3.1: NAGA TRADITIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Traditionally, the Nagas had no kind of internal government, and they acknowledge no supreme authority. If asked about their authority, they plant their spear on the ground and declare it as their supreme authority and that they will accept no other.

The elders of the village, or the gaonburas had some authority conceded to them, but it was very moderate and was often resisted and denied. A council of elders settled petty disputes and disagreements, but only in a way of arbitration. There was no constituted authority lodged anywhere in the community, with every man doing what he liked and what he was able to perform. Thus, in the past, the Nagas never had a unified system of administration.
The past history of the Nagas had been a long story of hostility to one another. Every Naga village has been a republic, having its own popular village government. Every clan of the village even today represents the council of the village. The council is the parliament of the village. Under the village government, every citizen enjoys political stability, social justice and religious freedom.

Throughout the 13th Century till the early 19th Century, the Naga village republic continued. The Nagas resisted all outside dominion and isolation continued. Captain Butler found that the Nagas in general, especially the Angamis, had not evolved any settled form of government even during the mid 19th Century. They were nominally under the orders of the headmen of their respective villages, who were chosen for their wealth, bravery, and skill in diplomacy or only powers of oratory. Virtually, every man was a law unto himself, “a form of democracy.” Theoretically, with most of the Naga tribes, a man was his own master.

Each Naga village was independent of other villages, and frequent village feuds involving headhunting took place. Every Naga village was like a sovereign independent state. The Nagas bear intense love and pride for their village and land, which would not be affected by hard life or dangers. From the cradle to the grave, a Naga identifies himself with his village. He will always subscribe his interest and welfare to that of his village and strive for the good of the village. As time went on, different tribes and clans emerged on the scene. As population increased, every village grew in strength and the people’s feeling of love for their village also increased. They became more and more defence conscious of their village. It

58. Ibid.
compelled each village to become self-independent, and especially to adopt a perfect
defence system. In this process each village attained the status of a sovereign state, i.e.
an independent unit.\textsuperscript{59} J.P. Mills and Dr. Horam both support a similar view when
they described each village as an independent unit within the tribe.

Administration of a Naga village was indigenous and independent. Village
administration of the Nagas stood for a corporate form of government. Administration
was just and equitable. The administration of the village was in general by the village
chief-in-council, except in some tribes like the Angami Nagas. The village chief in the
Naga context was the head of the administration.\textsuperscript{60} Chieftainship was therefore, a very
important factor in Naga polity. The village chief was a judge, administrator and
commander, rolled into one.\textsuperscript{61}

Naga society is patriarchal and a lineage is a political unit.\textsuperscript{62} Many such small
political units constitute a larger community, which shares a common territory. The
political organisation in a village is the sum total of these units as presented by the
various lineage. As lineage is a political unit, a head is chosen by the unit to represent
it in the village council, and thus it is the lineage heads of the village that look after
the affairs of the village as a whole. The political system among the Nagas is therefore
based on the recognition of the sectional interests of the component groups.

A political unit has a head, recognised as the chief of the political communities.
The chief, who is either a hereditary head (as among the Semas and Konyaks), or an
elected one (as among the Angamis), becomes a judge, administrator and executive
head of the community. In the past, he was commander-in-chief as well. But the

\textsuperscript{59} Shimray, R. R., Origin and Culture of the Nagas, 1985, pp.43-45.
\textsuperscript{60} Op.cit., pp.51-52.
\textsuperscript{62} Op.cit., p. 117.
office that combines so many responsibilities needs checks and balances. In order to check the chief’s unlimited power, he is given a council through which he works and exercises his duties. Besides the council, the customs and traditional laws also bind the chief.

Thus, the Naga village state was an independent unit and accordingly enjoyed the right of sovereignty. Every village state pursued an independent policy and implemented its own customary laws. Administration was thus indigenous and independent in the sense that village-state administration of the Nagas stood for a corporate form of government, where each village-state enjoyed the absolute right to make war or peace. It pursued an independent policy of its own.\(^\text{63}\)

The village chief-in-council, except in some tribes like the Angami Nagas carried on the administration of the village states in general. The village chief or king (monarch) in Naga context, whether hereditary or otherwise, was the head of the administration. A council thus carried on the administration of the village state. The number of councillors differs from tribe to tribe. The form of government also varied. It was either a monarchy or a republic.

The \textit{Ahngs} (kings) of the lower Konyaks and the kings of the Maos happened to be titular heads over some other villages too. The Konyak \textit{Ahngs} had villages under them that paid tributes to the \textit{Great Ahng}. Each village had one \textit{Ahng} and above them all stood the \textit{Great Ahng}. The term \textit{Ahng} is found only in Wakching village. The other Konyak villages use the term \textit{Wang}. In Konyak society where monarchy exists till date, the \textit{Ahng} or \textit{Wang} clan carries on the administration. In upper Konyak areas, there is quite a different type of administration. Here, they have a republican type of

\(^{63}\) Shimray, R.R., op.cit, p48.
The king of Mao also received tributes from other villages. The Sema chief also had tremendous powers. The chief thus enjoyed much power and privileges, but he was not an autocrat. In practice, the councillors ran the administration. The function of the chief was more or less ritualistic.

A typical Naga kingship can be seen from the practice of the Mao Nagas. According to them, the kings, being the founder of each village, possess the right of hereditary kingship. He summons and dissolves the meeting of the council. Among the Aos, Lothas and Sangtams, there exists a republican type of government from the very beginning. In the Ao village, one could become the chief by virtue of his own character and merit. In reality, the Aos, Lothas and Sangtams have no regard for monarchy.

It is difficult to say how the administration was run among the Angamis where extreme type of democracy existed. The independent minded Angamis did not attach much importance to chieftainship, as one Angami was considered as good as any other Angami. They had no council in the past. Any urgent problem or dispute was taken to public meetings where decisions were taken. For the convenience of administration and religious functions, the Angami tribe had a nominal head of the village known as ‘kemovo’, who was religious as well as administrative head.

Dr. V. Elwin summed up the administrative practice in Naga society in the following way: “Naga society presents a varied pattern of near-dictatorship and extreme democracy. There is a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and the Changs. The Konyaks have very powerful chiefs or Angs who are regarded as sacred and whose word is law. The greatest of Angs no commoner may stand upright.
The Aos, however, have bodies of elders, who represent the main family groups in the village and the Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas, and others are so democratic that Hutton remarks that in the case of the Angami, it is difficult to comprehend how in view of their particular independence of character, their village hold together at all before the coming of the British government.\(^{64}\)

The principle of administration of the village-states, the hereditary system and the divine nature attached with the kingship/chieftainship, the representative character of the village councils, etc, are basically same in all the Naga tribes. However, in application of actual laws in the day-to-day administration, there are variations from tribe to tribe. The Nagas were thus not subjected to a common or uniform administration until the establishment of British rule.

### 3.2: COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

Colonial situation is defined by George Balandier as the domination imposed by a foreign minority, racially and culturally distinct, upon a materially inferior autochthonous majority, in the name of a dogmatically asserted racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority, the bringing into relation of two heterogeneous civilisations, one technologically advanced, economically powerful, swift moving and Christian by origin, the other without complex techniques, economically backward, slow moving and fundamentally ‘non-Christian’, the antagonistic nature of the relations between the two societies, owing to the instrumental role to which the subject society is condemned, and the need for the dominant society, if it is to maintain its position to rely not only upon ‘force’, but also upon a whole range of pseudo-justifications and stereo typed patterns of behaviour, etc.\(^ {65}\)

\(^{64}\) Verrier, Elwin., Nagaland, 1961, p.6-7.

The history of the Northeast India, of which the Naga Hills form a part underwent a significant change with the conclusion of the Treaty of Yandabo on 24th February 1826.\textsuperscript{66} The treaty brought Burmese influence to an end and at the same time inaugurated the formal foundation of British power and influence over the whole Northeast India. By the terms of the peace treaty, the British became the rulers of the whole region. The British government concentrated on the establishment and consolidation of authority in Assam, Cachar, Manipur and Jaintia.\textsuperscript{67} Assam was directly annexed to the British Empire with the exception of Muttack and Sadiya districts. The hill tribes of the North-East Frontier, i.e. the Nagas, Khasis, Garos, Mizos and tribes of Arunachal Pradesh were categorised as dependencies of Assam according to Article 2 of the treaty.

Consequently, with the annexation of Assam and its adjoining states, there developed inevitable contacts between the numerous independent hill tribes and the British. The inhabitants of these areas had never been subjected to any kind of control either by organised native system of administration or by any outside power. After consolidation of their rule in these states, the British policy was to leave the tribes to themselves. However, the Nagas took to plundering that compelled the British to entrust the control of the tribes to the Raja of Cachar and Manipur.\textsuperscript{68}

When the Naga raids in Cachar and Manipur frontiers became frequent in 1835, Raja Tularam Senapati openly stated his inability to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining order. This again placed the responsibility of tribal control to British hands. They had to control these warlike, proud and independent tribes, who put up determined resistance against them.

\textsuperscript{67} Chakravarty, P.C., British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam Since 1826, 1964, p.16.
\textsuperscript{68} Foreign Department Pol. Extl-A, Jan 1836.
In fact, early British policy towards the hill tribes was guided by the primary consideration of administrative convenience and not by any progressive ideas of what it ought to be doing for the good of the tribes. The application of their policy was determined by the concern for the administrative responsibility in which they had become involved rather than the concern for the economic and moral implications of their undertaking.

The military personnel were the first British who came in contact with the Nagas. The contact took place when the British crossed into Naga territory for survey of strategic road communication between Assam and Manipur. During the early years of contact, the British found it more convenient to distinguish the different Naga tribes with reference to their political relations to the British frontier districts along the Assam border, instead of any ethnical differences. In general, in the west and north of the Naga Hills, the Nagas were classified into Boree (tamed and dependant) and Abor (untamed and independent) tribes. The Boree Nagas were those tribes that lived at the Assam border, and the Abor were those tribes in the interior Naga Hills. Few of the Abor Nagas came down to Assam plains for trade, but the Boree Nagas had constant trade with the plains. The different Naga tribes were constantly at war among themselves, which created disorder on the frontier, and disrupted commerce.

The Treaty of Yandabo (1826) had thus formally encompassed Naga inhabited areas within the sphere of British influence. But, for some decades, it remained beyond the limit of British administration. The treaty had no immediate impact on the Nagas and their undefined country, though the West and South West Naga Hills

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nominally became a part of British territory.

More direct Anglo-Naga contact started in 1832, but till 1881, the immediate attention of the British government was given towards the necessity of safer road communications between the strategic state of Manipur and the Brahmaputra valley through Naga Hills, and the alarming problems posed by the menacing Naga raids on the British subjects of the Cachar and Nowgong frontier. In 1881, Naga Hills was brought under a regular system of administration.\textsuperscript{70}

The government changed its policy towards the Nagas from time to time, and the early British policy towards the Nagas may be broadly divided into two periods:

i) 1832-1877 (during which the British tried to ward off the Nagas from raids in the administered districts of Assam).

ii) 1877-1880 (during which the government followed a ‘forward policy’ leading to the final merging of the Hills into the British India system of administration).\textsuperscript{71}

From the assumption of active administration in 1881 to the transfer of power in 1947, the British administered Naga Hills as a frontier district of Assam. During this intervening period of seven decades, British administration concentrated on the maintenance of law and order in this border district. The establishment of peace in Naga Hills was a gradual process, which went on steadily throughout the period along with the extension of colonial rule and administration.

The British directed their policies primarily towards practical and pressing problems such as the establishment of law and order, the foundation of administrative

\textsuperscript{70} Allen, B.C., Gazetteers of Naga Hills and Manipur in Assam District Gazetteers, Shillong, Vol.IX, 1905, p.9.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
system, and the dispensing of justice, and the raising of the revenue necessary for the
discharge of the function of the government. At the same time, British policy was not
that of imposing a European model of administration, but of establishing a rule of law
for the security of colonial interests. Accordingly, the existing native institutions that
had no contradiction with their policy or interests were left undisturbed.

British colonial administration in Naga Hills district was founded not on a defined
territorial boundary, but on a growing process of extension throughout the period
from 1881-1947. In extending their administrative sphere, the policy of the
government was largely influenced by local circumstances. It was as a gradual
process of annexation that the areas of the present Mokokchung, Zunheboto and
Phek districts were incorporated into the British district of Naga Hills. In following a
policy of expediency and convenience, the British left at least half of the present
Nagaland unadministered. Thus, a large part of the present Tuensang and Mon
districts and Kiphure sub-division remained in the unadministered tract even at the
time of transfer of power in 1947.72

For understanding the post 1881 colonial administrative policy in the Naga Hills,
the hills may be divided into three areas or zones:

i) Administered areas

ii) Controlled/Political control areas (unarmed)

iii) Areas beyond political control73 (free un-administered Naga areas)

The administered areas were the Southern, Western and Northern Naga tribes. The
number of administered villages increased gradually as the British brought them

73 Shakespear, L.W., History of Assam Rifles, 1980, p.163.
under subjugation. In the administered areas, the government assessed annual house tax at the rate of Rs. 2/- (two) per house and appointed village headmen for the collection of the house tax, and for carrying out the orders of the government at the village level. The government maintained law and order in this zone.

The controlled areas were the political control areas. Longsa, Sema and Eastern Angami (now Chakhesang) tribes, Melomi and Primi villages fell under this category. The government conducted annual military marches in this area and the Deputy Commissioner had the discretion to settle cases of disputes. But the government neither assessed house tax nor was it bound to protect the areas in this zone from the raids of the tribes beyond it. The government had the discretion to punish the raiders depending on the proximity and convenience.

In the areas beyond political control, called the free Naga zone (the tribes bordering Arunachal and Burma), the government followed a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs. However the government had the discretion to punish the tribes in cases of raids of a serious nature.

In course of the gradual annexation of more territories, the British incorporated the controlled areas into administered areas of the British District of Naga Hills, one after another. The circumstances that influenced the government to annex new areas into the fold of regular administration were of similar nature. Headhunting as a law and order problem was the primary concern that made the government to annex the tribal areas. However, administrative considerations of proximity and convenience remained paramount in determining the imposition of control. Consequently, while

74. Foreign Department Pol-A, Jan 1882, nos.134-37.
75. Foreign Department Extl-A, March 1886, no.25.
76. Ibid.
political control areas were brought under administration, the areas beyond political control were deliberately left under political control only.

With the introduction of the ‘Inner Line Regulation’ in 1873, the administered zone was brought under political control. However, with the British occupation of Kohima and its decision to have permanent control of the Nagas in 1881, the government introduced regular administration in this zone.77

Immediately following the formation of Naga Hills district under the British India system of administration, the political control areas attracted the attention of the government, because of headhunting incidents. Accordingly, in 1886, the government brought this zone under political control. However, owing to the increasing raids of the Trans-Dikhu tribes in the control tracts, in 1890, it was bought under active administration and simultaneously, the sub-divisional headquarters which was established at Wokha in 1875 was shifted to Mokokchung. Longsa, which was hitherto an independent Ao village, East of Dikhu, was incorporated into Mokokchung sub-division in 1892.78

The areas of the Sema and Eastern Angami tribes which had been under political control since 1903, was brought under regular administration in 1906,79 with Tizu River as the natural boundary between the controlled and non-controlled territories. Aishan Kukis brought the villages of Melomi and Primi under political control in the wake of their raids in 1913. Later in 1923, it was incorporated into the Naga Hills District. Although there had been disturbances in the areas beyond the administered district, the government limited its control to the Dikhu and Tizu rivers as its district

77. Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam, 1880-81, p.5.
78. Assam Secretariat, Pol-A, Aug.1892, nos.36-37.
boundary, leaving the eastern frontier under a ‘loose control’ till 1947.

Before the passing of the Assam Scheduled Districts Act 1874, the administration of Naga Hills was under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, who as the agent of the Governor-General governed it through the Chief Commissioner of Assam and his assistants. However, with the passing of Assam Scheduled Districts Act 1874, it was governed under the direct charge of the Chief Commissioner of Assam.  

The chief purpose of this act was to enable the government to provide for the administration of the ‘underdeveloped tracts’ and to extend to them any enactments in force elsewhere, which might seem desirable to bring into operation. Thus, in accordance with the provision of clause 5A of Scheduled Districts Act, 1874, the government in April 1884, passed the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation II of 1880 as amended by Regulation III section, clause 2 of 1884 and extended it to the Naga Hills District. This regulation enabled the government to administer the Nagas in a simple and more personal manner. By virtue of this regulation, Naga Hills were excluded for the operation of enactments relating to elaborate codes of law, the code of criminal procedure, and the civil procedure code were never in force in any Hill district. On the other hand, Naga administration continued to function under their chiefs and headmen, free from their legal technicalities.

The next constitutional change came with the Government of India Act 1910. Section 13[52-A (2)] of the Act categorised the Naga areas within the Naga Hills District as ‘Backward Tracts’ and the Governor of Assam governed it as the agent of

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80. Home Department Pol-A, Aug 1892, nos.36-37.
81. Hunter, H.W., Gazetteer of India, April 1884, Part-I, p.163.
the Governor-General. The Governor was given the responsibility of bringing the inhabitants of the said tracts under close administrative control, so that in due course, the responsibility of administration could be transferred to the provincial government.\textsuperscript{82} Accordingly the Governor of Assam administered the Naga Hills through his administrative agencies, namely the Deputy Commissioner, his assistants and other local administrative functionaries, such as the gaonburas and dobashis.

The last constitutional change was the Government of India Act, 1935, that was implemented in April 1937. The act classified Naga Hills, Lushai Hills and NEFA tracts as ‘excluded areas’ of the Government of Assam. As an excluded area, the Naga Hills District came under the direct charge of the Governor, who administered the district through the Deputy Commissioner, Kohima. The constitutional position as it stood in 1937 in respect of Naga Hills District continued till 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 1950, the date on which the Constitution of India came into force, except that with effect from 15\textsuperscript{th} August, 1947, the Governor of Assam was deprived of his discretionary powers in respect of administration of the District, which since that date, vested in the provincial government the Governor Act according to the advice of the council of ministers.\textsuperscript{83}

The British therefore established their administrative headquarters with the sole purpose of controlling the tribes, especially those that defied their authority. Trouble spots thus largely determined the places for the establishment of the district administrative posts. The district of Naga Hills, which was firstly established at Samaguting (Chumukedima) in 1866 with the purpose of checking the raids of

\textsuperscript{82} Verrier, Elwin., op.cit, p.35.
\textsuperscript{83} Luthra, P.N., Nagaland from a District to a State, 1974, pp.5-9.
Angami Nagas into the plain districts of Assam, was later (1878) shifted to Kohima for the control of the principal Angami villages. Similarly, a new sub-division was first established at Wokha in 1875, for the control of the powerful Lotha villages of that area, which had recently killed Captain Butler, a British survey officer. But later on, when these tribes became amenable to the control of the government it was shifted to Mokokchung for the control of the trans-Dikhu tribal wars.

Along with the establishment of their administrative centres at different strategic regions of Naga Hills, the British followed simple administrative arrangements for the district. The administrative networks were followed by the general administration of the district as a two-tire system, namely, the village and the district. The head of these administrative units were the gaonburas at the village level and the sub-division officer at the sub-division level. The Deputy Commissioner was at the apex of the district administration. He was in turn responsible to the Governor of Assam, who was the agent to the Governor-General of India. The same administrative arrangement remained intact throughout the colonial administration of Naga Hills from 1881 to 1947.

The overall administration of the district was under the supervision of the Sub-Divisional Officer and the Deputy Commissioner. Europeans exclusively manned these executive offices. The colonial administration encouraged district tours as a means of promoting relation with the people and affecting civilising influence on them through contacts. The general administration of the district was carried out smoothly during the district tours. These district officers travelled throughout the

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84 Mackenzie, A., History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the Northeast Frontier of Bengal, 1979, p.119.
district, visiting one village after another and met village chiefs, general public and settled disputes.

The British introduced no significant basic changes in the administration of the Nagas. Nagas were mostly left to continue to rule and administer their villages according to their respective customs and traditions with only loose control by the government.\textsuperscript{85} While the techniques of control and administration remained informal, native system of administration functioned under British paramountcy. This popular technique of administration served the dual purpose of keeping the Nagas free to govern themselves in their traditional ways and at the same time, it had immensely reduced the responsibility of the government from the detailed and costly affairs of administration.

The British adopted the system of native administration that would suit local tastes and at the same time be conducive to the maintenance of law and order among the tribes. In other words, the British did not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of the Nagas, nor try to administer them on the European model. Accordingly, they reinforced traditional form of administration that well suited the peculiar conditions of the people and society. This system ensured social continuity and at the same time facilitated the acceptance of British rule. In following this policy, the government readily used the existing institutions based on local customs and tradition. It made no attempt to introduce any measures based on the alien concepts leading to an elaborate administrative system, which might estrange the tribal people.

By recognising the traditional leaders and elders as chiefs and \textit{gaonburas} the British tried to integrate the existing leadership into the colonial administrative system.

framework. Thus, in consolidating their power, the British based their administration primarily on the existing native system. The native leadership, consisting of the village headmen and their assistants, was empowered to supervise and maintain law and order together with their established tribal customs and traditions. This system of administration was uniform all over the district.

The village headmen become the agent of the colonial administration. The people had direct contact with their chief or headmen and had little to do directly with district officials. Their direct concern was with the linkman and not the foreign rulers. Thus, the structure of the district administration left the Nagas with no direct weight of alien rule, because the British rule did not in any way seriously affect the basic social structure of the Nagas that remained traditional in character and content.

The colonial administration utilised two layers of native administrative agencies, namely the village chieftainship and the *dobashi* system. First were the village chiefs, whose traditional leadership at the village level was utilised for village administration. This began with the extension of British protection to the Naga villages in 1874, because protection automatically bound the chiefs to abide by the policy of the government in matters of their relations with the tribes beyond British control as well as their obligation to pay annual house tax. Symbolising their special responsibility and relation with the administration, the chiefs were presented red blankets. This system continued as a basic feature of Anglo-Naga relations even after the introduction of regular administration in 1881. With gradual extension of their administration, the British also applied village chiefs according to local practice and the customs of various communities, starting in 1882.
Second was the *dobashi* system that was first started in 1842 as a system of trial with native delegates from the different Naga clans, and was later (1860) continued on a regular basis. In due course, it became a basic institution of colonial administration in Naga Hills. This system became the chief means through which the British government established successful relations with the diverse Naga tribes. In view of the fact that the Government of India had become convinced of the usefulness of the native delegates, the system was made permanent in 1881. The native representatives to the government were known as interpreters. The Hindu word ‘*dobashias*’, translated, as speaker of two languages thus became a popular usage for the Nagas as ‘*dobashis*’.  

To the native administrative agencies, the government delegated maximum responsibility of district administration and district officers functioned only at the supervisory level. The village headmen or chiefs were made responsible for the collection of annual house tax from their respective villages. In addition, the administration of justice was assigned to the *gaonburas*, who maintained law and order in their respective village jurisdiction. On the other hand, the role of the district officers was to receive the collection of revenue from the *gaonburas* and intervening in the village administration only in disputes involving cases that could not be settled by the native courts—*gaonburas* and *dobashis*.

This system of administration largely left the Nagas free to run their local administration without much intervention from the British. The colonial administration thus effectively utilised the services of the native administrative agents for the perpetuation of their rule in Naga Hills. In fact, the colonial administration

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apparently made progress because of the valuable service rendered by the native agents. Colonial administration thus made use of the native agents, which provided incentives for both parties.

3.3: IMPACT

The Nagas had been living in village states, each village independent of others. The Naga society was a society secluded from contact with the outside world and influence. The British did not try to implant their own culture or impose their civil and political systems on the Nagas. What Britain attempted and succeeded in doing was the modification of those aspects of Naga culture and practices that did not conform to the interests of colonial administration. Besides the suppression of objectionable practices such as headhunting and slave trade, the government did not interfere with the native ways of life. In fact, the colonial policy was directed to the utilisation of the native systems, paying attention to the Naga effort to preserve their culture against the new forces of change. Thus, the initial British policy of administration seemed quite considerate and yielding to the feelings of the natives.

The introduction of effective administration in the district imposed respect for law and order, and this brought the most noticeable change among the Nagas. In fact, it was this respect for the colonial administration, which made the tribes to live at peace with one another. This fostered the feeling of oneness among the Naga tribes. The desire for peaceful living was expressed by the Naga tribes in their voluntary request for extension of British administration over them. Often, the desire to live under the government was accompanied by their willingness to pay house tax. They welcomed the new administration as it had brought peace and relative order in place of

uncertainty and chaos that had prevailed before the British conquest.\(^{89}\) The response of the Nagas to the British rule was “unexpectedly encouraging”,\(^ {90}\) as noted by Verrier Elwin.

Popular appreciation of the new administration was signified by the growth and improvement in the Anglo-Naga relations. The effect of administration on the Nagas was proved by the fact that the British could command the loyal service of the Nagas in all the important regional as well as global wars in which they fought. In 1891, the Nagas served the British government during the Kuki uprising, in the Abor War (1893-94) and in the First World War, (1914-1919), in which two thousand (2000) Nagas were taken to France as members of the Labour Corps. This co-operation continued to the Second World War (1939-45) in which the Nagas’ contribution to the allied victory in the eastern sector of India has been an acknowledged fact,\(^ {91}\) though much of the services of priceless value offered by the Nagas had remained hidden for want of written records and documents.

Partition of the Naga inhabited areas was the first consequence of colonial administration. As the colonial policy was deliberately directed to suit its own system of expansion with the introduction of their administration, the areas inhabited by the Nagas were divided into various sectors. Some were within administrative circles, while others were left ungoverned or free to administer themselves. Thus, with the formation of the British District of Naga Hills, the Naga areas were divided and dispersed.\(^ {92}\) As a result, Nagas were scattered throughout the Northeastern states of

\(^{89}\) The Naga Problem, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, pp.1-2.
\(^{90}\) Verrier, Elwin., op.cit, p.24.
\(^{91}\) William, Slim, F.M., Defeat into Victory, 1956, p.341.
\(^{92}\) Until 1960, no concrete measures were taken to integrate the Naga tribes. During the creation of the state of Nagaland, the desire of the Nagas to bring their inhabited areas under a single administration center became more evident and strong. Consequently, a Naga delegation led by Dr. Imkongliba Ao
Manipur, Assam and NEFA (present Arunachal Pradesh), and Burma on the eastern side.

The village administration, which was largely left to the native leaders, brought about some significant changes. The native leadership, which existed loosely in the pre-colonial period, was recognised and legitimised in the form of headmen, and their appointment was made, where the system was found lacking. The new administration reinforced this feudal structure of leadership and integrated it into the colonial administrative apparatus. Consequent upon the recognition of the native leadership, it was institutionalised and infused with dynamism. At the same time, the status of village administrative functionaries was changed significantly as they were given a quasi-official position and were no longer answerable to the village community of which they had been the representatives or servants.

The village administration was delegated with the power to deal with petty local disputes. Yet, in practice, the district administration invariably intervened in the name of maintaining law and order and developmental activities. Though the government’s policy was to interfere as little as possible in the internal affairs of the Nagas, this non-interference was superficial rather than real, because notwithstanding the official position and granting a great deal of autonomy to the Nagas in their villages, the government meddled in petty issues of all types. For instance, the government forbade the felling of alders, fishing with cast nets, wearing half-pants and keeping

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met Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on 19th July, 1960, at New Delhi, and the result of the meeting was the Sixteen Point Agreement, which included a clause for the integration of the Naga inhabited areas into a new state. However, the Naga undergrounds soon assassinated Dr. Imkongliba, signifying their protest against the agreement between the leaders of the Naga People’s Convention and the Government of India.

non-traditional haircut.\textsuperscript{96} Such petty cases highlighted the nature of the colonial administration that indulged in undue intervention even in aspects that did not pose any law and order problem for the government. But in the long run, many of the petty rules laid down by the British made the Nagas feel different and helped them to appreciate and pursue their unique solidarity. For example, the denial of permission to wear half-pants compelled the Nagas to weave and stitch cloths for themselves,\textsuperscript{97} and this enabled the tribes to preserve their cultural identity.

Administrative machinery thus made entry into the social structure of the village. Special government organs dealing with administration, education, agriculture and public health had direct contact with the Nagas. The village communities were no longer left to manage their affairs without direct or indirect supervision. Although different influences operated to undermine the social structure of the village community, to a certain extent, the native system retained importance at the village level. For instance, the village council still acted as a tribunal for settling petty cases, and the district officers intervened only in cases that the village authorities could not settle at their level of administration. The other institution of local administration that was created by the British and had a lasting impact on the tribal administration was that of the \textit{dobashis}.

One main impact of administrative control was the virtual elimination of inter-village and tribal warfare within the district besides the gradual checking of objectionable social practices such as headhunting and slave trade. The British passed orders against headhunting,\textsuperscript{98} and defaulters were punished, while those who obeyed

\textsuperscript{96} Chenga Kath, 80, Tsemenyu gave this information.
\textsuperscript{97} Merang Jamir, 82, Mokokchung, gave this information.
\textsuperscript{98} Though head hunting was successfully stopped in the administered areas, the practice continued till very late in the unadministered areas.
orders were employed as British labourers to work in Burma.\textsuperscript{99} Besides, during the headhunting days, the Nagas were unaware of each other.\textsuperscript{100} Only after headhunting stopped and peaceful conditions prevailed, the Nagas went about freely, and came to know each other better.

With the termination of headhunting, inter-village and tribal warfare, situation became peaceful and friendly among the tribes. This eventually led to marriage alliances between different clans, villages and tribes. Marriage alliances lessened enmity within the village and developed good relation among the various clans, villages and tribes.\textsuperscript{101} When marriages take place between two different clans, villages or tribes, the feelings of oneness and unity was created among the participating clans, villages or tribes. From the clan level, peace and unity thus got enhanced from matrimonial alliances and reaches the village and tribal levels. Matrimonial alliances made the tribes to give up their differences and come together as one people. For example, the inter-married women pacified the inter-khel war of Tuensang Village in 1942-43.\textsuperscript{102} The contribution of peaceful atmosphere at clan, village or tribal levels in promoting unity at a higher level is very crucial. Thus, under the British administration, marriage alliances became an important institution that moulded the strength and unity of the Nagas in their solidarity movement as one people.

Although colonial administration left the Naga territories scrambled over the administrative units of Northeast India, within the bound of British district of Naga Hills, it also had the positive impact of integrating the chronically unorganised Naga tribes leading to certain cohesion of the Naga tribes as an ethnic group. Thus, it was

\textsuperscript{99} Vesuro Swuro, 77, Phek gave this information.
\textsuperscript{100} Tsathrongo Sangtam, 85, Kiphire gave this information.
\textsuperscript{101} N. Yeshito, 73, Dimapur gave this information.
\textsuperscript{102} Yemlongjaba Chang, 72, gave this information.
only under British India administration that the cohesion of the Naga tribes and their resurgence as an ethnic group of people emerged, with political consciousness. Historically, the Naga tribes were nowhere brought together as a tribal group but under the British India system of administration. With the acceptance of British rule as a settled fact, a growing sense of unity was generated among the Naga tribes as a result of their common subordination to one supreme authority.

The British India administration protected the Nagas from exploitation by the outside people. In their endeavour to maintain law and order within the district, the British sealed off the Naga Hill District in 1873 by the introduction of ‘Inner Line Regulation’. By this regulation, the possible socio-economic exploitation of the Nagas by the plains people was effectively warded off.

On the whole, the colonial administrative policy of keeping Naga Hills isolated, benefited the Nagas in so far as it helped preserve and promote the Naga identity with all its consequences. The prevailing situation in the Hills within the British colonial state thus made the emergence of identity formation a very ideal and natural development. Although, constitutionally Naga Hills formed a district of Assam, for all practical purposes, it was never under the normal administration of the province of Assam.\(^{103}\) As a matter of fact, Nagas continued to live within the reserved parameter of British district of Naga Hills, devoid of normal practical administrative connections with Assam. Therefore, Nagas maintained an exclusive socio-political entity in a classical colonial situation.

Under the British rule and administration, the tribes realised that they have a different identity with a different history, culture and tradition. The British also

\(^{103}\) Rustomji, N., op.cit, p.26.
considered the Naga tribes as belonging to the same distinct ethnic group and therefore they gave their effort to unite the Naga tribes. They initiated group discussions and meetings of all the Naga tribes. This became a very crucial step towards the solidarity movement of the tribes when they realised the need to come together and assert their identity. The process of coming together as one, the emergence of Naga identity thus began under the British rule and administration.

The tendency towards the emergence and growth of common socio-political interests became more manifested by the formation of the Naga Club (1918), and the individual tribal councils of the Aos, Angamis, Lothas, Semas, etc. All these semi-state formations worked as a gradual unifying force of the Naga tribes and awakened them to a new dimension of political consciousness, culminating in the formation of Naga Tribal Council in 1945, and the Naga National Council in 1946. The invasion and development of the new political ideas and their diffusion fostered the nascent spirit of nationalism as a unifying factor among the Naga tribes.

Thus, within the bound of British administration, law and order was maintained and it had provided the needed security to the tribes, who lived in a hostile and insecure atmosphere during the pre-colonial period. The dawn of colonial administration in fact started the beginning of peaceful co-existence among the tribes of Naga Hills. It was under the impact of colonial administration that the tribes were drawn together and began to identify themselves as Nagas. This slowly and gradually created awareness of modern politics among the Nagas, and significantly shaped their common political outlook. This outlook was subsequently manifested in the emergence of Naga identity.

Established within a definite territory and embracing most of the Naga Tribes, the
British Naga Hills administrative apparatus thus became the basic framework for the formation and growth of Naga identity. By 1920, most of the Naga tribes now in the present state of Nagaland had been brought under British administration. The unification of the Naga tribes under a common centralised administration and the inclusion of the village and tribal territories into a larger all Naga Hills District, and the fact that the Naga tribes have a common ethnic origin combined to form in the mind of the Nagas, the recognition and realisation of a common identity.

The ‘all Naga’ feeling was strengthened by increased contacts among the Nagas in the wake of increasing trading activities, wars, construction of roads, introduction of Assamese as the official language, opening of trading and administrative centres in Naga Hills. All these aspects contributed to the awakening of the Nagas towards a feeling of common identity.

The sense of oneness, feeling of solidarity and self-identification as ‘Nagas’ developed, and it grew faster among the Nagas working in the government offices at administrative centres such as Kohima, Mokokchung and Wokha. Daily contact with non-Nagas, like the Assamese and Bengalis, and the British, whose race and culture were different, also reinforced the Naga feeling of identity.

This study reveals that within the colonial administrative framework, many factors combined and contributed to the creation and emergence of a distinct identity for the Nagas. Naga identity first emerged in the mind of a few people, and gradually it got expanded and reached more people until it finally became a concept with contemporary spirit and recognition. Thus, Naga identity emerged and got consolidated under British colonial administration.