CHAPTER 4
HISTORY OF NAGA CONFLICT

The Early History

The Naga inhabit the hilly confluence of India, China and Myanmar. It occupies a compact area of 120,000 km of the Patakai range between the longitude 93° east and 97° east, and in between the latitude 22.5° north and 28° north which lies at the trijunction of China, India and Burma. The part of Nagaland included in India consists of territory which today is spread over four different states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. The eastern part of Nagaland, which became a part of Myanmar (roughly 100,000 km) has been placed under two administrative units, those of the Kachin state and of Saganing division (UNPO, 2010)

The Naga consists of many tribes. They are located mostly in Nagaland, the hilly regions of Manipur, North Cachar district of Assam, northeastern part of Arunachal Pradesh and the Somra Tracts and its contiguous areas of North Western Myanmar, (Chasie, 1999). The different tribes have been living in this region since many centuries

Encounter with Ahoms

The Ahoms are said to be one of the first outsiders to come into contact with the Naga, when around 1228 A.D the Ahoms first entered Assam from Myanmar through the Naga Hills. The advancement of the Ahoms into Assam through their land was resisted by the Naga and there was fierce fighting in many places. (Ramunny 1993:5) However once the Ahom rule was formally established there was peace between them. (NSF 1995: 3)

The Ahom-Naga relationship is chronicled in the Buranjis (Misra, 2000). To the Ahom, the Naga Hills had plenty of strategic importance, for it was through the Patkai hills that the Ahoms came to Assam and it was this route that they had to use in maintaining relation with their kith and kin in
Burma. During the fourteen and early part of the fifteen centuries the Ahom kings had to face several revolts by the Nagas living on the hills bordering the upper Assam plains. Each revolt was crushed and the tribes were forced into submission. Several Naga tribes acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom kings and even used to pay yearly tributes. (Alemchiba: 1970; Lakshmi Devi; 37)

It was only later in the seventeenth century that the Ahom-Naga relationship marginally improved. Though modern Naga historians are averse to accept the facts recorded in the Ahom Buranjis particularly regarding the acceptance of Ahom suzerainty by some of the Naga tribes living on the borders of Ahom territory, scholars like Verrier Elwin mentioned that these tribes were looked upon as subjects by the Ahom kings who collected tax in the form of elephant tusks, spears and hand woven cloths etc. (Elwin, 1969). The Ahoms however never thought of extending their administration into the Naga Hills for they seemed to realize that interference on the Naga administration could prove hazardous, instead they considered it expedient to receive their submission and to allow them to their autonomy.

As the Ahom power declined towards the end of the century, the Naga tribes began to assert their independence from outside control and those tribes which had been paying tributes to the Ahom kings stopped doing so. The Ahom-Naga encounter and relation shows that while the Nagas submitted to the strength of the Ahoms the later respected their freedom and avoided interference in their internal matters

Encounter with the British

The British contact with the Naga began after the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 (Neivetso Venuh, 2005). This treaty for the first time brought the concept of map and boundary and the tribal of the hills particularly the Naga became its victim. The demarcation of boundary placed the groups into separate regions or parts striking at their otherwise unified existence not constrained by the existence of boundaries. The net effect of this was that some Naga tribes
were places within Burma and others were dispersed to different states of Northeast India. Until the advent of the British and signing of Yandabo Treaty, the notion of territorial or political authority was unknown in the hills. The different tribes had been living in freedom without any geographical boundary or restriction since ages. After annexing Assam, the British began to consider the Naga areas to be part of the colonial interest (Venuh, 2005). But they followed a policy of cautious non-interference towards the hill tribes; especially the Naga because they considered annexing the tribal hills was not profitable to them.

However, the situation began to change when the Naga first major encounter with the British took place. In January 1832 when Captain Jenkins who with his 700 army of men and 800 coolies marched through the Naga territory on their way to Assam from Manipur had to face a fierce Naga attacks and unfamiliar terrain. As Iralu puts it, the Naga attacked any one who trespasses their areas. To stop this raids many expeditions were carried out by the British in the Naga Hills between 1831 and 1851 with heavy losses. (Charles Chasie, 1999) The British had to pass through the Naga Hills on their way to Assam but the Nagas often caused trouble by way of sudden attacks to the British. These attacks greatly harmed their interest so it became imperative for the British to capture Naga territories without much ambition of occupation as they knew the Naga were famous as a warrior tribe and the British were wary of this fact.

The policy of the British towards the Naga hills becomes evident from the position taken by Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor General of India “I dissent entirely from the policy which is recommended of what is called obtaining control, that is to say, of taking possession of these hills, and establishing sovereignty over their savage inhabitants. Our possession could bring no profit to us, and would be as costly to us as it would be unproductive. As it is impossible to contemplate the permanent possession of these hills, so it seems impolitic to sanction temporary possession of them.” (Elwin, 1969) This policy was followed till around 1862. But when Cecil Beadon took over as the
Lieutenant Governor the British began to bring some of the Naga villages under their political control particularly the ones that constituted direct threat to them. In November 14, 1878 the British occupied Kohima despite the fierce resistance put up by the Angami tribe which lasted for eleven days. This was followed by speedy consolidation of British rule in the Naga Hills. However it must be noted here that the British occupation of the Naga Hills was confined only to the areas which were contagious to British settlement of Assam, particularly in the borders of Nowgong and Sibsagar districts. This was mainly to protect its subjects from the Naga raids; otherwise the British had no real intention or interest to conquer the Naga Hills. So their occupation was mostly confined to the area covering present day central Nagaland. The British had their Administrative centre in Kohima, Mokokchung and Wokha. The Naga of these areas for the first time had to accept an alien power over their territory as they could no longer resist the strong, superior and well-equipped British army. There were many other Naga tribes over whom the British never exercised any kind of administrative control. (Charles Chasie, 1999: 24) Most of the areas bordering Myanmar and Tibet were left out by the British because they knew it was futile and useless for them.

The British extended a rather loose political administration over those areas which came under its sway; it was content in leaving the tribes alone in their isolation. The Government of India Act of 1919 (Montagu-Chelmsford reforms) provided powers to the Governor-General to declare any tract a ‘Backward Area’ and bar the application of normal provincial legislation there. Within a short time, the Garo hills, Lushai hills district and the Naga Hills were all designated as Backward Areas. Later the Simon Commission recommended designating these areas as Excluded Area, that all these hill divisions comprising the entire backward tracts be excluded from the province of Assam and be administered by the Governor-in-council, as the agent of the Governor General-in-council at the cost of centre revenues. And accordingly the Commission recommended that the Governor would be empowered to make regulations having the force of law for the peace and good government of any excluded area or partially excluded area, subject to the prior consent of the
Accordingly the Government of India by order of the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Act (1935) declared the Naga Hills District, the Luishai Hills District, the North Cachar subdivision of the Cachar District and the frontier tracts as excluded areas. While, the Garo Hills District, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District (excluding Shillong) and the Mikir hill tract of the Nowgong and Sibsagar District were declared as partially excluded areas. (Chaube, 1999)

The legacy of this Act was carried forward by the Govt. of India after independence. The Constituent Assembly set up an advisory committee to make recommendation for the development of the tribal areas of Northeast India. A committee headed by Gopinath Bordoloi, later Chief Minister of Assam along with four members, Rupnath Brahma (a Bodo), J. J. M Nichols Roy (a Khasi), Aliba Imti (a Naga) and A. V. Thakkar (a Gandhian social worker) was set up. The Committee found that the tribals in the hills were very sensitive to any interference over their land and forest, their customary law and way of life. The Committee accordingly recommended the formation of autonomous regional and district councils that could provide adequate safeguards to their land, customs, language and culture. (Bhaumik, 2009)

Opinion in the Constituent Assembly on the recommendation was divided, but due to the persuasion and intervention of Jaipal Singh and B. R. Ambedkar, it was decided that sufficient autonomy to these areas would be provided in the administration and accordingly the Sixth Scheduled of the Indian Constitution was created vested with the provisions for the creation of the autonomous regional and district councils. (ibid: 13). Today this provision has also been extended to tribal of the plains areas such as the Bodoland Territory Council, Mishing Autonomous body, Tiwas Autonomous Council and Rabha Hashong etc. Similarly there are other tribal groups of the plain such as the Koch Rajbonshi and some tea tribes of Assam, who are demanding for autonomous status.
Impact of British incursion on Naga Hills

The Naga territory was not included under the British Indian territory and no treaty was ever signed between the Nagas and the British during their forceful occupation over certain portion of the Naga territory. (Lanunungsang, 2002) The administrative arrangement devised by the Govt. of India Act 1935 gave the British an advantage in later years when they used this provision to prevent, national political parties from extending their influence in this region. This also explains why the Naga Hills was completely cut off from the struggle for Indian Independence. (Chaubé: 1973, 72, U Misra, 21) The British were successful in preventing the winds of national movement from reaching there and also nourishing the idea that once the British left India, the Nagas would be able to decide their own future. This also resulted in the Nagas not being psychologically prepared for the transition from British to Indian rule in 1947. (Misra, 2000)

The political and economic history of the Naga is shaped and determined to a great extent by its relation with the British. It had its fair share of ups and downs. The British occupation of the Naga Hills did not effectively change the life pattern of the Naga except in certain spheres. The tribal economy was partially monetized and a small class of petty traders and businessmen emerged. (Misra, 2000)

Impact of Christianity and Missionaries on Naga Society

The missionaries can be said to be the harbinger of change in the Naga society. The spread of Christianity slowly changed their life style and belief system. Many age-old customs were given up. The concept of hygiene and health care was introduced. The unity that was lacking among the various tribes began to slowly fade and semblance of unity emerged. There was social awakening which paved the way for the growth of a pan-Naga consciousness, a sense of common Naga identity based on Christianity. (Misra, 2000)
The most important impact of Christianity introduced by the Baptist Missionaries on the Naga was the introduction of western education. Within a span of hundred years (1871-1972) almost the entire Ao community was converted to Christianity (Sinha, 147). This was true of most of the other Naga tribes. The spread of western education and Christianity introduced them to modern ideas and helped in put an end to the frequent inter-tribe warfare. Consequently, it gradually eroded the traditional power of the village chiefs and replaced it with that of village authority.

“A significant feature of the role of Christian Churches in the Naga Hills was that it made education available to all sections of the Naga tribes. Whereas in most of the other regions of British India the fruits of modern education were enjoyed generally by that class of people which emerged out of the landed aristocracy or from commercial activity, in Nagaland education imparted by the Church was not confined to any particular section” (Misra: 200). Missionaries printed the Bible in selected Naga dialects such as Ao, Angami and Sema and in the process gave those dialects a written form using the Roman script. As Sanjib Barauh pointed out, today Christianity is an essential part of Naga identity. Except the Zeilongrong Naga, most of the Naga are Christians. The NSCN-IM puts the figure at 95 per cent.

However, the spread of Christianity, at same time greatly affected some of the old customs such as folk songs, dances, folklore of the past. Many Naga scholars today agreed and felt the virtual loss of the rich traditions of the past due to conversion of Christianity. “Since the advent of Christianity all the old activities were stopped on the ground that they were based on superstitions, as a result, today many of the Nagas do not even remember their traditional stories, songs and dances and if one wishes to learn them, one must go to very old people who are seventy year old and above.” (Horam, 1990) It has impacted their belief system, mindset and political attitude. Christianity has virtually destroyed the traditional foundations of dance, folk songs. (Shimray, 2007) Even drinking the traditional rice beer is considered as a sin by the Churches among the protestant believers.
Emergence of Socio-political Organization

The education imparted by the church to the Naga people paved the way for the growth of a pan-Naga consciousness and there emerged an educated group of Naga which began to represent the whole Naga population. It was this educated section that for the first time put up a platform for the representation of the Naga people as a whole which subsequently led to the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 at Kohima with the joint efforts of government official, village headman and those British recruits who returned from France after serving as Labour Corps during the first world war. This club was the first of its kind as its members were drawn from various Naga tribes and was social and political in nature. (Vashum, 2000) This platform formed in the early part of the twentieth century was the first step towards the raising the issue of a unified Naga homeland. Till then the idea of nationality or nationalism were unknown to the Naga with loyalties being practiced and defined mainly on tribes and clan bases.

The primary objectives of this club were (1) to consolidate their socio-political identity, (2) to make distinct Naga nationality, (3) to develop fraternal feelings of various Naga tribal communities and (4) to work for the welfare and unity of all Naga tribes. (Lanunungsang, 2002) Thus, for the first time, this common platform brought all the isolated Naga tribes together and established a sense of belonging and unity.

On January 10, 1929 the Naga Club led a team and submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission who visited the Naga Hills. This was the first expressed document to restore the independence of the Naga. The Naga were aware that the British rule was not a permanent one and would one day be replaced by a local government. They were aware of the proposal of a ‘New Reformed Scheme’ that was to be implemented against their wishes. The Naga wished to be outside this new scheme as they had been before. The representatives of the Naga Club demanded adequate safeguards from any possible rule by Indian or Burmese forces. They expressed that after the British
left they should be given the independence on the basis of historical antecedent. This was the first seed of Naga nationalism.

There are no records about the activities of the Naga Club after submission of memorandum to the Simon Commission. But the seed of Naga integration was sown. It was followed by the establishment of the Lotha Council in 1923 and the Ao Council in 1928. And all these led to the emergence of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945 formed at the initiative of Charles Pawsey, then British Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills district which later came to be known as the Naga National Council in 1946.

The uprising of the Naga for the exercise of the right to self-determination also started to take place in the western Naga Hills, for example the Zeiliangrong uprising. The Movement was spearheaded by a combination of three Naga tribes, Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmei. It was led by Jadonang Kabui, a young Rongmei Naga, social and religious reformer who was born in 1905 at Kambiron, a village situated in the western Naga Hills. His main intention was to drive away the British, who were considered as outsiders in the Naga region, and in 1927 he launched a political movement against the British and mobilized support from the Naga villages. (Horam, 2004) The Kabui Naga became so impressed by Jadonang’s leadership that they began to look upon him as their true leader. But before long the British became alarmed and arrested him on July 31, 1931 for causing unrest and was subsequently hanged on 27 August 1931 at Imphal on several charges including murder.

Though he was hanged his courage inspired many others and the Naga movement continued to spread all over the Naga areas. After Jadonang’s death one of his follower, Gaidileu emerged as a new leader. Born on 26 of January 1915 at Nungkhao village, she was associated with Jadonang at the early age of 13. Her struggle was based on the same idea of Jodonang i.e. to establish an independent Naga kingdom. She went underground and rebelled against the British, but was arrested by Captain Macdonald on 17 October 1932 and sentenced to life imprisonment by Mr. Higgin, the political agent of
Manipur. Later she was released from Tura jail when India became independent in 1947. Known for her courage and spirit, Jawaharlal Nehru in 1937 described her as the “Rani of Naga”. (Shimray, 2007) According to D Iralu, this was a clever political move by Nehru to portray this conflict as Indo-Naga fight against the British by giving this title to her, while the fact was rather a religious-political uprising against the British for interfering in the Naga affairs.

The British felt the need to restructure the North east region realizing ethnic and cultural difference between the Naga tribes and the rest of British India and Burma. This is manifest in the statement of Sir Robert Reid, former Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills:

“We have no right to allow this great body of non-Indian animists and Christians to be drawn into the struggle between Hindus and Muslims which is now and will be in future, with ever increasing intensity the dominating feature of politics in India. They cannot be left to the Indian political leaders with neither knowledge nor interest or feeling for the areas. In any case, if my main premise of separation from India is accepted, their intervention could scarcely arise....Personally, I am in favour of Dr. Hutton’s idea of a North-East province vaguely embracing all the Hill fringes from Lushai land on the south right round to the Balipara Frontier tract on the north, embracing on the way to the Chittagong hill tract of Bengal and the Nagas and Chin of Burma and perhaps the Shan states too. I could put this under a Chief Commissioner and he in turn, could, I imagine, have to be divorce from the control of the Government of India and put perhaps under some appropriate department at Whitehall”. (NSF, 1995 as quoted in Naga Right to Self-Determination, Vashum: 2005)

Accordingly in 1941 he proposed the formation of the Crown colony comprising the Naga Hills. This plan was reviewed by Sir Reginald Coupland, a constitutional expert, and thus it came to be known as the Coupland Plan. The plan was that the Governments of India and Burma would share responsibilities of these areas as “Trust Territory” But the plan was opposed by the Nagas on the ground that they were opposed to colonialism of any kind. (Elwin 1961, Vashum, 2005) Had the Nagas then lent the slightest support to the scheme the trust territory could have been established. (Alemchiba 1970: 166)
Naga Quest for Freedom

Immediately after the Second World War, the Naga spirit of nationalism started to emerge very strongly. It was Lord Wavell who first recommended that the Naga should be helped for their support during the War. The Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills at that time Mr. Charles Pawsey of Naga Hills called the prominent Naga leaders at his office to decide on the future of the Naga. And under his initiative the Naga Hills District Tribal Council (N.H.D.T.C.) was formed in April 1945, which was a political platform for the Naga and later it was renamed as Naga National Council in the following year in February during the Wokha session. The organization aimed at fostering the welfare and social aspirations of the Nagas and it received the official patronage. It had a unifying and moderating influence on the Council. In the beginning the NNC did not speak of secession from British India but consequently the priorities changed because of the imminent departure of the British from India coupled with lack of any clear cut approach on the part of the congress leadership. Such a situation deepened apprehensions and doubts in the minds of the Naga and most of the leading tribes were firm on securing Naga homeland. The declaration of the Secretary of the NNC on December 6, 1946 that the NNC stood for unification of all the Naga tribes and their freedom reflected the mood of the community. (Misra, 2000)

The Indian National Congress was aware of the sentiments of the NNC leaders and Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to the NNC leader, T. Sakhrie, in August, 1946:

“It is obvious that the Naga Territory in Eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself politically or economically. It lies between two huge countries, India and China and part of it consist of another backward people who need considerable help. When India is independent, has it is bound to be soon, it would not be possible for the British government to hold on to the Naga Territory or any part of it, they will be isolated between India and China. In inevitably, therefore, this Naga Territory must form part of India and of Assam with which it has developed such close associations......” (Quoted in Alemchiba: 1970).

In his long letter, Nehru also referred to the NNC’s demand for separate electorates for the Naga, the question of a common language and the
issue of bringing the un-administered Naga Territories within one administrative setup.

Nehru had talked of giving autonomy to the Naga Hills within the province of Assam. But the NNC was divided on this issue, with one section putting forward the idea of an independent homeland. Others preferred a mandatory status, with Great Britain as the guardian power. But the NNC position was clear on one point, i.e. that the Nagas never form the part of Indian and they must be given the choice to decide on the nature of their relationship with the later.

Formation of NNC and its functions

The Naga National Council was formed in 1946 by the representatives of different tribes with Mayangnokcha Ao as the founding president and Aliba Imti Ao as the secretary. One of the most significant aspects of this organisation was that the term ‘National’ was used for the first time, a major step towards the formation of Naga nationalism. For the first time in the history of the Naga an attempt was initiated to bring all the Naga tribes under one platform. It composed of twenty nine members who represented the various Naga tribes on the basis of proportional representation and every Naga was supposed to be member of the NNC (Misra: 1983, 160). According to Chaube the Naga National Council was intended to be a government even though a tribal or more accurately, an inter-tribal one. It had two central councils, one at Kohima and the other at Mokokchung. However, the composition of the two central councils did not have equal representative from all the tribes. The Kohima Central Council consisted of twelve members out of which, seven of them belonged to the Angami, while the Mokokchung Central Council had fifteen members of whom five were Ao, four Sema, three Lotha, two Sangtam and one Chang. (Chaube 1999) Each central council was again split into a number of tribal councils and the members were chosen and not elected.
As the activities of the NNC widened, it eventually became the sole political force in the Naga Hills, The NNC drafted its own Constitution. The preamble stated:

"This constitution to be known as the constitution and laws of the Naga National Council is adopted to provide a way of working for peace and agreement between all the Naga tribes, of preserving and developing what is good of their own culture and customs, and to promote the growth of democratic self-government and the material welfare of the Nagas".

The Naga National Council passed a four-point resolution on June 19, 1946 and submitted it to a group of visiting British Cabinet mission who had come to India to prepare the ground for Independence to India. The four points were:

i) This National Council stands for the solidarity of all Naga tribes including those in un-administered areas;

ii) This council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal;

iii) The Naga hills should be continuously included in an autonomous Assam in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Naga; and

iv) The Naga tribes should have a separate electorate.

The Naga were starting to assert politically. They were aware of the changing political scenario of the world and of India. Again, on February 20, 1947 the NNC submitted a memorandum to the British Government. This was an attempt to present the case of the self-determination of the Naga people. They made an appeal to the then Viceroy of India Lord Mountbatten to set up an interim government for the Nagas for a period of ten years after which the Naga people would be free to choose any government under which they would live. The Memorandum was as follows:
i) The Interim government of the Naga people will rule over all the people of Nagaland, having full powers in respect of Legislation, Executive and Judiciary;

ii) Nagaland belongs to the Naga people and will be inalienable;

iii) The Interim government of the Naga people will have full powers in the matter of raising revenue and expenditure, an annual subvention to cover the deficit being given by the guardian power;

iv) For defense and aiding civil power in case of emergency, a forum considered necessary by the Naga National Council will be maintained in Nagaland by the guardian power.

But the British Government did not take serious note of the memorandum. Instead the NNC was advised to refer their proposal to the Advisory Committee of the Aboriginal tribes which resulted in a deadlock. According to D Iralu, one possible reason for the British refusal to the Naga pleas could be because of the NNCs refusal to accept the Coupland Plan of setting up a Northeastern Agency on the pattern of a crown colony comprising of all the Eastern people of the Northeastern region who are neither Burmese nor Indians. Had the plan materialized, an area of over 1, 50,000 sq. km could have become a crown colony with rich minerals resources for the British Government.

After this, there was an agreement between the then Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari, representative of the Government of India and the NNC. This agreement was known as the 'Hydari Agreement'. The main provisions are (Iralu, 2003):

1. Judicial: all cases whether civil or criminal, arising between Naga in the Naga Hills will be disposed of by duly constituted Naga courts according to the Naga customary laws.

2. Executive: While the District Officer will be appointed at the discretion of the Governor, Sub-Divisions of the Naga Hills would be
administered by a Sub-Divisional Council with a full time Executive President paid by the NNC who would be responsible to the District Officer in all matters falling within the latter's responsibility, and to the Naga Council for all matters falling within their responsibility.

3. Legislative: That no law passed by the Provincial or Central Legislature which would affect the terms of this agreement or the religious practices of the Nagas would have legal force in the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga National Council.

4. Land: The land with all its resources in the Naga Hills should not be alienated to a non-Naga without the consent of the NNC.

5. Taxation: That the NNC will be responsible for the imposition, collection, and expenditure of land revenue and house tax and such other tax as may be imposed by the NNC.

6. Boundaries: The present administrative division should be modified so as (i) to bring back into the Naga Hills Districts all the forest transferred to the Sibsagar and Nagaon District in the past, and (2) to bring under one unified administrative unit of all Naga as far as possible. No areas should be transferred out of the Naga Hills without the consent of the NNC.

7. Arms Act: The Deputy Commissioner will act on the advice of the NNC in accordance with the provision of the Arms Act.


9. Period of Agreement: The Governor of Assam as the agent of the Government of India will have special responsibility for a period of 10 (ten) years to ensure the due observation of this Agreement; and at the end of this period the NNC would be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people.
The Nine-point agreement between the Government of India and the Naga became a contentious issue. There was disagreement over Article 9. Majority of the NNC members felt that the point was not a clear promise for self determination, whereas the moderates within the NNC declared that Article 9 actually gave the Naga the right for full independence after the interim period of ten years was over. But this was not acceptable to The Government of India interpreted this provision as meaning administrative changes within the Indian union.

The wrangling over the interpretation of Article 9 led to disagreement even among the Naga leaders. There were two groups, (1) the moderates and (2) the radicals. The radicals led by Phizo did not accept the Hydari Agreement as they deemed the terms of the Agreement to be short of self-determination. Phizo visited Delhi in July 1947 pressed view that the Nagas be left outside the Indian union once the British departed. They met Mahatma Gandhi and told him about their decision to form a separate State for the Naga and declare independence for themselves. Gandhi agreed that the Naga had ever right to be free. To quote Gandhi

I want you to feel that India is yours. I feel that Nagaland is mine just as yours, but if the Nagas believed that they were not part of India then the matter ended there. I did not believe in suppression or force union.

When the Naga delegates pointed out that Akbar Hydari was threatening to do that, Gandhi said I will ask him to shoot me first before one Naga dies. The meeting with Gandhi inspired the leaders to declare independence. (Vashum 2005, Nibedon 1983)

On the issue of Naga independence also there was no unanimity among the members of the Naga National Council. While some were opposed to the view of immediate independence and favored continuation of relation with India till the Naga were able to learn the art of running a State, others wanted immediate Independence, still another group wanted to be under the British for a limited period of time.
Despite the difference of opinions, the NNC was firm on its extreme line of action regarding independence. As a result NNC declared Independence on August 14, 1947. It was a declaration that was signed by nine members of the Council. The tri-color NNC flag was unfurled at Kohima and Mokokchung and the National song of the Naga was sung. (Lanunungsang, 2002)

"God bless my Nagaland, land that I love, stand beside her and guide her, through the night, with light from above, from the mountains, through the valley, to the meadows where I roam, God bless my Nagaland my home sweet home.

However, the British Government did not recognize the unilateral declaration of the independence. All the Press releases made by the NNC in the leading newspapers were confiscated and not a word of the independence could reach the outside world. The next day, on August 15, 1947, when India's flag was hoisted by the then Deputy Commissioner Mr. Pawsey at Kohima, there was not a single Naga present on the occasion

Formation of Nagaland state

When the British took control of the Naga Hills in 1881, the Naga for the first time had to accept an alien rule. Until then they were isolated tribes living in village-state, each independent of the other and the idea of nationality and nationalism were unknown to them. As stated above it was only after the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 by some of the Naga educated class that the consciousness for Naga unity and identity began to emerged. Formation of the Naga National Council (NNC) further consolidated the Naga nationalism and movement for Naga self-determination started. However after the departure of the British from India in 1947, the Naga hill was merged with India much against the wishes of the Naga people. The NNC went underground and vigorously continued its movement through armed struggle against Indian state and became a powerful rebel outfit.
In order to counter the influence of the NNC, the Govt. of India encouraged attempts by a section of the Naga elite led by Imkongliba Ao, to work for a negotiated settlement of the Naga issue. The deployment of Indian army to crush the Movement led by the NNC was another factor which hastened the process of state formation. Consequently, there was split in the NNC leadership and several close confidants of Phizo who represented the moderate voice such as T. Sakhrie and Zasokie left the organization (Misra, 2000). These leaders initiated the first Naga Peoples Convention which was held from 22 to 26 August 1957. It was the first step towards the creation of Nagaland state. About 1735 representatives of different Naga tribes participated in the Convention where Imkongliba Ao was elected as the chairman and Jasokie Angami as the secretary of the Convention.

The Convention adopted the following resolutions: (Chandrika, 2008)

1. We maintain that the only answer to the Naga question is a satisfactory political settlement.

2. In as much as a large number of our people are still underground and there is no freedom of movement and speech under the present condition in the Naga Hills districts, we feel no discussion can be held among the people preliminary to negotiation.

3. In order to create the condition necessary for a political settlement the following immediate change as an interim measure is essential. The present Naga hill districts of Assam and Tuensang Frontier Division of NEFA along with the reserved forests, transferred out of the Naga Hills district under the reforms of 1921, should be constituted into a single administrative unit under the External Affairs Ministry of the Govt. of India through the Governor of Assam acting in his discretion as the Agent of the President of India, so as to ensure, with our active help, a genuine general amnesty, speedy end of hostility and relief to sufferings.
4. We strongly urge the Government to implement the above proposal immediately as we, on our part, pledge ourselves to actively work together to end hostilities so that the army and police can be withdrawn and the villages de-grouped, and to try by all means in our power to heal old feuds so that all of us, both those now underground and those over ground, may work together for the good of our land and the free development of our people according to our own traditions.

5. We appeal to our countryman in arms to give up the cult of violence.

6. The Convention asks for prayers of all men, both underground and over ground and the Government services for the achievement of lasting and honorable peace.

While the deliberation was going on, the Governor of Assam through a message to the People’s Convention, made it clear that any settlement to be practical and acceptable must be within the framework of Indian Constitution. It would be in the best interest of the Naga people. The Governor expressed the faith on the collective wisdom and practical sense of the assembled delegates. The message was honored by the Naga People’s Convention. To remove the doubt of the Governor and to make the point clear about the Naga intention, the Convention adopted a resolution on 26th August, 1957 that clarified that by political settlement they meant a satisfactory political settlement within the Indian Union.

The NPC constituted a delegation comprising nine Naga leaders with Imkongliba as the leader of the team with the objective to start negotiations first with the Governor of Assam and then with the Indian Prime Minister in the light of the resolutions adopted by the Convention in August, 1957. The discussion with the Assam Governor was held on 23rd September 1957 where Mr Imkongliba made it clear that they (Naga) believed neither in violence nor in the creation of an independent Naga state. They just wanted a modification in the existing; administrative sets up so that they could share fruits of India's independence and develop in accordance with their economic, social and
religious beliefs. Fazl Ali, the Governor, expressed his satisfaction and told the members of the Naga delegation that he too shared their views and sentiments. Being satisfied with the stand of the Naga delegation, he strongly recommended to the Government of India to accept the demands of the Naga people for a change in the present administrative set up of the Naga Hills district. As a result of this a meeting was held on 25th and 26th September 1957 with Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. While opening the discussion the Prime Minister made it clear that the Indian Government was not prepared to discuss any scheme that demanded the independence of the Naga Hills. He however, accepted the Kohima Convention's proposal for the formation of a Naga administrative unit within India. He also stressed upon the need for putting an end to the violent activities and agreed to the proposal for “political settlement within the Indian Union.” Lastly, he assured the Naga delegation that the necessary amendment to the Constitution of India would be considered by the Parliament in its next session in November 1957, and the Government would consider to grant amnesty to the rebels “in respect of all offences committed against the state in the past, though amnesty would not cover future offences.”

The Ministry of External Affairs in its statement of 26th September 1957, spelt out the scheme of the future administration of the Naga Hills area thus: “The Naga Hills district and the Tuensang Frontier Division would be constituted into one administrative unit within the Indian union directly under the President of India. This Unit will be administered by the Governor of Assam on behalf of the President under the Ministry of External Affairs.” The statement made it clear that the Government of India had already decided to grant the Naga people a separate political unit for the Naga hoping that the progress would normalize conditions in the Naga Hills” and that all the members of the delegation would cooperate in restoring peace to the troubled areas”(Chandrika, 2008).
Sixteen Point Proposal: Base of Nagaland State

Despite the protest and anger of the rebel Naga leaders, the Moderates called the second Naga People's Convention from 21 to 23 May 1958 at Unigma. The Convention reaffirmed the decision of the Naga People's Convention held at Kohima (in 1957) and expressed satisfaction for creation of a new administrative unit for the Naga people. It passed a resolution strongly condemning all sorts of violence. It also constituted two bodies, the Select Committee and a Liaison Committee comprising of eminent Naga leaders to address the Naga issue. The Select Committee further constituted a Draft Committee with a view to preparing a plan for the political settlement of the Naga problem. Accordingly the Drafting Committee drafted the sixteen point's proposal which was approved by the third Peoples Convention in October 1958 and the Govt. of India with some modifications in the proposal.

16-Point Agreement

The main provisions of the 16 Point Agreement are discussed below: (Chasie, 1999)

1. The Name and Jurisdiction

The Territories that were hitherto known as the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area under the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area Act 1957, and any other Naga Area, which may hereafter come under it, shall form a state within the Indian Union and be hereafter known as the Nagaland.

2. The Ministry-In-charge

Nagaland shall be under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India.
3. **The Governor of Nagaland:**

1) The President of India shall appoint a Governor for Nagaland and he will be vested with the Executive Powers of the Government of Nagaland and he will function from the Headquarters of Nagaland.

2) His administrative secretariat will be headed by a Chief Secretary stationed at the Headquarters with other Secretariat Staff as necessary.

3) The Governor shall have special responsibility with regard to Law, Order and Police during transitional period only.

4. **Council of Ministers:**

1) There shall be a Council of Ministers (viz. six Ministers and three Deputy Ministers) with a Chief Minister at the head to assist and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions.

2) The Council of Ministers shall be responsible to the Naga Legislative Assembly.

5. **The Legislature**

There shall be a constituted Legislative Assembly consisting of elected and nominated members as may be deemed necessary representing different Tribes. (Further, a duly constituted body of Experts may be formed to examine and determine the principles of representation on democratic basis.)

6. **Representation in the Parliament**

Two elected members shall represent the Nagaland in the Union Parliament, i.e. one in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha.

7. **Acts of Parliament**

No Acts of Law passed by the Union Parliament affecting the
following provisions shall have legal force in Nagaland unless specifically applied to it by a majority vote of the Naga Legislative Assembly.

1. Religious or Social practices of the Nagas
3. Civil and criminal justice so far as these concern decisions according to Naga Customary Laws;
4. The ownership and transfer of land and its resources.

8. **Local Self-Government:**

Each tribe shall have the following Units of Law-Making and Administrative Local Bodies to deal with matters concerning the respective tribes and areas:

1. The Village Council
2. The Range Council
3. The Tribal Council

9. **Administration of Justice:**

a) Each tribe shall have the following Courts of Justice:

1. The Village Court
2. The Range Court
3. The Tribal Court

b) Appellate Courts:

1) The District Court-cum-Sessions Court (for each District), and Supreme Court of India.

2) The Naga Tribunal (for the whole of the Nagaland)

10. **Administration of Tuensang District:**

1) The Governor shall carry on the administration of the Tuensang
District for a period of 10 (ten) years until such time when the tribes in the Tuensang District are capable of shouldering more responsibilities of the advanced system of administration. The commencement of ten-year period of administration will start simultaneously with the enforcement of detailed workings of the Constitution in the other parts of the Nagaland.

2) Provided further that a Regional Council shall be formed for Tuensang District by elected representatives from all the tribes in Tuensang District, and the Governor may nominate representatives to the Regional Council as well. The Deputy Commissioner will be the Ex-Officio Chairman of the Council. The Regional Council will elect members to the Naga Legislative Assembly to represent Tuensang District.

3) Provided further that on the advice of the Regional Council, steps will be taken to start various Councils and Courts, in those areas where the people feel themselves capable of establishing such institutions.

4) Provided further that no Act or Laws passed by the Naga Legislative Assembly shall be applicable to Tuensang District unless specifically recommended by the Regional Council.

5) Provided further that the Regional Council shall supervise and guide the working of the various Councils and Courts within Tuensang District, and wherever deemed necessary depute the Local Officers to act as Chairman thereof.

6) Provided further that Councils of such areas inhabited by a mixed population or which have not as yet decided to which specific Tribal Council to be affiliated to, shall be directly under the Regional Council for the time being. And at the end of ten years the situation will be reviewed and if the people so desire the period will be further extended.
11. **Financial Assistance from Government of India:**

To supplement the revenues of the Nagaland, there will be a need for the Government of India to payout of the Consolidated Fund of India as Grants-in-aid as follows:

1) Lump-sum as may be necessary each year for the development programme in the Nagaland;

2) A fixed recurring sum (Annual Subvention) for meeting the cost of the administration of Nagaland.

12. **Re-Transfer of Reserved Forests:**

All the Reserved Forests and other Naga areas that were transferred out of Naga area will be returned to the Nagaland with a clearly defined boundary under the present settlement.

13. **Consolidation of Contiguous Naga Area:**

The other Naga Tribes inhabiting the areas contiguous to the present Nagaland be allowed to join the Nagaland if they so desire.

14. **Formation of Separate Naga Regiment:**

In order that the Naga people can fulfill their desire of playing a full role in the defense forces of India, the question of raising a separate Naga Regiment should be duly examined for action.

15. **Transitional Period:**

(a) On reaching the political settlement with Government of India, the Naga People's Convention shall appoint a Body to draft the details of the Constitution for the Nagaland on the basis of the settlement.

(b) There shall be constituted an Interim Body with elected representatives from every tribe, to assist and advise the Governor in the administration
of the Nagaland during the transitional period. The tenure of office of the members of the Interim Body will be 3 (three) years subject to re-election.

16. **Inner Line Regulation:**

The Rules embodied in the Protected Area 1958, shall remain in force in the Nagaland.

The following Special Resolutions were also appended to the 16-point Memorandum.

1. The Naga Peoples' Convention records its deep appreciation to the Administration for the various welfare activities and the progress made in the administration of the area.

2. The Naga Peoples' Convention further requests the administration to extend the following amnesty in order to expedite restoration of peace in the Nagaland and to effectively implement the provisions of the Political settlement arrived at with the Government of India:

   i) To consider favorably the release of the Naga political prisoners;

   ii) To extend further, general pardon to the underground people coming overground;

   iii) To relax military patrolling, Operations and other restrictions to enable free contact between overground and underground people during the amnesty period.

3. The Naga Peoples' Convention further appeals to the Naga People in general, and the aggrieved families in particular, to extend the same general pardon to the underground people coming overground and also we appeal to all underground Naga to stop all sorts of violent activities from now on.

4. The Convention further requests the co-operation of every tribe to take effective steps to bring normalcy in the country.
5. The Naga Peoples' Convention once again invites the underground people to come overground and to participate fully in the running of the New Government of Nagaland.

**Formation of Working Committee:**

For the formation of a Working Committee the following Resolutions were adopted by the Convention:

a) A Working Committee with three representatives from every tribe be formed to oversee the implementation of the decisions of the Third Session of the Naga Peoples' Convention held at Mokokchung in October, 1959.

b) The Working Committee be entrusted to select a body to be called the Negotiating Body which will make such contacts, and negotiations, both with the Government of India and the Underground people, to arrive at an amicable political settlement, and by all means, representatives of the underground people could also be taken in as members of the Negotiating Body'. The formulation and the process of arriving at a conclusion out of these negotiations should be done within one month of its inception.

c) The Negotiating Body be fully authorized to make such minor changes in the course of the negotiations, if deemed necessary, unless when the question of fundamental principles and policies are involved.

This initiative of the moderate Naga leaders encouraged the Govt. of India to move a bill in the Parliament for the 13th Amendment of the Constitution for the creation of the state of Nagaland in August 1962. The Bill was signed by the President on 4 September 1962 and on 1 December 1963 a full-fledged state of Nagaland was inaugurated by President Radhakrishnan at Kohima. (Chaube: 1999)
Conclusion

The foregoing discussion presented a historical account of the Naga starting from their independent life style to their first encounter with the outside world beginning with the Ahoms and then with the British. These interactions marked the end of their isolation from the rest of the world and freedom.

The Naga conflict is the result of historical blunders committed wittingly and unwittingly by the British and Indian leaders. For example, the British policy of non interference in the administration of the Naga Hills alienated them from the rest of India. This isolation could be one of the reasons why it has made them feel that they are different and are not part of India. The British did not provide any concrete plan for the Naga when they left after India became independent in 1947. The Naga felt betrayed for forcefully handing them over to India.

Initially the Govt. of India did not take the Naga problem in right earnest and simply considered it as law and order problem. Unfortunately for the Naga the Indian leaders never showed full commitment towards solving the Naga problem through a process of dialogue. No steps were taken which can be considered as indicative of confidence building measures. Instead they used the policy of force or luring the Naga leaders with money and position to divide and rule over them. Not unsurprisingly it is quite common to find a Naga quoting Phizo who is said to have once lamented “Naga can stand against bullets but not money”.

The Naga leaders were equally to be blamed for the mess. Though, it was clearly mentioned in the 16 Point Proposal, to allow all Naga inhabited contiguous areas to be a part of Nagaland, yet when the state of Nagaland was created this demand raised by the Convention was not included in spite of the fact that many of them had fought and sacrificed their lives for the Movement. There was no protest against this decision of the government. It was the lack of unity and strong leadership at crucial stages of the Movement that subsequently led to split, defection and frictions in the ranks and files of the
underground groups which affected the Movement adversely. There is still a strong bitter dispute among the Naga leaders of different groups as to who should lead and decide the future of the Nagas. For instance, former Chief Minister of Nagaland, S C Jamir recently stated “Naga in Nagaland will decide the future of Nagaland”. It is important to mention here that one of the main spokespersons for the NSCN (IM) at the peace process meetings is Mr Muivah who originally comes from Ukhrul, Manipur. Thus the above statement by Mr Jamir has a far reaching implication for the future of the peace process.

In the next chapter we will discuss the Naga conflict and peace process against this background.
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