kukis should be utilized as a ‘buffer’ or ‘screen’ between the plains and the Nagas, especially the Angamis. As a result of which, in 1856-57 Kukis were granted land to the east of North Cachar beyond the Langting river, which would be rent-free for a period of 10 and later 25 years. Moreover, they were also supplied with fire arms and other ammunitions to ward off probable Naga raids. James Johnstone writes about massive migration of Kukis into the hill tracts of Manipur, in 1845, resulting in many of the older inhabitants, which primarily included the Zeliangrongs and some of the other Naga tribes, fleeing the area. As in the case of North Cachar, the Political Agent of Manipur at the time, Col. W. McCulloch, used this moment to the advantage of the state. He settled and allotted the new migrants lands according to their numbers and most importantly, “where their presence would be useful on exposed frontiers.” In other words, they were once again used as a buffer that would ward off any threat the state faced from the Nagas. Moreover, large sums of money were advanced to them and different duties were assigned to them. While some were made into irregular troops, others were drafted into carrying loads for the state.

---

The settlement of Kukis which was mediated by the state in order to serve its own political interests furthered reinforced the growing animosity between the Kukis and the Nagas. While the migration and settlement of the Kukis created much resentment among the Nagas, resulting in armed confrontations between the two over land and forests, the colonial state exploited the situation to further its control over the Hill tracts. In the subsequent periods, both the Kukis and the Nagas were frequently used against each other by the colonial state in case one rebelled. For instance, Kukis were used to suppress the rebellion of 1879-80 among the Angamis and many of the Nagas who had just returned after serving as labour corps in France during the First World War were used in suppressing the Kuki rebellion of 1917-19. Located within this larger history of conflict, the Kuki rebellion, while being against the British rule and the Manipur kingdom, also involved attacks on Nagas, especially the Zeliangrongs. Even during the initial stages of the rebellion, several Zeliangrong villages were attacked and people killed. The use of Zeliangrong villages as bases by the Assam Rifles did not help the situation much and invited further trouble. One of the Kuki chiefs, Tintong Haokip, raided the Rongmei village of Awangkhul in retaliation to the latter having assisted the village of Lukhambi where some Kukis were attacked and their guns confiscated. The raid that took the heads of 30 people was done while the men were in the fields and only the women and children were present. In retaliation, Akhui, a powerful Rongmei village attacked a nearby Kuki village, killing about a dozen Kukis. The above mentioned Kuki chief in response attacked Akhui village, destroyed it, and about 76 people were killed. It is to be added that there were also instances of Nagas reaching at an understanding with the Singson chiefs among the Thadou Kukis to peacefully coexist and despite provocations, they remained at peace. However, in general, the suspicion and fear among the two communities intensified during the Kuki rebellion.

---

From the early 1920s onwards, missionary Christianity had also begun to make its presence felt among the Zeliangrong tribes. Among the Rongmeis, under the leadership of Namrijinpou and Jinlakpou, about 20 families of Kaikao village turned to Christianity by 1922. There was tremendous opposition to the new religion among the villagers, which eventually led to the new converts being driven out of the village and the exiled Christian villagers establishing a new village called Sempang, quarter of a mile away from the older village. In 1923, the first church among the Rongmeis was established in Sempang and about 73 came forward for baptism and Christian instruction. Under the leadership of two others, Huruang and Laibam, about 20 families of Tamenglong village turned to Christianity, constructed their own village which although remained a part of the main village, and constructed their first church in 1930. There was much opposition to the construction of this church and with the support of the Sub-Divisional Officer, R. H. Shaw, whose personal animosity towards Christianity was great, it was destroyed. By 1930, there was about a total of 150 Christians among the Rongmeis. In contrast, missionary activities were more or less absent among the Liangmeis during this period. American Baptist Missionary, G. G. Crozier on visiting a Liangmei village in 1930, commented that no evangelistic work “has ever been done in these villages before” and there were only two Christians among them. Among the Zemes, Christianity came through the Zeme students who studied in the mission school at Kohima during the first decade of 20th century. The first church was established at Benreu village as a result of their efforts. By 1913, there was a full time Angami evangelist working among the Zemes. In 1930, Crozier writes about finding 200 Christians among the ‘Kacha Nagas’ in the Naga Hills, which in most likelihood have been Zemes. As it is evident from the above description, the rate at which conversions to Christianity took place among the Zelaingrong tribes was slow and it hardly had any significant presence among the Zelianongrongs in the 1920s. Yet, the people were also not unaware about the developments that were taking place among

29 Downs, The Mighty Works, p. 176-177.
32 Downs, The Mighty Works, pp. 146-147.
33 G. G. Crozier, 'Every House Open to the Gospel', p. 327.
the other Naga tribes around them, especially about the tension and conflicts the new religion was creating in some of the tribes and villages around.

Not only was missionary Christianity making efforts to establish itself in the hill tracts of Manipur, there were also efforts by the Raja of Manipur to send in Hindu missionaries into the hills. It is not clear as to when exactly the Raja of Manipur first made the proposal to carry out Hindu missionary work among the Hill tribes, but it was in a letter dated 21 November 1929 that the Political Agent agreed to the Raja's proposal albeit with certain conditions.\textsuperscript{34} While the Political Agent did not see any reason to object the Raja's proposal, he felt that there was a possibility that it could lead to trouble as far as political rule over the Hill tribes was concerned. It is with this concern that the Political Agent laid out some conditions such as: the missionaries should be Manipur state subjects or converted hill people as foreigners were liable to create disturbances; as in the case of Christian missionaries, the Hindu missionaries were not entitled to demand transport, supplies or accommodation from the hill people; as in the case of Christian missionaries, the Hindu missionaries could not demand their right to entrance to any village where the elders and villagers had objection, although they were free to preach outside the village boundaries; there could be no compulsion put on the hill people to change their religion; the converts to Hinduism could not interfere with any of the existing rights and customs of the hill people, for instance slaughter and eating of beef, which is integral to the culture, could not be disallowed; as in the case of Christian converts, Hindu converts in Naga villages will be compelled to form new villages, outside the village boundary in order to avoid disputes over converts refusing to observe traditional customs; finally, Hindu converts will be compelled as any one else in a village to carry out their share of communal labour such as supplying the transport for government officials and the building and maintenance of roads.\textsuperscript{35} It is neither clear as to how far any of these conditions were followed nor to what extent Hindu missionary activities were effective at all in the hill tracts. However, the fact

\textsuperscript{34} J. C. Higgins, Political Agent to Maharaja of Manipur, 21 November 1929, H. H. The Maharaja of Manipur's Proposal to Carry out Hindu Missionary Work among the Hill Tribes, R-1/S-B/90, 1929, Manipur State Archives (hereafter MSA), Imphal.

\textsuperscript{35} J. C. Higgins, Political Agent to Maharaja of Manipur, 21 November 1929, H. H. The Maharaja of Manipur's Proposal to Carry out Hindu Missionary Work among the Hill Tribes, R-1/S-B/90, 1929, MSA, Imphal.
that there were attempts towards this direction from the part of the Manipur Raja during this period cannot be denied.

Considering Hinduism itself had by this time become much more standardized with its own clear set of canons and doctrines, just like Christianity, what one had was the presence of two dominant religions at the door steps of the hill tribes, preparing to carry out evangelizing missions. In these circumstances, there was a real fear among the Hill tribes, especially the Nagas, that their existing customs and ceremonial practices would soon be done away with or subsumed within these two larger religious formations. The effects that the coming of missionary Christianity had on villages and tribes where there have been conversions was all too familiar and the pressing question for many would have been how was one to protect and reform the existing indigenous belief system and customary practices as per the necessities of the changing material and cultural circumstances.

It was in this context that a Rongmei mhu\textsuperscript{36} named Jadonang undertook the project of redefining the existing belief system, culture and integrating it with the immediate material and political need of the Nagas. Born into an ordinary peasant family at Puiluan village (called Kambiron by the Meiteis) in 1895, Jadonang was much exposed to the changes taking place in the economic, political and cultural landscape of the Rongmeis from a very early age. His village being located on the Cachar-Imphal bridle path, he often encountered large numbers of travelers from far and near, sepoys and government officials, whose baggage Nagas had to frequently carry. Neither Jadonang nor the village of Puiluan was directly affected by the Kuki rebellion as friendly relations existed between Zeliarongrong villages and the Kuki villages under the Singson chiefs in the area. But he was surely a witness to

\textsuperscript{36}Jadonang is generally referred to as a \textit{maiba}, which is a Meitei term. According to T. C. Hodson, a \textit{maiba} is someone who has the ability to interpret dreams and omens, and heal people who are sick. He is reputed with the knowledge of indigenous medicines and medical practices. He or she is not a priest and his or her profession or status is not in any way hereditary. He largely owes his or her position to his or her talents to conquer the forces of nature, Hodson, \textit{The Naga Tribes of Manipur}, pp. 140-142; However, here he is referred to as a \textit{mhu}, which is a Rongmei term. According to Gangmumrei Kamei, \textit{mhu} is a more apt term to describe Jadonang as he was not just someone possessing knowledge of indigenous medicine, but he was also a prophet and someone who could communicate with the god and be a mediator between god and humans, Kamei, \textit{Jadonang}, pp. 18, 103.
the heavy troop movement in the Cachar-Imphal bridle path at the time.\textsuperscript{37} His father passed away when he was one year old and it was his mother who brought him and his two other brothers up. Jadonang being the youngest, his mother was particularly affectionate and caring towards him.\textsuperscript{38} As a boy, he is said to have been contemplative and withdrawn but gentle, compassionate and sensitive towards his surroundings.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{II}

From a very young age Jadonang was acknowledged as someone possessing abilities to interpret dreams and heal those who were sick. It was common for him to go into a trance and communicate with the gods and spirits around him. It was during these occasions that the gods gave him the prescriptions and directions for solving the many ailments and problems that the people faced. Subsequently, he came to be recognized by the people as a messenger of the gods. As he grew older, he became a \textit{muh} following a dream he had: he was taken to the Bhuban Hills in North Cachar and there the God of Bhuban Hills, Bisnu, appeared to him and instructed him to become a \textit{muh}. Jadonang now traveled widely in the Zeliangrong region, treating the sick, praying for the dead and interpreting dreams. Soon, his popularity as a healer among the people increased.\textsuperscript{40}

During his travels across the Zeliangrong region, covering Cachar, North Cachar Hills, Western hill tracts of Manipur and the South-East portion of the Naga Hills, Jadonang became more and more conscious of the myriad problems Nagas, particularly the Zeliangrongs, faced: the burden of taxation, free and forced labour services, the arrogance of the British and Meitei government officials, and the growing insecurity over land. He felt that it was not in the interest of the gods to see the people suffer. Moreover, as a messenger of the gods, it was his responsibility to lead the people out of their misery, free them from the control of the British and the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} Kamei, \textit{The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas}, p. 147.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Kamei, \textit{The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas}, p. 147; Asoso Yonuo, \textit{Nagas Struggle Against the British Rule under Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu}, 1925-1947, Kohima, 1982, p. 39.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Pamei, \textit{The Trail from Makulongdi}, p. 39.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Yonuo, \textit{Nagas Struggle Against British}, pp. 56-57; Kamei, \textit{The History of Zeliangrong Nagas}, pp. 147-149.
\end{itemize}
Manipur Raja, the primary cause of all their suffering, and proclaim a ‘Naga Raj’ where Nagas will once again have the freedom to determine the course of their life. In the prophetic and mediatory role that Jadonang assumed on behalf of the gods, there was much that resembled Birsa Munda, who spearheaded the movement against the British among the Mundas in the second half of 19th century.\textsuperscript{41} By the mid-1920s, Jadonang began preparations to launch a spiritual, cultural and political campaign.

Frantz Fanon once said that it is integral to the project of colonialism that the culture of the colonized is “marked off by fences and signposts”.\textsuperscript{42} Among the Nagas, colonialism had either tended to freeze the culture and spirituality of the colonized, and reduce it to museum pieces as many colonial officials and anthropologists were prone to do; or to undermine it, and subject it to the ‘civilizing’ instincts of the colonizer as many missionaries were eager to do. In the campaign that Jadonang initiated, there was surely an effort to counter this process.

It was on his last meeting with Bisnu in the Bhuban caves, in January 1931, just before his arrest by the British authorities, that a new reformulated religion was revealed to Jadonang and Gaidinliu in its entirety. However, through the late 1920s and early 1930s, Jadonang had gradually begun putting into practice and promoting certain fundamentals of this new religion. It was an attempt to reinvent the existing belief system of the Nagas and in doing so Jadonang did not hesitate to borrow a great deal from Christianity as it was being preached in Tamenglong at the time and from Vaishnavism as it was being preached in Cachar and in the plains of Manipur. As it will be seen, the objective of Jadonang was also to make the existing belief system more standardized with its own set of liturgy, hymns, prayers and texts. Especially in a context where Christianity and Hinduism were attempting to make inroads into the hills, this need to clearly define, standardize and make legible what had otherwise been loose canon was seen as important and necessary.

\textsuperscript{42} Frantz Fanon, \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, Harmondsworth, 1967, p. 190.
The reformed religion that Jadonang developed put much emphasis on the worship of the Supreme Creator, Tingkao Ragwang. Generally, the Supreme Creator was acknowledged for his original act of creation but he was not that important as far as the immediate everyday life on earth was concerned. As T. C. Hodson, in 1911, says: “He is, it would seem, almost a metaphysical conception, originating in the desire to find an explanation for the creation of the material world.” Moreover, although acknowledged as the Supreme Being, he was only one among the many gods and spirits that inhabited the Naga cosmology. Jadonang made some significant changes to this conception by amplifying those qualities of Tingkao Ragwang such as omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence, justice, truth and kindness, and proclaiming him to be the most important spiritual energy or force that permeates the whole world. As individuals or as a group, people were encouraged to offer a prayer, facing east with hands put together, every morning and evening, to Tingkao Ragwang. People were also encouraged to construct temples for Tingkao Ragwang, to sing songs and hymns in praise of him, and to direct all prayers and supplications to him. As Tingkao Ragwang was given prominence, the people were dissuaded from giving too much importance to some of the lesser gods and spirits, although the importance of acknowledging and respecting them continued to be stressed. This shift towards a largely monotheistic belief structure was in many ways an appropriation of Christianity and probably of Islam, as it was being practiced in the plains of Cachar and Manipur.

Secondly, it called for the abolition of numerous taboos and called for the reduction of sacrifices, and gennas. While much of these were meant to be means of worship, they had increasingly become regimented rituals and beliefs, which were time consuming and expensive within an increasingly transformed work ethic and economy. Jadonang did away with many of the taboos and reduced the number of gennas and sacrifices, especially offered to the lesser gods and spirits. For instance, he did away with taboos, gennas and sacrifices that were associated with the birth of

---

44 Yonuo, *The Nagas Struggle Against British*, p. 46.
46 *Genna* is the collective or individual abstention from all work on a particular day or period.
a child, presence of an animal on the roof of a house, earthquake, felling of trees and
landsides, injury from a spear or any other weapon, etc. At the same time, he
retained the observation of gennas for a good crop or harvest; safety of the crops
from rats, rodents and pests; and safety from attacks of animals.47

Thirdly, rather than giving too much importance to rituals and sacrifices, he
emphasized the importance of living a life that was just, truthful and pleasing to
Tingkao Ragwang. In this respect, some of the traditional principles like speaking
the truth, having no fear of anything except god and tiger, loving, respecting and
honouring the entire Creation, etc. were given more prominence.48 A denial or
rejection of these ethical principles, which would eventually lead to a breakdown of
relationships and cause imbalance in the creation, was defined as contrary to the
wishes of the Supreme Creator.

Fourthly, construction of temples where people could assemble together and
worship god was encouraged. Temples were not part of the traditional belief system
but were a structure that increasingly gained significance with the coming of
Vaishnavism and Christianity in the neighbouring areas. In his statement in
custody, Jadonang said: “I built temples because the Bhuban god told me in a dream
that there would be prosperity and good health for every one if I did so, although it
is not our custom to do so.”49 Temples were called Kao Kai and first of these was
constructed at Kekru, then at Puiluan, Nungkao and Binnakandi.

Finally, Jadonang resurrected the myth surrounding Bisnu and gave the latter a
prominence that was earlier absent in the religious pantheon of the Zeliangrongs.
Bisnu was central to the spiritual and political programme of Jadonang. He
occasionally visited the Bhuban Hills in North Cachar and took instructions from
Bisnu on every matter that affected the lives of his people. It was Bisnu who urged
him to reform the existing belief system, which was now unable to address the

---
48 Yono, The Nagas Struggle Against British, p. 50.
49 Statement of Jadonang, 23 March 1931, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
changing needs of the times. It was Bisnu who proclaimed that villages would prosper in rice and money if the villagers sacrificed mithuns. It was Bisnu who instructed Jadonang to build temples so that there would be good health and prosperity for everyone. It was Bisnu who revealed the new religion to Jadonang during his last meeting with him in January, 1931. Moreover, in the temple he constructed at his village, Puiluan, the male God made out of clay, which occupied the upper temple was Bisnu and the female God was Bisnu’s wife, whose name Jadonang himself did not know.

The name Bisnu here is not to be confused with the Hindu God Vishnu as one would be prone to do. While the name itself, which is used mainly among the Rongmeis living closer to the plains, may have been a variation on Vishnu, a deity popular in the plains, Bisnu belonged to the traditional religious pantheon of the Zeliangrong tribes, which maintains a distinct identity of its own. He is the eldest among the seven sons of Charasinglangpui, the sister of Didampu, the god of the Earth. He is known among the Zemes as Munsanu, among the Liangmeis as Munchanu, among the upper Rongmeis as Bonchanu and among the lower Rongmeis as Bisnu. There was once a contest between Didampu and the seven sons of his sister, which included stone throwing, javelin throwing and wrestling. At the final contest of wrestling, Didampu was defeated by his youngest nephew, whose victory was largely because of the partiality and favour shown to him by his mother. Didampu now went underneath the earth and became Banglagwang, the Lord of the Earthquakes and the youngest nephew assumed the position of Ragwang, the god of the Earth. Angered because the youngest brother assumed the position of Ragwang, and that too, as a result of the favouritism he received from his mother, the eldest brother, Bisnu went away to the south along with the creation around him and lived on the Bhuban Hills of Eastern Cachar. Subsequently, there was much tension and fighting between Ragwang and Bisnu, leading to much destruction. During this period, it was Tingpu Rengsonang, a contemporary of the Supreme Creator, Tingkao  

51 Statement of Jadonang, 23 March 1931, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal; Mithuns are half domesticated bisons (Bos Fontalis).  
52 Statement of Jadonang, 23 March 1931, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.  
54 Statement of Jadonang, 23 March 1931, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
Ragwang, who put all humankind into the bowels of the earth and protected them from danger. Eventually, at the intervention of Banglagwang, Ragwang and Bisnu were reconciled through marriage between the daughter of Bisnu and the son of Ragwang.\textsuperscript{55} It is not clear as to the reasons why Bisnu was given such prominence. It could be that by resurrecting the character of Bisnu and rehabilitating him in the temples that were built in the hills, Jadonang tried to reconcile and unify the two estranged gods of the Nagas, and thereby also implicitly integrate the Nagas of Cachar with those living in Manipur and Naga Hills. After all, the important need of the times was to unify the Nagas spiritually and politically so that they would pose an effective resistance and alternative to the external forces that were beginning to threaten their existing way of life. It could also have been that Jadonang hoped to privilege Bisnu over his youngest brother who, as a result of the partiality shown by his mother, defeated Didampu to become the Ragwang. There was an implicit injustice that was read into how the youngest brother assumed the position of Ragwang. This injustice of the past had to be corrected, so that the foundations of the new religion and kingdom may be built on restoration of justice.

The reformulation and standardization of Naga religion was accompanied by the invention of a standardized written script. Largely dependent on speaking and signs as the main means of communication, the written word was absent among the Nagas. According to J. H. Hutton, a tradition existed in different versions among different Naga tribes, that in the beginning the Supreme Being gave the knowledge of reading and writing to the Nagas in the hills and to the plainspeople of Assam. However, while the script given to the plainspeople was recorded on stone or paper, the script given to the Nagas was on a sheet of animal skin, which came to be devoured by a dog. Thus Nagas lost their script.\textsuperscript{56} The significance and power of the written word had become prominent with colonialism. The colonial state used it to codify and legitimize their rule over the subject population. Missionaries used it to reinvent existing Naga languages, reduce them to written form through the use of the roman script, and thereby recast the Naga self. Jadonang was conscious of how language had become the ground on which colonialism claimed its power over the

\textsuperscript{55} Kamei, \textit{The History of Zelianrong Nagas}, pp. 26-27.

\textsuperscript{56} Hutton, \textit{The Angami Nagas}, p. 291.
Nagas. Thus, he invented a script and used it to write down his thoughts and songs. To show that Nagas now had a script, as an integral marker of a superior identity, Jadonang brought the new script to the notice of the Sub-Divisional Officer of North-West Area, S. J. Duncan. The latter, however, found it to be nothing more than the inanity of an ‘uncivilized’ subject and tore up the written script to show his contempt.57

Colonial anthropologists and officials looked upon these attempts on the part of the Nagas themselves to reinvent or reformulate their own existing culture and beliefs with contempt. Thus, when Jadonang, under the direction of Bisnu, began to make changes in the existing religious practices of the Zeliangrong Nagas, it was derided as the crafty work of an individual to take advantage of the "superstitious minds of the Kabuis" and exploit it for his own personal aggrandizement.58 The same attitude also informed their disgust for the invention of a script, which Nagas could call their own. Any attempt on the part of the colonized to define their religious and cultural life in their own terms, and draw from it resources to fight colonialism were seen as threatening to the foundations of colonialism.

Ultimately, the efforts to reform the existing religious and cultural life of the Nagas was closely associated with the immediate need to drive out the British and to carve out a political space that Nagas could call their own: in other words, to establish what Jadonang would call Makam Gwangdi or the 'Naga Raj'.59 In this new political space, people would neither have to pay the house tax nor provide free labour and food to visiting government officials; all the lambus, government officials and others who took advantage of the people would be expelled from the region; none would have to shut their opened umbrellas or put down any head-wear or caps before a

---

57 Yonuo, The Nagas Struggle Against British. p. 58.
59 Makam Gwangdi is the Naga Kingdom that Jadonang proclaimed. While Gwangdi is referred to Rongmei as kingdom, Makam was used as a generic term for Nagas and may have been derived from Makhel, which is also known as Makhan or Makhia, the original place where Naga tribes believe to have arrived from the Yunan Province of China and lived together before a major dispersal took place. By evoking the word Makam, Jadonang hoped to forge unity among the Naga tribes and create a kingdom outside the control of British and the plains people.
to launch an air attack on the north and west Vietnam.\textsuperscript{142} Billy Graham had also ridiculed the anti-war protests that had gained much currency in the United States during the 60s and the 70s as merely the handiwork of a bunch of "radicals and those seeking to overthrow the American way of life."\textsuperscript{142} Needless to say, he was also an ardent critique of communism and supported American government's domestic and foreign policies towards Communist and national liberation movements.

Theologically, Billy Graham's ministry had largely revolved around bringing people closer to Jesus, bringing 'peace' into their hearts and providing them with 'a new start' in their life.\textsuperscript{143} Faith as a means to inner peace and happiness was important feature of post-world war American evangelical revivals. As historian Justo Gonzalez says, this form of religiosity "was well suited for the times, for it provided peace in the midst of a confusing world, it said little about social responsibilities, and it did not risk conflict with those whose cold war mentality had made them Grand Inquisitors of American political opinion."\textsuperscript{144} Located strongly within this very individualized evangelical framework, wherein 'peace' was largely an inner peace felt by an individual through an acceptance of Christ as one's personal saviour, there was much that the Naga Baptists could identify with in Billy Graham's theology. Moreover, in a world faced with many uncertainties, where a cease-fire had broken and threat of army atrocities loomed large, where their claims for independence remained unheeded, and in addition, as per the churchmen, where there was a purported threat from Communism, people would welcome and accept anyone promising 'peace' to their hearts and hopes of 'a new start' in their life. Thus, at the crusade in Kohima, when Billy Graham said, "Jesus says, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ I want to bring peace everywhere I go", those gathered could not agree with him more.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{141} Hughes, 'The Dark Side of Rev. Billy Graham: A Prince of War Exposed'.
\textsuperscript{142} Quoted in Hughes, 'The Dark Side of Rev. Billy Graham: A Prince of War Exposed'.
\textsuperscript{144} Gonzalez, The Story of Christianity, p. 381.
\textsuperscript{145} People. Time. Monday, 4 December 1972. \url{http://205.188.238.109/time/printout/0,8816,979573,00.html}, as seen on 2 July 2009.
It was Billy Graham who had popularized the idea of evangelistic crusades in the 20th century. The crusades he organized were more often conducted in large venues such as stadiums, parks or streets which could accommodate a very large gathering. He generally had a group of about 5000 people to sing in a choir, which would be followed by him preaching the gospel. After which, people in the audience were invited to come forward and have a one to one conversation with a counsellor who would clarify their doubts and questions, and pray with them. Billy Graham held these crusades all around the world and it came to be modelled upon in places like Nagaland. Although there was an ambush by the Naga army on an Indian military convoy three days before the crusade, close to one million people from Nagaland and the neighbouring states gathered at the Kohima stadium for the Billy Graham crusade on 17-22 November 1972. Because of the ambush, there was some speculation as to whether the Indian government would allow the crusade to happen or whether Billy Graham himself would cancel his trip. However, such speculations were laid to rest when the Indian government granted permission and Billy Graham and his team arrived to attend the crusade. The stadium overflowed with the crowd. A choir of about thousand voices sang and Billy Graham delivered his messages, which were translated into fourteen Naga languages. Billy Graham attended the crusade only for two days yet he had inspired all those who had gathered and furthermore, "thousands of people came forward for Christ and accepted Him as their Lord and Saviour".

The Executive Secretary of NBCC, Longri Ao was grateful to the Indian government for granting Billy Graham and his team the required permits to come to Nagaland at a "time of tension and insecurity due to the activities of the underground armed group." He felt many of their efforts "in this great preparation would have fallen through without their help." The Indian government also would not have had any reservations granting permission to Billy Graham to visit Nagaland at such a time as

---

147 Longri Ao, CBCNEI, 1972, p. 99, CBCNEI, Guwahati; Rao, Longri Ao, p. 111.
148 Longri Ao, CBCNEI, 1972, p. 100, CBCNEI, Guwahati; Rao, Longri Ao, pp. 111-112.
149 Longri Ao, CBCNEI, 1972, p. 99, CBCNEI, Guwahati.
150 Longri Ao, CBCNEI, 1972, p. 100, CBCNEI, Guwahati.
151 Longri Ao, CBCNEI, 1972, p. 100, CBCNEI, Guwahati.
they very well knew he would not be someone to say or do anything controversial or upsetting to the powers that be. After all, following his two days in Kohima, Billy Graham was to have a scheduled meeting with the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.¹⁵²

As the church through its missionary movement and crusades worked towards claiming 'Nagaland for Christ', the NNC was increasingly becoming accommodative of the possibility of a Naga nation that would not just be 'for Christ' but also inclusive of the traditional Naga religion. To begin with, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the provisional constitution adopted by the Federal Government in 1956 stated that, "Religion will be free".¹⁵³ However, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, in the context of church’s campaign, Christianity had increasingly become a part of the national agenda. On 3 March 1964, while stating its key policies, the Federal Government further reaffirmed: “As expressed in Article 30(1) of our Yezhabo, Nagaland will be evangelized with the Gospel of Christ under the patronage of the Federal Government.”¹⁵⁴ Therein, Christian proselytism also became an important part of the political campaign of the Federal Government and the Naga Home Guards.¹⁵⁵ This of course raised the ire of those who were followers of the traditional Naga religion and especially, those who followed the religious faith founded by Jadonang and Gaidinliu, ultimately leading Gaidinliu to form her own army and government that would be parallel to the Federal Government and Naga Home Guard. There were many skirmishes between the two groups, largely on religious lines through the late 1950s and first half of 1960s.¹⁵⁶ However, realizing the harm disunity based on religion could be to the Naga nation building, the Federal Government in its amended constitution of 1968, which was later passed by the National Assembly in 1971, stated that “Protestant Christianity and Naga Religion are recognised Religions in Nagaland”.¹⁵⁷ In the later phase of the struggle, in the 1980s, the Naga movement once again resurrected the slogan of 'Nagaland for Christ'. The reasons and context for this is a subject for the next chapter.

¹⁵² 'People', Time, Monday, 4 December 1972.
Wrought with dissensions within the Federal Government, crafted and manoeuvred by the Intelligence Bureau, misunderstandings generated by church and state over Communism, the loss of their base in East Pakistan after the formation of Bangladesh and the failure of peace talks, the Naga resistance to Indian occupation had been considerably weakened by the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the meanwhile, the Indian army consolidated its strength and the stage was set for another round of military offensive. Nirmal Nibedon states that, the Indian Army was “well-entrenched now with a hundred times more manpower than them.” This implied that the atrocities committed by the Indian army also went ahead unabated. As the church was busy campaigning against the possible threat to Christianity from ‘atheist’ China, on 11 July 1971, the 1st Maratha Regiment, 8 Mountain Division of the Indian Army marched into Yankeli village in the Lotha region and raped four young girls on the pulpit of the local Baptist church. On 9 December 1970, about 27 women, including 9 married women of Cheswezuni village were raped, and over 50 women were molested by the Indian army. Similar instances happened at Song Song and Sajaoba villages in the Mao Naga area on 24 March 1971 and 24 July 1971 respectively. These were just a few instances among many others that went unrecorded. All this took place despite the fact that officially, the cease-fire agreement was still in effect.

In 1972, the same year Billy Graham brought ‘peace’ into the hearts of the people, the Government of India unilaterally withdrew the ‘cease-fire’ and banned the Naga National Council, the Federal Government of Nagaland and the Naga Army by invoking Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Anyone aiding or abetting the Federal Government or the Naga Army was to be arrested and prosecuted. The Indian army operations conducted in the 1950s was repeated once again – villages, standing crops and granaries burnt; men and women beaten, tortured and raped.

---

159 'Protest Note on Army Atrocities at Cheswezumi', Naga National Rights and Movement, p. 150.
161 Dhar, Open Secrets, p. 159.
162 Shimray, Let Freedom Ring, p. 94.
British official as a show of subservience and respect; and Nagas would once again be free to decide upon their destiny.60

The construction of a political alternative to colonial incursions was rooted in an already existing prophetic tradition prominent among the Angamis, whose origins however could be traced to the Liangmeis and Zemes. This told the tale of a king who was sleeping in a cave in North Cachar, and who would return one day to drive out the British, and establish his rule over “all who eat from the wooden platter”, meaning the Nagas. Jadonang fashioned himself as that king, who had been anointed by the God of Bhuban Hills.61 However, as Gangnunrei Kamei indicates, the concept of a kingship as a political system was traditionally alien to the Nagas. The Zeliangrongs, like many other Naga tribes had a more or less democratic polity wherein village councils were considered the highest decision making body. Each village council had one or more matais or headmen; however, they did not have any absolute power and was often guided by other members of the council.62 Within such a system, there was no space for a king. Therefore, Jadonang had to first popularize the idea of a kingship.

One way in which he did this was to show the relevance of such a political system within the context where other nationality formations in the region had their own kings and kingdoms. Any claim of equality with them had to be on the basis of Nagas having a king and kingdom of their own. Jadonang proclaimed:

“The Meiteis have their King, the Indian! (Tajongmei) have their rulers, why should we not have our own King? The white men and we are all human beings. Why should we be afraid of them? All men are equal. We are blessed people. Our days have come. Our powerful weapons are kept hidden by God at Zeliaid. We shall pray and worship God. With His grace we shall become rulers.”63

At that particular historical moment, as Kamei says, the idea of Makam Gwangdi did offer a “fresh idea and attractive to his people who had been oppressed,

60 Yonuo, The Nagas Struggle Against British, p. 59.
61 Hutton, The Angami Nagas, p. 252
63 Quoted in Kamei. The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 150.
persecuted and victimized by the alien rulers." However, as it shall be seen later in this paper, it was also to become an issue of contention especially when Jadonang made attempts to reach out to other Naga tribes. If at all the Angamis had any reservation with the movement among the Zeliangrong tribes, it was with Jadonang’s claims of being the king of the impending Naga Raj.

In his self-fashioning as the king of the Nagas, Jadonang also made sure how he presented himself in attire and travel. When he traveled the length and breadth of the Zeliangrong region and at times even the Angami region, Jadonang adopted a variation on the dress of the British official: a red hat, long trousers, shirt, coat and shoes. Just as the British official did, he also made sure that he traveled riding a pony. Jadonang’s mode of dressing and traveling was surely an inversion of the existing symbolic world of relations, wherein wearing trousers, shirt, etc. and riding a pony was the sole privilege of the British official. More importantly, this selective symbolic appropriation of the colonizer’s cultural signs of power for the construction of a new self, along with many other aspects of the movement which have been looked at so far, in many ways challenge the notion that Jadonang’s movement represented revival of the ‘pure and pristine’ in a ‘tribal’ culture. In fact, rather than a return to tradition, it represented an effort to evolve an effective alternative to modernity as it was constituted by colonialism. Similar instances can be found in the case of the Devi movement of 1922-23 in South Gujarat, Jitu Santal’s movement of 1924-32, the Ghost Dance movement among the Native American nations in the American West, the movement of Venancio Kamiko among the Arawakan people in the Northwest Amazon, or many other such movements around the world posing a spiritual and cultural resistance to

---

64 Kamei, The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 150.
65 Information collected by S. D. O. North. S. J. Duncan, 10.2.31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
colonialism, wherein colonizer's values, signs and institutions are appropriated, democratized and ultimately turned against the colonizer himself.

Jadonang's construction of his own self did not fail to enrage the Sub-Divisional Officer of North West Area, S. J. Duncan. In 1928, Jadonang came across the path of the Sub-Divisional Officer. The latter expected Jadonang to remove his hat and dismount from the pony as a show of subservience. But Jadonang refused to do so and, instead, talked to the S. D. O as an equal about the impending Naga kingdom and the end of British rule. Enraged, the S. D. O. brought him to Tamenglong, interrogated him and then ordered that he be imprisoned for one week. However, as the people were restless about his arrest, he was released after three days on the condition that he would discontinue his 'seditious' political activities and confine himself to religious duties.\(^7\)

III

It was around the same time that Jadonang was touring around Naga villages and organizing the people to rise up against the British and prepare for the establishment of a 'Naga Raj', that an emerging Naga middle class comprising of teachers, government functionaries, elders and pastors from an organisation called Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission, a seven member commission comprising of seven British parliamentarians which had been set up to study and suggest the possibilities of constitutional reform in India. The Naga Club had been formed way back in 1918 by a group of educated Nagas from the Naga Hills who were products of mission school education. Some of them had just returned from France after serving in the Labour Corps in the First World War. They now came together with the objective of discussing and addressing some of the social and administrative grievances the Nagas confronted. Alongside the movement initiated by Jadonang, it was another important effort to forge unity and understanding among all the Naga tribes across village, clan and tribe, and develop a feeling of oneness among them.\(^7\) There were three important factors leading up to

\(^7\) Yonuo, Nagas Struggle Against British. p. 65
the formation of Naga Club, namely, the emergence of a middle class who were products of mission school education, the experiences of the First World War and of a wider world, and the growing urge to define one's identity in contrast to that of their neighbours in the plains.

The growth of a small but significant upwardly mobile and middle class had an important role to play in the formation of Naga Club. The constituents of this class were Christians who had been converted in the last decade of 19th century or the first decade of 20th century, the minority about whom there was much discussion in the previous chapter. Having studied in mission schools, many of them went for higher studies to Jorhat, Shillong or Guwahati and also went on to become government functionaries, teachers, doctors, pastors and evangelists. The times they lived in were marked by vast social, economic and political changes ushered in by colonialism, which included the introduction of money economy; the coming of the roads; the resulting prevalence of new diseases and the quick spread of epidemics; the undermining of traditional village authority and the propping up of government appointed gaonburas as the real wielders of power at the village level; and the introduction of new commodities and technologies. All this had made them restless, and they were keen to fashion themselves to meet the challenges posed by the times. In doing so, as it was discussed earlier, they often fell back on the cultural values they had been socialized into by the American Baptist missionaries through the school, church and other programmes such as the Christian Endeavour and the Sunday school. They did not fail to acknowledge the culture and civilization of their American missionary teachers as morally superior and historically advanced than their own. Moreover, they saw themselves as the torchbearers and the architects of a modern Naga society.

In 1917, when the British issued orders for the recruitment of a Labour Corps from Naga Hills and Manipur for the First World War, these men were the ones most

---

73 Gaonburas were appointees of the British administration in each village to help with tax collection and other administrative work.
receptive and ready to volunteer. American Baptist missionary among Angamis, J. E. Tanquist, commented that: “It is gratifying that our Angami Christians, as well as the non-Christsians educated in our mission school, have been foremost in answering the call of the government.” He went on to remark: “We often meet grown-up men who have never been ten miles from their place of birth. Christianity together with education gradually makes them braver and more far-sighted in this and other respects.”

About 4000 men, including Nagas and Kukis, were recruited and sent to France. To begin with, there was much hesitation among the Nagas and Kukis to go across the seas and participate in a war that did not mean anything for them. Among the Tangkhuls, the land of the white people known as Ngaleingachaikazingngachai, the place between heaven and earth, was thought to be a place of no return, and many felt it was a ploy of the government to steal their young men and properties. Eventually, some of the Tangkhuls agreed to volunteer following the persuasion of the American Baptist missionary, William Pettigrew. While the Semas and the Lothas responded favourably to the recruitment, each sending 1000 men, the Aos were slightly reticent but eventually gave in to the demand sending about 200 men; the Rengmas also sent 200 men; the Changs and other trans-frontier tribes sent another 200 men; the Angamis, the Liangmais and the Zemes protested against being enlisted for the duration that had been laid down. As a result, many of these recruits for the Labour Corps were instead diverted to assist the military operations to contain the Kuki rebellion.

For those who were recruited, the journey to France and the participation in the war had a lasting impact in terms of how they understood themselves in relation to the world, both geographically and mentally. After a few weeks of rigorous physical training and classes on warfare, they were sent off to Bombay, from where they boarded the ship to France. For many of the recruits, it was the first time they had

---

74 Reid, History of Relations, pp. 162-163.
ventured beyond their villages. The whole journey to France and participation in the war filled them with mixed feelings of nostalgia for their home as well as curiosity for all they experienced in this world beyond their hills. Ruichamhao, a Tangkhul evangelist who had been appointed the Supervisor of the Manipur Labour Corps, recounts that on reaching Piphema, en route to Dimapur, many of the recruits began to pine for their homes and relatives they had left behind. During the long ship journey, with no land in sight, many were overcome with depression and were taken ill. Some succumbed to their illnesses.79 Moreover, the experience of the war itself left many emotionally and physically traumatized. Yet, the places and experiences they encountered, be it the train journey from Dimapur to Bombay, the ship journey and the sea, the city of Bombay, the port of Eden, the port of Rome and then France itself, or all the different races of people they met on their way did stimulate their curiosity and excitement.80 This exposure to life and places beyond their village boundaries, the vast new lands and seas, not only altered their sense of geography but also their notion about themselves, as a people, in relation to the nationalities and places around the world: thus, adding another layer of perspective to their existing self which was being constructed.

The relations between the plains and hills have not always been pleasant and during the British colonial period, they were strained further. This was another factor structuring the kind of Naga nation that was being imagined. The Ahoms and the Meiteis, after the adoption of ‘Hinduism’ as their state religion, increasingly looked upon the Hill tribes as culturally and socially inferior to them. The caste sensibilities, intrinsic to ‘Hinduism’, were only strengthened further by the suppression of non-brahman movements like the Moamoria movement of the 18th century with the help of the British.81 Subsequent British policies of containing and controlling the hill tribes, for gaining land and protection for tea plantations and for the effective administration of Assam and Manipur, and the role played by the

81 Moamoria movement was a movement inspired by two lower caste leaders, Sankui and Madhit, who denied the supremacy of Brahmans and rejected the worship of Shiva. As their followers grew in number and influence, the later Ahom rulers increasingly persecuted them, eventually leading them to rise up in rebellion. The rebellion was crushed with the assistance of British in the late 19th century.
Assamese and Manipuri political elites in this process further invited the animosity of the hill tribes towards the plains. Moreover, the clear administrative division that the British had created between the hills and the plains, and the mediation of movement and communication between the hills and the plains through measures like the Inner Line system ensured that the plainspeople remain alienated from the hill tribes and vice versa.

Given the strained relations, the growth and spread of the Indian national movement in the plains from the 1920s onwards ignited fears over what the political future of the Nagas would be. In 1921, the Assam Provincial Congress Committee, under the leadership of Kuladhar Chaliha and K. N. C. Bordoloi, had been formed in order to assist the Indian National Congress in its struggle for independence from the British. In August 1921, Gandhi himself had come to Assam to inaugurate the Non-Cooperation Movement, which was followed by large public meetings, boycotts of courts, educational institutions and British goods, refusal to pay taxes. Although there were crackdowns on Congress activities, and many of its leaders and workers were imprisoned and its offices burnt down, the Indian national movement had become stronger through the 1920s. The 1928 Calcutta session of the Congress had given an ultimatum to the British that if complete dominion status was not granted in a year, the Congress would be compelled to demand complete independence. The Nagas were conscious of these political developments and they had begun to anticipate the moment when British would finally be compelled to leave India. However, once that moment came, what the political status of the Nagas would be remained a matter of concern. There was a fear that the plainspeople, who had always looked upon Nagas as inferior, may after all assume administrative control over the hills. This fear became more pronounced when the Simon Commission included Naga Hills within the proposed constitutional reform for India.

In January 1929, the Simon Commission visited Kohima. While the Indian nationalists had given a call for boycott of the Commission as it failed to have a single Indian member, the members of the Naga Club took the opportunity to

---

submit a memorandum indicating their concern over being included “within the Reformed Scheme of India”. The memorandum began with the plea that “our Hills be withdrawn from the Reformed Scheme and placed outside the Reforms but directly under British Government. We never asked for any reforms and we do not wish for any reforms.” The memorandum went on to state that prior to the coming of the British, “we were living in a state of intermittent warfare with the Assamese of the Assam valley to the North and West of our country and Manipuris to the South.” Moreover, they “never conquered us, nor were we ever subjected to their rule.”

The memorandum listed the way in which Nagas were ‘backward’ and different from the plainspeople. For instance, “our education is poor”; “our population numbering 102,000 is very small in comparison with the population of the plains districts”, thereby anticipating less representation in provincial councils; “our language is quite different from those of the plains”, “no social affinities with the Hindus and Mussalmans” wherein “we are looked down upon by the one for “beef” and the other for our “pork” and by both for our want in education”. There was also the fear that if they were placed under the new reformed scheme, “new and heavy taxes will have to be imposed on us, and when we cannot pay, then all lands will have to be sold and in the long run we shall have no share in the land of our birth and life will not be worth living then.” They appreciated that “though our land at present is within the British territory, Government have always recognized our private rights in it.” But, if they were “forced to enter the council of majority”, they feared the imposition of “foreign laws and customs to supersede our own customary laws which we now enjoy.” Therefore, the memorandum concluded by stating:

“We pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachment from other people who are more advanced than us by withdrawing our country that we should not be thrust to the mercy of other people who could never be subjected; but to leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient times.”

Although the memorandum was signed by representatives of Angami, Zeme-Liangmei, Kuki, Sema, Lotha and Rengma tribes, it was stated that it also

---

84 Memorandum to Simon Commission, 10 January 1929, *The Naga National Rights and Movement*. Publicity and Information Department, NNC, 1993, pp. 9-11.
represented the concerns and aspirations of "other regions of Nagaland". The signatories included about ten interpreters, one clerk, one peon, one potdar, one peshkar, one sub-overseer and one treasurer working for the colonial administration; one doctor and three teachers, of whom two were pastors.

In response to the plea made by the Naga Club, the Simon Commission recommended that the Naga Hills be excluded from the constitutional reforms being proposed for India and it be treated as an 'excluded' area. The 'excluded' areas would be enclaves 'protected' from outside encroachments, where there would be "security of land tenure, freedom in pursuit of their traditional methods of livelihood, and the reasonable exercise of their ancestral customs." The designated areas were also excluded from the Provincial and Federal Legislatures, and the Governors were given the powers to administer the area in their discretion. The Simon Commission recommendations were implemented in 1937 with the Naga Hills District, the North-East Frontier Tract, the Lushai Hills and the North Cachar Hills being demarcated as Excluded Areas within the Province of Assam. While meeting some of the principal demands of the Naga Club, the paternalism implicit in these administrative changes anticipated the urge of Indian administration after 1947 to forcefully 'protect' the Nagas, much against their wishes. Moreover, while the British administration at the time was keen on meeting the demand made by Naga Club for 'protection', in the subsequent decades as it withdrew from the region, it remained non-committal to another important plea in the memorandum, which was that if the British were to leave the region, "we should not be thrust to the mercy of other people who could never be subjected; but to leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient times."

IV

Following his first imprisonment and release, just a month before Naga Club submitted its memorandum to the Simon Commission, Jadonang became even more popular among his people. The fact that the colonial official could not do
anything to him convinced them even more of his invincibility. Jadonang gradually recruited an army of men and women, known as Riphen. Besides grazing of cattle, cultivation, pounding of paddy, and collection of fuel and firewood, these young men and women were also trained in military tactics, making of gun powder, knowledge of which was current among Nagas even before the British came, and handling of weapons such as daos, spears and muzzle loader guns. They often traveled with Jadonang wherever he went, took part in the religious ceremonies he conducted and were also sent out to other villages on errands requesting their alliance and allegiance, and also to recruit more people for the impending war with the British. It is said that at the peak of these preparations, Riphen consisted of about 500 young people. Alongside military preparations, efforts were also made for the collection of funds for the purchase of arms and the maintenance of Riphen; to put in place an efficient intelligence system, wherein people were trained in the art of passing on secret messages from one place to another; and to teach a repertoire of songs and dances in praise of their land and struggle, largely composed by Jadonang himself and taught by his disciple, Gaidinliu.

Having organized an army, Jadonang reached out first to all the Zeliangrong tribes. Then, he began to reach out to other Naga tribes, particularly the Angamis, Chakhesangs, Rengmas, Maos and Marams with the intention of forging a greater unity among the Nagas to fight the British. To each village, spears were sent out as a request for alliance or allegiance. If a village accepted the spear, then it meant its allegiance to Jadonang’s movement was assured and subsequently it would offer tributes to Jadonang. In certain areas, especially in those belonging to other tribes, Jadonang went in person seeking alliances. For instance, there were reports from some Rongmei Christians about him traveling with some Angamis in the Naga Hills, inviting the people to join the struggle against the British. The Zeliangrong tribes, including the Rongmeis, the Zemes and the Liangmeis inhabiting the North Cachar

---

89 Yonuo, *The Nagas Struggle Against British*, p. 60.
91 Report received from Kuki residents of Tamenglong saying that they were informed by the Kabui Christians of Tamenglong that Jadonang had sent word to all the Kabuis as follows, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
Hills, Naga Hills and the Tamenglong Subdivision of Manipur, were quick to express their allegiance to Jadonang and many of them gave mithuns as tributes.\textsuperscript{92} Other Naga tribes were attracted to the idea but had certain reservations based on their own suspicions and fears. For instance, in the Angami village of Khonoma, as was mentioned earlier, there was an intense discussion in the village council on whether to support the new king or not and it was resolved that since accepting the suzerainty of Jadonang would only lead to a change of masters and not necessarily an achievement of total freedom, they would not offer support.\textsuperscript{93} Considering there had been many headhunting raids between the Zemes and the Angamis in the past, such fears and suspicions was only to be expected. Moreover, a sizeable section of the Angamis may have been more at ease with the strategy adopted by the Naga Club rather than that of Jadonang, a fact proved by the large representation of Angamis in the Naga Club.

Yet, despite the decision of the Khonoma village council and much to the anxiety of the colonial officials, many Angamis did come forward in support of Jadonang's struggle.\textsuperscript{94} Some of the Kukis reported of deliberations among Angamis, Liangmeis and Zemes to fight the British and all the Kukis of the Saipimol range who might inform on them and support the British.\textsuperscript{95} In another instance, in December 1930, few Angamis from Khonoma, including a gaonbura, visited the Liangmei village of Tharon in Tamenglong sub-division. They killed a mithun in honour of Tharon, and asked the villagers there not to pay any taxes the coming year (1931-32), as they would also not be paying it.\textsuperscript{96} Angamis also distributed spears to many Naga villages in Manipur, as a show of solidarity.\textsuperscript{97} The colonial officials in the region were anxious about the alliances being built with other tribes, especially the Angamis who were always looking for an opportunity to attack the British. The S. D. O. of North-

\textsuperscript{92} Kamei, \textit{The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{93} Kamei, \textit{The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{94} Report received from Kuki residents of Tamenglong saying that they were informed by the Kabui Christians of Tamenglong that Jadonang had sent word to all the Kabuis as follows, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{95} Report from P. M. S. D., 19-2-31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{96} Information collected by S. D. O. North, S. J. Duncan, 10.2.31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{97} Group of Kukis to the President, Manipur State, Imphal, 1-3-31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
West requested J. P. Mills, the District Commissioner of Naga Hills, to ensure that villagers from Khonoma do not enter either the North Cachar Hills or the Tamenglong area through Henima or any other route through the hills but only through Imphal, where they will be supplied with a guide. It was further decided that any Angami seen in the region would be immediately arrested and sent to Imphal since “it is extremely likely that any Angami in that area at present is up to no good.”

There was a growing concern and fear among the British towards the beginning of 1931 regarding the new events that were enfolding the hills. This was largely because colonial officials had received information that Jadonang was planning to declare war against the British by the end of 1931. A Kuki mauzadar at Henima informed the D. C. of Naga Hills, J. P. Mills that since the beginning of the year, Zemes and Liangmeis of Naga Hills had been expressing their allegiance to Jadonang with presents of Mithuns. There were rumours circulating among them that the day was near when there will be a sound in the air and the region will be covered with white clouds – that would be the sign of war. Till that portent was seen, everyone should prepare themselves for self-defence. They were also informed that the Zeliangrong Nagas in the Naga Hills had already stopped all household work in preparation for the war. Jadonang had also instructed the people not to pay any more taxes to the Manipur state from the coming year, 1931-32 onwards but instead to pay taxes to him. Several secret meetings were held at various villages and guns were also collected.

---

98 Information collected by S. D. O. North, S. J. Duncan, 10.2.31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
100 Report from Lhoupo Kuki, Mauzadar of Henima to the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, 5 January 1931, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
101 Information collected by S. D. O. North, S. J. Duncan, 10.2.31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
102 J. C. Higgins, Political Agent, Manipur to Chief Secretary to the Government of India, Assam, W. A. Cosgrave, 14 February, 1931, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal; Report received from Kuki residents of Tamenglong saying that they were informed by the Kabui Christians of Tamenglong that Jadonang had sent word to all the Kabuis as follows, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
Under the leadership of Jadonang, the Nagas were involved in a civil-disobedience movement of their own around the same time Gandhi was leading one in the Indian subcontinent. Jadonang had known of Gandhi through some of the Rongmeis who lived in Silchar and other parts of Cachar where Congress influence was strong. He appreciated and respected the efforts made by Gandhi to drive out the British from India and he, as the leader of the Nagas, even wished to meet this leader of India. Having known that Gandhi would be visiting Silchar in January 1927, Jadonang had also made arrangements to take a hundred Naga boys and a hundred Naga girls to welcome him and dance in his honour. Unfortunately, Gandhi could not make it to Silchar at the time and Jadonang also could not meet him. This admiration for Gandhi, however, need not become a reason for integrating Jadonang into the Indian national struggle for independence. Jadonang was clearly leading a movement for liberating the Naga Raj from the control of the British and the plains, and his admiration for Gandhi and the Indian national struggle was only an expression of political solidarity with a neighbouring kingdom that was also fighting the British.

By February 1931, the British officials in the region had decided to arrest Jadonang and suppress the movement once and for all. S. J. Duncan, S. D. O. of North Western Area, suggested that Jadonang and other leaders of the movement be immediately arrested and imprisoned for a period of not less than a year. Subsequently, his whereabouts were sought. As he returned from Bhuban hills along with Gaidinliu and 600 of his other followers, Jadonang was arrested under Section 108 of Indian Penal Code and was imprisoned at Silchar Jail on 19 February.

The news of Jadonang's arrest spread to the hills and there was much unrest. Nagas began to move about in large armed bands, all work in the fields was suspended,

105 Information collected by S. D. O. North, S. J. Duncan, 10.2.31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
106 Yonuo, *The Nagas Struggle Against British*, p. 76.
villages were barricaded and watch was kept through the night. An attack from the hills seemed so imminent that the Sub-Inspector of Police at Lakhipur gave instructions to the Inspector of Police at Jhiribam in Manipur, to ensure that no Nagas from the hills are allowed into the plains and all routes leading to the plains be blocked. Besides, Nagas and Kukis alike were prohibited from walking around with spears and guns, or in large groups. Meanwhile, the Political Agent at Manipur, J. C. Higgins reached Puiluan village, destroyed the temples that were constructed there, desecrated the idols and shot the pythons in the temple dead. Higgins claimed he was doing all that in defense of ‘animism’ and against the threat Jadonang posed for ‘animist’ religious practices of the Nagas. Moreover, he arrested the elders, confiscated all the guns and imposed heavy fines on the villages. The total sum that was levied from various villages amounted to Rs. 2,970. Higgins and the column of Assam Rifles then proceeded to Jirighat, where Jadonang was handed over to them by the police at Cachar. Rather than going directly to Imphal, Higgins decided to take Jadonang, bound up in chains, through the hills, through Tamenglong, just so that he could demonstrate to the Nagas that Jadonang does not possess any divine powers and that none is invincible in front of the British.

On 19 March 1931, Jadonang was finally brought to Imphal and was imprisoned in the Imphal Jail. While in jail, he was thoroughly interrogated by Higgins. Jadonang denied all the charges that were brought against him. In fact, reluctant to give the many secrets of the movement away, he denied having told the people not to pay taxes to the Manipur government or to rise up in arms against the British. Higgins had interrogated Gaidinliu and the elders of the village earlier, but his efforts were
futile as none of them gave any information away.\textsuperscript{114} As the investigations went on and as Jadonang languished in Imphal jail, Jinlakpou, a road \textit{muhorrir} who was also one of the first Christian converts in Tamenglong, informed the government about a murder of four Meitei traders that took place in Puiluan and alleged that those murders were done at the behest of Jadonang.\textsuperscript{115} Without even investigating the veracity of such a charge, an unfair trial held on 13 June 1931 prosecuted Jadonang for the murder of four Meitei traders.

Without any legal aid, Jadonang explained how the traders were killed, about his absence during the murders, and how it was the result of a collective decision taken by the whole village and not of any individual. Higgins summoned some villagers as witnesses and forced them under duress to testify that Jadonang was responsible for the murders. None of the defenders was granted the right to counsel and finally, Jadonang was convicted and sentenced to death, while the real perpetrators of the act were sentenced to life imprisonment.\textsuperscript{116} The fact that the murder of four traders was just a pretext to frame and hang Jadonang is made clear by what Higgins writes in the Manipur Administration Report for that year. He writes:

\begin{quote}
"Although these punishments had nothing to do with those that would have been awarded to Jadonang and others of his followers for the disturbances which they were instrumental in causing in the Hills, it was hoped that they would be taken as such, and serve as a deterrent for other who might aspire to similar fame."\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

On a Saturday, on 29 August 1931 at 6 in the morning, by the banks of Nambul River behind the Imphal Jail, Jadonang was hanged to death. Before his death he once again declared that he had done no wrong and all that he did was for his people. Later, his body was taken to his village, Puiluan and was buried according to the traditional rituals and ceremonies.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{114} Higgins to Mills, Camp Nungkao, 13-3-31, Naga Movement, 1931 (R-1/S-C/200), MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{115} Kamei, \textit{The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas}, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{116} Yonuo, \textit{The Nagas Struggle Against British}, pp. 69-70; Manipur Administration Report, 1931-32, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{117} Manipur Administration Report, 1931-32, p. 3, MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{118} Yonuo, \textit{The Nagas Struggle Against British}, p. 79.
There was a strong feeling among the colonial officials that once Jadonang was captured and hanged, the movement would eventually cease to exist. But, as Higgins himself admits, "unfortunately this has not been the case, and the trouble far from being eradicated has spread over a large area."119 The hope of a Naga Raj continued to be still aflame and the hanging of one leader had produced an array of leaders encouraging people not to pay taxes and rise up against the British. The leading figure among them was Jadonang's trusted follower, Gaidinliu, who at the time was just sixteen years of age.

Gaidinliu was the third daughter of Lothonang of Pamei clan. In a Naga village, the role of a woman was clearly defined. It was confined to occupations such as cooking and brewing; rearing the children; weaving of clothes; fetching wood and water; reaping and sowing in the fields; and mediating inter-village disputes.120 On the other hand, the role of men was also clearly defined and was confined to occupations such as hunting and fishing; warfare in times of disputes; building of houses; weaving of baskets; felling of the jungle for agriculture. There were no strict taboo against men and women crossing these clearly defined gender roles. However to do so was generally seen as improper. From when she was small, much to the concern of her family and relatives, Gaidinliu was keen to do all that she was not supposed to as a woman. For instance, a woman entering the boy's dormitory, known as khangchu, was considered 'most immodest'.121 However, once she protested against this norm and insisted on entering it.122 There were many such instances where, driven by her individuality, courage and determination, she became involved in activities that were forbidden for a young woman, which later included even leading an entire armed movement against the British. Interestingly, her family and clans people, despite being concerned about her escapades which defied all existing gender norms, did not admonish her but instead continued to support and respect her. She was even appointed the leader of the girl's dormitory known as liuchu.

121 Bower, Drums Behind the Hills, p. 93.
As she grew into her adolescence, she increasingly began to encounter a particular goddess who looked just like her and who, she later recognized, to be the daughter of Bisnu, the god of Bhuban Hills. She had also begun to see many visions and dreams about the future. Her parents and clans people were convinced that there was something special about her and recognized her to be a *muh-pui*. In one of her dreams, the goddess she had befriended took her to the cave of Bisnu in the Bhuban Hills, where she met Jadonang. She had heard about Jadonang and his powers to interpret dreams, to heal people and his efforts to improve the lives of the Nagas from before and now she had become all the more keen to work with him and learn from him. Around 1926 or 1927, she went to meet Jadonang in Puliuan and became his disciple. Over the next four years, she became one of the most trusted disciples of Jadonang and was given the responsibility of training the young women who joined the *Riphen*.

Following Jadonang’s death, she assumed leadership of the movement. As Jadonang was languishing in Imphal Jail, Gaidinliu, accompanied by about 50 young people, went into hiding, and following his execution, she covertly visited every village, especially in western Tamenglong region, and encouraged the people to rise up in revolt. There was also a rumour afloat that Jadonang had come back to life and was visiting his subjects again, and there were huge festive gatherings around an empty throne that occurred in every village. Outsiders were barred from entering the villages. Gaidinliu urged the people not to pay taxes and to prepare themselves with daos and spears for the impending war with the British. As in the case of Jadonang, she too became very popular and the people ensured her safety. As Mills points out, “With very few individual exceptions indeed every man and woman in the affected villages is an active sympathizer.” Moreover, “even among those who do not sympathise I doubt if more than a dozen men in the Naga Hills are

---

123 *Muh-pui* is a female prophet who can communicate with the gods and spirits, and be a mediator between gods and humans; Kamei, *The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas*, pp. 157-158.
126 Copy of a D. O. No. 3-C., dated the 13th February 1932, from J. P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, Unrest among Kabui Nagas in the North West of the Manipur State. File No. 189-P, Foreign and Political, 1932. NAI, New Delhi.
prepared to give information against Gaidiliu and then only with the utmost secrecy."\(^{127}\)

The people had developed an efficient system of concealing her presence. Mills reported that, they “are kept most carefully concealed in villages. They travel with strong escorts, moving at night when there is any risk of detection. Villages are barred against Kukis and suspicious strangers…”\(^{128}\) In February 1932, Gaidinliu organized an attack on the Assam Rifles outpost at Hungrum, North Cachar Hills. Armed with just daos and spears, but filled with the conviction that the bullets fired by the soldiers would turn into water, about 50 to 60 Hungrum villagers, with reinforcement from Bopungwemi village, attacked the Assam Rifles outpost at dawn.\(^{129}\) The Assam Rifles shot back and there were many casualties. About six Assam Rifles soldiers and eight Zeme warriors were killed, the Bopungwemi village was burnt down, and many were injured.\(^{130}\) Gaidinliu continued to seek alliances with other Naga tribes such as the Maos, Marrams and the Angamis. Although not much military support came from these tribes, they remained sympathetic to her efforts. Khonoma, which was earlier indecisive as far as making any alliances with the Jadonang’s movement was concerned, now became more supportive.\(^{131}\) Cornered by the British, Khonoma did state its position in ambiguous terms: “we would tell you if Gaidiliu were in our village, but we would not arrest her for you.”\(^{132}\) However, this was an indirect way in which despite knowing her whereabouts, Khonoma refrained from revealing it. Gaidinliu had people working for her right down to Kohima, and the Naga Hills was increasingly becoming a safe hiding for her.\(^{133}\)

---


\(^{128}\) Extracts from letters received from the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, Henima, 29 January 1932, Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.

\(^{129}\) Letter from G. E. Soames, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, to the Political Secretary, Govt. of India, 5th April 1932, Shillong, Unrest among Kabui Nagas in the North West of the Manipur State, File No. 189-P, Foreign and Political, 1932, NAI, New Delhi.

\(^{130}\) Kamei, The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 160.

\(^{131}\) Kamei, The History of the Zeliangrong Nagas, p. 163.


\(^{133}\) Kamei, Jadonang, p. 69.
Unable to suppress the movement either politically or militarily, Mills, who had been entrusted with the mission of capturing Gaidinliu, realized that only through effective propaganda and exploitation of contradictions among the people could the British suppress the movement. He stated the policy as thus: “The pressure must be in no way relaxed and Kacha Nagas and Kabuis must be made to realise that Gaidiliu’s promises to bring prosperity are worthless and that to listen to her is to court trouble. No possible means of obtaining information must be left untried, and the more inconspicuous the means are the better.”

Mills sent out propaganda teams into the villages in Naga Hills and he instructed the S. D. O. of North Cachar to do the same in the villages under his jurisdiction. Besides, he announced a reward of Rs. 500 to anyone providing information leading to her arrest; the Manipur State Darbar announced a reward of Rs. 200; and Dr. Haralu, a Christian convert from Pulomi village, announced a reward of Rs. 100. Subsequently, Mills also suggested to the government that any village that would bring Gaidinliu in or hold her in custody, and send word for an escort to take her over be promised remission of house tax for ten years. Finally, another effective way in which the colonial officials exploited the situation to their advantage was by consistently portraying the movement as more an anti-Kuki movement and less an anti-government movement. For instance, Mills states: “Against us there is no bitterness at all, but the Kukis are hated.” This was far from the truth as colonial officials themselves in another instance admitted that it was not just the Kukis who were suspect and kept out of Naga villages but even those Nagas who worked under any capacity for the government: thus further stressing the fact that it was primarily a movement against the government.

---

134 J. P. Mills, Note on the state of the operations against Gaidiliu, Kohima, 9-5-32, Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.
136 Notice from the Office of the DC, Naga Hills, 3-6-32, Gaidinliu, R-1/S-B/53; Notice from the Manipur State Darbar, 11-6-32, Gaidinliu, R-1/S-B/53; Notice from the Office of the DC, Naga Hills, 18-7-32, Gaidinliu, R-1/S-B/53, MSA, Imphal.
137 J. P. Mills to Commissioner, Surma Valley & Hill Division, Silchar, 12-8-32, Gaidinliu, R-1/S-B/53, MSA, Imphal.
139 Copy of a D. O. No. 3-C, dated the 13th February 1932, from J. P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, Unrest among Kabui Nagas in the North West of the Manipur State, File No. 189-P, Foreign and Political, 1932, NAL, New Delhi.
anti-Kuki, however, was successful in raising a state of panic among the Kukis and thereby, further sharpening the division among the hill people and making it easier to subjugate the Nagas. In many respects, colonial policies such as these which took advantage of the contradictions within the society anticipated the Indian state's counter-insurgency measures in the region post-1950s.

Following the Hungrum incident, and with the British forces strengthening the hold over its operations, Gaidinliu confined herself to the Naga Hills. In October 1932 she reached the village of Pulomi, where the people welcomed her and ensured her protection. Pulomi was perceived to be one of the strongholds of the movement. However, Dr. Haralu, a newly converted medical doctor from Pulomi who practiced in Kohima, the same doctor who had announced Rs. 100 as a reward for information on Gaidinliu, came to know about her presence at Pulomi. He immediately informed the Extra Assistant Commissioner at Kohima, Hari Blah, who informed Mills. A column of 100 soldiers of the Assam Rifles under the command of Captain Macdonald was sent to Pulomi. About 100 coolies were also sent to Khonoma on the way to Henima. On 19th October, the column of Assam Rifles arrived at Pulomi and Gaidinliu was arrested and taken to Kohima. Subsequently she was taken to Imphal for trial. She was sentenced to life imprisonment and was put in Guwahati Jail, followed by Shillong, Aizwal and finally in Tura Jail.  

Gaidinliu had been arrested, however, much to the anxiety of the colonial officials, the movement continued to spread even more widely. Now there was no longer one leader, but multiple 'maibas' and 'maibis', prophesying and drawing people together, and filling them with hope to continue their struggle. The Manipur Administrative Report stated:

"Numerous 'Maibas', or prophets have sprung up in various villages all over the affected area, and these profess to have special powers of leadership, and make their respective villages obey them and disregard the ordinary village elders. It is difficult at present to know exactly what connection they have with Gaidileu, and whether they are not mere opportunists, who seeing the gullibility of the ignorant mass of villagers, think they themselves will make

---

141 Maibas and Maibis were names coined by Meiteis and colonial writers to refer to priests/medicine-men, who could also be mediums between human beings and the spirit world.
an attempt at following a lucrative profession! There is no doubt however that, first Jadonang and then Gaidileu, embued them with the whole idea of the new cult, and until the latter is brought to book there is little likelihood of quiet coming back to the Hills, and these erstwhile prophets subsiding.\textsuperscript{142}

Colonial anxiety over the presence of a serial chain of prophets was also expressed by Mills. In his notes on the state of the operations against Gaidinliu, he wrote:

"The capture of Gaidiliu will not end the agitation... She will be succeeded by one or more “mediums”. To be a “medium” is not an offence under any law. Yet they will continue to keep the people in a state of constant excitement, and Nagas will continue to be set over against Government and Kukis."\textsuperscript{143}

Having gathered information about a parcel that was forwarded to Gaidinliu from Yang Khulen village, the President of Manipur Darbar, Captain Harvey came to the locality and called for the headman of Yang Khulen. The headman refused to meet Harvey as he claimed to owe loyalty to another authority, namely a person named Rangtui, who being inspired by a maiba in Pulomi and having communicated with the Gods, had assumed the leadership of the village and encouraged villagers to direct taxes to him rather than the government. Having called for reinforcements, Harvey ordered the village elders of Yang Khulen to meet him. The village elders too refused to come and instead sent a couple of people, returning Harvey’s parwana with twelve thumb impressions in blood, and with a message that the village intended to show its loyalty only to Rangtui. Harvey once again asked the headman to meet him and asked him how Rangtui could be arrested. This time the headman obliged to meet and he told Harvey that once the Naga Raj came, no one would be able to arrest Rangtui. On the same day, realizing that the village headman had gone to meet Harvey, Rangtui himself came along with his followers to meet Harvey in order to make it clear to him that the village was under his jurisdiction and not under the British. Harvey immediately arrested him and ordered the Yang Khulen village to be burnt down.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} Manipur Administration Report, 1931-32, p. 4, MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{143} J. P. Mills, Note on the state of the operations against Gaidiliu, Kohima, 9-5-32, Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{144} J. C. Higgins, Political Agent, Manipur to G. E. Soames, Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, Imphal, 23-5-32, Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.
Another maibi, who also happened to enter the correspondence of colonial officials, was Lhipezilu, a ten year old girl from the Eastern Angami village of Thetsemi. While it is unlikely that she had anything to do with Gaidinliu, prophesies of Gaidinliu and Jadonang were not unfamiliar to her. She had the ability to communicate with the spirits and often could describe one or more of them that stood beside her. Interestingly, her chief spirit’s name was Yihova, bearing much resemblance to the God missionaries were trying to popularize among the Angamis at the time. Guided by a message from Yihova, she instructed 500 men from several villages to level a hill in order to construct a house for the ‘Sahib’ who is going to come and stay there. Although Mills interpreted the ‘Sahib’ as himself, one is not sure if it was really referred to him. In any case, the ground was cleared expecting the ‘Sahib’ to come and stay, though he never came. At another occasion, in August 1931, again guided by Yihova, she began identifying and keeping out alleged thieves from the area, and she also began to grow her hair long. At the time, Mills gave a severe warning, shaved her head and ordered her father to control her and discourage her from seeing visions. In 1932, following the instruction of Yihova, she asked the villagers to organize sepoys to join what Mills calls a ‘mysterious army’ and in July of that year, she sent 70 men to Kekrima, in order to welcome a ‘Sahib’ and a woman named ‘Indilu’, who most likely would have been Gaidinliu. After waiting for five days, however neither the ‘Sahib’ nor ‘Indilu’ came, and the sepoys returned back to their villages. When Mills came to know about this, he immediately arrested the ten year old girl was placed under observation for “lunacy”.

The emergence of maibas and maibis, who were seeing visions and prophesying, continued to emerge even after the arrest of Gaidinliu. In June 1933, S. C. Booth, the S. D. O. of Tamenglong Sub-Division, reported a maiba named Tengkhamang

---

145 J. P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills to The Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Silchar, Kohima, 22 August 1932, Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.
146 J. P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills to The Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Silchar, Kohima, 22 August 1932, Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.
147 Hamring Tangkhul, Lambu to J. C. Higgins, Political Agent, Manipur, 9-8-32. Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.
148 J. P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills to The Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Silchar, Kohima, 22 August 1932, Naga Movement, 1932, R-1/S-D/228, MSA, Imphal.
belonging to Atang Khulen village. He is said to have asked the villagers not to cultivate their fields as they will be fed by God, and also to believe in his teachings and join him. He also purportedly told the villagers not to pay their taxes to the government. While pursuing Tengkhamang, Booth came to know about another maiba, Disalang, who along with Tengkhamang brought together some of the Zeme and Liangmei villages in order to wage an insurrection against the British and raid the Manipur valley in the months of August and September. Moreover, they spread the news that the 'Sarkar' was about to fall and a new king called Gandhi, who was said to be the son of Jadonang, was to come and rule over them. Because of which, the villagers were told not to pay their taxes as long as possible, since they might have to pay taxes a second time when the new king took over the reign. Upon receiving information, Booth set out to arrest these two maibas and suppress all preparations for an insurrection. He first sent for the gaonburas of Khudong Khun Khaiba, the village where the maibas were last seen, but they refused to meet him. However, on hearing information that Booth was on his way to their village with an army, they finally came and met him in Haochung village. They were duly cross-examined. Following which, three villages where the maibas were seen – Khudong Khun Khaiba, Yairong and Oktan – were disarmed. While Booth was in Khudong Khun Khaiba village, the two maibas attempted to rouse the villagers to attack him, but, the attempt was unsuccessful and the maibas escaped, although one of their 'captains' was caught. Subsequently, Tengkhamang was caught and interrogated, but only to escape from the custody of Assam Rifles guard three hours after he was handed over to them.

149 C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, 16-6-33. Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
150 C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Imphal, 16-6-33. Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
151 C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Imphal, 17-6-33. Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
152 C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Imphal, 16-6-33. Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
153 C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Imphal, 17-6-33. Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
154 C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Imphal, 18-6-33. Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190; C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Imphal, 19-6-33. Unrest in Tamenglon Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
Tengkhamang and Disalang had been working under the instruction of another maiba, Jinongpui of Leng village. The villagers at Leng had been in communication with Gaidinliu, both prior to her arrest and after, and she had instructed the villagers to continue the struggle despite her absence. Following which, Jinongpui had assumed the leadership of the movement in that region. Like Jadonang, he built a temple in the village and kept a python with him. He instructed the villagers to believe in the king, Gandhi, who was to come, retain their faith in Gaidinliu, and prepare themselves for a war with the British in the coming months of August and September.\textsuperscript{153} Subsequently, Leng had made alliances with about 25 other villages in the region, and begun preparations for the war. Having received information about the preparations for war, S. C. Booth and Political Agent, C. Gimson went with a small column of Assam Rifles and burnt down the village. Following which, Jinongpui and several others were arrested on charges of killing a Meitei at Makui Loubok.\textsuperscript{156} It was also proposed that all the villages involved be fined, their guns confiscated and each village made to do one month’s punitive labour on roads and other works.\textsuperscript{157} Those villages and individuals who have helped the administration in providing information and other assistance would, on the other hand, be rewarded with guns. In October of the 1933, under the pretext of punishing those involved in the killing of a Meitei, Jinongpui was sentenced to death and five others, including Tengkhamang was sentenced to transportation for life.\textsuperscript{158} Subsequently, Tengkhamang was pardoned as he had “proved very useful, and it was really he who gave most of the information which enabled the conspiracy to be nipped in the bud…” Moreover, it was felt that, “we have at present almost no friends among the Kacha Nagas and we must make some. Tengkhamang is prospectively a very useful friend.”\textsuperscript{159}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{155} C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Camp Chatur, 28-6-33, Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{156} Manipur Administration Report, 1933-34, p. 4, MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{157} C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner, Assam, Camp Chatur, 28-6-33, Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{158} Orders by the Governor in Council, Govt. of Assam, 17 October 1933. Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
\textsuperscript{159} C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur to W. A. Cosgrave, Chief Commissioner. Assam, Imphal, 15-9-33, Unrest in Tamenglong Subdivision Manipur, R-1/S-C/190, MSA, Imphal.
\end{flushright}
The arrest and sentencing of these individuals was not able to entirely suppress the movement against the government. Following the arrest of above mentioned maibas, Haideo of Joute Pabram village, one of the maibas who had been in communication with Gaidinliu, emerged as a leader and prophet. He travelled around the villages in Naga Hills, Manipur and North Cachar, and claimed to have the power to heal people of their sicknesses. Wherever he went, he performed ceremonies in commemoration of Jadonang and Gaidinliu, preached the reformed religion, proclaimed the coming of the Naga kingdom, and called on the villagers to not pay their taxes. The British began to pursue him and as he was fleeing to Henima village, in May 1934, the Assam Rifles guard at Henima arrested him at Nchanramai. As in the case of others, forced confession and information regarding others involved in the movement was extracted out of him.160

The arrest of Haideo was followed by the arrest of two other important leaders, who were closely associated with Gaidinliu – Ramjo and Dikeo. Following the imprisonment of Gaidinliu, they had continued organizing the villagers against the government. They kept the hope of a Naga kingdom alive and encouraged the villagers to not pay taxes. Both had been wanted by the British authorities since the arrest of Gaidinliu, but they continued to evade arrest. Ramjo was purported to have led a group from Bopungwemi village in killing the wife and child of a Kuki chawkidar at Lakema, who was suspected of assisting the British in their operations leading to the arrest of Gaidinliu.161 However, following his arrest, he was kept as an undertrial for over a year as the authorities could not find sufficient evidence to convict him of his crimes, and finally in 1936, he was convicted under Bengal Regulation III of 1818, wherein if there was no sufficient evidence to pursue a judicial proceeding, the state could put any suspect in preventive detention for an indefinite period, for “reasons of State”. Dikeo was also convicted under the same regulation, although he managed to escape from the British and continued his

160 J. H. Hutton, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, to the Political Secretary to the Govt. of India, 8th August 1935, Shillong, Detention of certain Nagas of Gaidiliu cult under Bengal Regulation III of 1818, Foreign and Political, File. No. 425-P(S), 1935, NAI, New Delhi.
161 J. H. Hutton, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, to the Political Secretary to the Govt. of India, 8th August 1935, Shillong, Detention of certain Nagas of Gaidiliu cult under Bengal Regulation III of 1818, Foreign and Political, File. No. 425-P(S), 1935, NAI, New Delhi.
political activities in hiding until in November 1940, he was traced, and shot dead by the Assam Rifles.\textsuperscript{162}

It was around the same time that Ramjo and Dikeo were arrested that the colonial authorities received information about a maiba hailing from Bopungwemi village named, Gomhei, who had also been touring villages, healing people of their sicknesses and proclaiming the advent of Naga Raj. The British authorities arrived at his village in order to arrest him but the villagers denied the existence of such a person and said that he had died two months back. Protected by the villagers, Gomhei continued his work without the knowledge of the authorities. Subsequently, he was joined in his journeys and work by a maibi named, Areliu, who had been inspired by Gaidinliu. However, the authorities heard about them in April 1935 and in September of the same year they were arrested and imprisoned.\textsuperscript{163}

Despite all these arrests, there was no dearth of prophets and visionaries, proclaiming matters that were uncomfortable for the British ears. The Secretary to the Governor of Assam wrote to the Political Agent: "His Excellency is disturbed by the fact that, though eight years have passed since the arrest of Gaidiliu, rumours of prophetesses and so forth still crop up among the Kacha Nagas, a whole generation of whom is growing up in an atmosphere of unrest."\textsuperscript{164} In June 1940, Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, C. R. Pawsey, arrested a maibi by the name Ramsanpoliu, also known as Naizeleu. Although hailing from Nengung village, near Tamenglong, she was largely active in the Naga Hills and parts of North Cachar.\textsuperscript{165} Many villages offered her tributes and in Haflong and Naga Hills, there were large gatherings of people were said to have been singing, dancing and making sacrifices in her honour. And the colonial authorities feared that she "will quite likely become

---

\textsuperscript{162} C. G. Prior, the Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India in the Foreign and Political Department to J. A. Dawson, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, 31st January 1936, New Delhi, Detention of certain Nagas of Gaidiliu cult under Bengal Regulation III of 1818, Foreign and Political, File. No. 425-P(S), 1935, NAI, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{163} J. H. Hutton, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, to the Political Secretary to the Govt. of India, 8th August 1935, Shillong, Detention of certain Nagas of Gaidiliu cult under Bengal Regulation III of 1818, Foreign and Political, File. No. 425-P(S), 1935, NAI, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{164} Secretary to the Governor of Assam to C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur, 14 September 1940, Rani Gaidiliu Case File, 1930-35, R-1/S-B/35, MSA, Imphal.

\textsuperscript{165} C. R. Pawsey, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills to C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur, Kohima, 12 June 1940, Rani Gaidiliu Case File, 1930-35, R-1/S-B/35, MSA, Imphal.
a successor to Gaidiliu..." Soon after the arrest of Ramsanpoliu, Pawsey again became alarmed by reports of a new ‘prophetess’ who had arisen in the North Cachar Hills. She was purported to be touring villages closer to the foothills.

V

The movement among the Zeliangrong tribes and the initiatives of the Naga Club represented two important initiatives occurring around the same time towards forging greater unity among the Nagas and ensuring their independence from external political controls. However, as it is evident, there were marked differences between the two, largely on how each understood colonialism and hoped to confront it. Although both initiatives would have been aware or conscious of the activities and presence of the other, especially considering their geographical proximity, there is no evidence of any debates or dialogues between them at the time and both seemed to have a life and trajectory of their own. It may be worth taking a brief look at some of these differences between the two.

There was a marked difference in terms of the socio-cultural composition of the Naga Club and the movement initiated by Jadonang. While the former were largely beneficiaries of the colonial system, either as part of the governmental apparatus or products of colonial education and missionary work, the latter were those who had all along resisted the colonial state and the missionaries, who were suspicious of colonial education and preferred working their way up using the existing customs, beliefs and practices as the point of departure. This difference in terms of socio-cultural composition had an important role to play in how both these initiatives thought about colonialism.

From the memorandum to the Simon Commission, it is evident that the Naga Club was more veiled in their criticism of the British. Although never entirely endorsing British rule, they nevertheless articulated their preference for British rule and

---

protection over the rule of the plains. One of the Naga elders is supposed to have told E. Cadogen, one of the members of the Simon Commission who visited Naga Hills:

"This is the way they put it to me. They said, "We hear that a black king is going to come to rule over India. If that is so, for goodness sake" — or whatever corresponds to the expression "goodness sake" — "do not let it be a Bengali." They ended by saying that they much preferred Queen Victoria.”[68]

They also acknowledged the fact that the British were always protective of their customary law and land relations, and had brought modern education among them, which has been a cause of ‘advancement’. The paternalism that was integral to the British colonial project among the Nagas was successful to the extent that this class of Nagas had begun to look up to the paternal care and protection of the British as a necessary means of keeping the incursions of plains rule, which they feared the most, at bay.

This attitude of the Naga Club was in contrast to how Jadonang understood the colonial problem. Jadonang did not distinguish between the colonial incursions of the British and the plains, and its impact. As far as he was concerned both eventually affected the spiritual, cultural, economic and political unity and integrity of a people. It caused an imbalance in the creation that Tinglyo Ragwong, the Supreme Creator, had designed. Therefore, it was important that any attempt to impose external political control be resisted, so that a new political and economic arrangement based on the values of the Ragwong is determined, and therein finally, their own cultural and spiritual self may be reclaimed and reinvented in their own terms. Organizing a political resistance against the British, challenging the existing governmental apparatus in the hills, yet at the same time developing an alternative spirituality, script and set of cultural practices through a creative appropriation of available resources from both their own traditions and elsewhere have to be seen in this light.

They also differed in the means each adopted to achieve their respective ends. The constituents of the Naga Club saw themselves to be a class apart, gifted with the art of writing the colonizer's language, and therefore, owning the responsibility to represent the 'illiterate' masses who can not speak for themselves within a public sphere generated by colonialism. The memorandum to the Simon Commission began by stating: “We the undersigned Nagas of the Naga Club at Kohima, who are the only persons at present who can voice for our people...” 169 'The political practice of the Naga Club was also framed within colonial notions of 'civility', where petitioning to address their grievances was increasingly seen as the more 'polite' and 'civilized' means as opposed to the 'violent' and 'savage' ways they had left behind, especially through the mediation of the American Baptist missionaries.

Jadonang's movement, on the other hand was located within an existing prophetic tradition prominent among the Angamis, but whose origins could be traced to the Liangmeis and Zemes, about a king who is believed to be sleeping in a cave in North Cachar, who would return one day to drive out the British, and establish his rule over “all who eat from the wooden platter”, meaning the Nagas. 170 As an appointee of the God of Bhuban Hills and as a witness to his revelation in the Bhuban caves, Jadonang claimed to be this king, in the process privileging kingship over earlier traditions of collective leadership. He had assumed the position of the one who would empower and organize the people to rise up in armed rebellion against the British and dispel all those who nurtured ambitions to rule over the Nagas. Jadonang was aware that this immediate change in the existing political status quo would not happen through petitioning. In fact, all his attempts to negotiate with the British authorities directly, whether it was regarding the recognition of the newly developed script or the need to usher in changes in the existing political structure, was either ridiculed or silenced by the British, leaving him with the sole option of organising an armed resistance against the British.

---

170 Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 252
In its own time, the Naga Club and the movement among the Zeliangrong tribes in the late 1920s and early 1930s represented two ways in which Nagas, drawn into the vortex of colonialism, tried to imagine and work out a political space that could be their own. Surely, there were differences between them, as it was seen above, yet both emerged out of the immediate and shared need among the Nagas to carve out their political identity in the context of colonial incursions at that particular moment. However, in the subsequent decades, clear differences had emerged in how Nagas came to remember both these initiatives, and this had to do a lot with the manner in which the Naga national movement under the leadership of Naga National Council and the Zeliangrong movement under the leadership of Gaidinliu developed in the period after the 1950s.

The Naga national movement which gained momentum with the formation of Naga National Council in 1946 awarded a lot of prominence to the Naga Club as the antecedent of Naga national movement and consciousness. But, it remained rather silent about the movement led by Jadonang and Gaidinliu in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Christianity of American Baptist missionaries, which had a lasting influence in shaping the Christian self of many Naga national leaders and which was keen to portray the movement initiated by Jadonang as nothing but anti-Christian and contrary to establishing ‘Nagaland for Christ’, had an important role to play in this act of privileging one movement over the other. The sentiments of the American Baptist missionaries were echoed by Church historian, Frederick Downs, in his oft quoted book, The Mighty Works of God. He characterised the movement as ‘explicitly and often violently anti-Christian’. This characterisation was a product of the fear and suspicion of the missionaries towards any initiative that was ‘non-Christian’. It contributed in generating a consensus among Naga Christians against the movement. Considering that a sizeable section of the early converts to Christianity in the region comprised of state functionaries and informants, some of whom were directly responsible for the arrest of certain key leaders of the movement, surely the movement did harbour much hostility towards them. But, it

171 Every historical account of the Naga national movement begins with the Naga Club and its memorandum to Simon Commission. It then moves on to the formation of Naga National Council and the subsequent struggle under its leadership for independence.
172 Downs, Mighty Works of God, pp. 147.
never took on an anti-Christian campaign in its own time and to interpret these hostilities as anti-Christian would be far from the truth.

The allegations made by the missionaries and the local Christians not only contributed towards how the Naga National Council wrote the history of the Naga national movement but also how its political engagement was structured especially in relation to what remained of the Zeliangrong movement in the 1950s and 60s. The first constitution of the Naga National Council, adopted in 1958, clearly stated that “Nagaland shall be a kingdom for Christ” and from this, Christian proselytism became an important part of the political campaign of the Federal Government of Nagaland and the Naga Home Guards. This raised the ire of those who had been followers of the *Heraka* faith, the religion founded by Jadonang and later developed by Gaidinliu as the Naga nation seemed to exclude them on the grounds of religious persuasion. This ultimately led to Gaidinliu forming her own army and government that would be parallel to the Federal Government and Naga Home Guard: giving up the idea of an independent Naga homeland and confining her demand to an autonomous district for the Zeliangrong tribes within the Union of India. This, in fact, not only marked a break from the political stance of the Naga National Council but also a departure from the initial aspiration aired by Jadonang himself, to forge unity among all the Naga tribes, not just the Zeliangrong, and establish an independent Naga kingdom. The late 1950s and the first half of 1960s witnessed many skirmishes between the two groups. The Naga National Council, realizing the disunity caused in the name of religion, later amended its constitution in 1968, and stated that “Protestant Christianity and Naga Religion are recognised Religions in Nagaland”. While this temporarily reduced the tension, the suspicion between the two remained.

The growing attempts of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to assimilate the *Heraka* faith into the larger Hindu tradition since the 1960s further contributed in generating a rift between what remained of the movement initiated by Jadonang and the Naga

---

national movement. Interestingly, the missionary rhetoric of the movement being an anti-Christian had only made the task of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad much easier, as it succeeded in portraying the Zeliangrong movement as largely a religious and cultural movement against Christianity rather than as a movement that began as a call for a Naga Raj independent of all external political control.

Thus, two political initiatives which began around the same time and geographically next to each other, which came out of a shared material culture, ethnicity and history that was encountering colonialism and which had similar political aspirations, became separated from each other: not only as a result of how scholars wrote about them but also in how inheritors of that history, mediated by missionaries, state and organisations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, came to remember them and use them to structure their political action.

---