

**‘Segmentation, Unity, and a Church Divided:  
A Critical History of Churches in Nagaland, 1947-2017’**

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**ABSTRACT**

This is a study of the distinctive formation of the Christian churches in Nagaland during 1947-2017. It argues that the major clues to understanding Naga church history are to be found in the cultural milieu of Nagaland. Thus, using a cultural history methodology, the ecclesiastical events described in this research were examined in the cultural framework of the segmentary Naga society and the changing political, social and religious environment in the region, giving close attention to how they affected the contours of the ecclesiastical history. It posited that segmentation as a cultural characteristic of the Naga society effected both unity and divisiveness in the Naga churches, which subsequently shaped the beliefs and practices of the churches in the region.

Archival data in the form of reports, records and minutes of meetings were collected from church and government offices. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with leaders and key eyewitnesses of various events discussed in the research. Using a semi-structured questionnaire in these interviews allowed the interviewee to tell the story in their own words. Though primary textual sources were used to establish the state of churches in Nagaland prior to 1947, the main focus of this research is limited to the period 1947 to 2017.

This research retells the story of the Naga church in a state of India with Christian majority. The ethnic status the Christian faith assumed, the extent of its identification with the local culture, and the scope of the mission of the Naga churches as key stakeholders in society, offers a new angle to the history of Christianity in India. As an historical study of churches within the geographical confines of Nagaland this research is hoped to be a tool for the churches’ self-evaluation in the region and beyond.



‘Segmentation, Unity, and a Church Divided:  
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2017’

by  
Chongpongmeren

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of  
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## DECLARATIONS


This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date 09/07/19

### STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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## **DEDICATION**

To:

my mother, late Atula, who dreamt with me,

and

my wife, Viva, who walked the dream with me.





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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABAM	:	Ao Baptist Arogo (Church) Mungdang (Council)
ABMC	:	Assam Baptist Missionary Conference
ABTM	:	Ao Baptist Tetsur (Women) Mungdang (Council)
ACAUT	:	Actions Against Unabated Taxation
AG	:	Assemblies of God
AGEI	:	Assemblies of God East India
AFSPA	:	Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act
BMM	:	Baptist Missionary Magazine
CAG	:	Comptroller and Auditor General (of India)
CBCNEI	:	Council of Baptist Churches of North East India
CHAI	:	Church History Association of India
CNBC	:	Council of Naga Baptist Churches
DAN	:	Development Association of Nagaland
ETC	:	Eastern Theological College
FGN	:	Federal Government of Nagaland
FNBA	:	Fellowship of Naga Baptist Associations
FRN	:	Forum for Naga Reconciliation
GB	:	<i>Gaon Bora</i> (meaning, 'village elder')
GoI	:	Government of India
GPRN	:	Government of People's Republic of Nagaland
HMB	:	Home Mission Board
ILP	:	Inner Line Permit
KBCC	:	Kyong (Lotha) Baptist Church Council
MMS	:	Medical Mission Sisters
NBCC	:	Nagaland Baptist Church Council
NBCCWD	:	Nagaland Baptist Church Council Women's Department
NBWU	:	Nagaland Baptist Women's Union
NCF	:	Naga Christian Fellowship
NCRC	:	Naga Christian Revival Church
NCWA	:	Nagaland Catholic Women's Association
NDO	:	Nagaland Development Outreach
NEFA	:	North East Frontier Agency
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
NHBCAC	:	Naga Hills Baptist Church Advisory Council
NHDTC	:	The Naga Hills District Tribal Council
NJCF	:	Nagaland Joint Christian Forum
NMM	:	Nagaland Mission Movement
NNC	:	Naga National Council
NPC <sup>1</sup>	:	Naga People's Convention
NPC <sup>2</sup>	:	Nagaland Peace Council
NPMHR	:	Naga People's Movement for Human Rights
NSACS	:	Nagaland State AIDS Control Society
NSCN	:	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
PHC	:	Public Health Centre
TPM	:	The Pentecostal Mission





## GLOSSARY

Akhuaye	:	Way of life; life virtue (Sumi Naga)
Angh	:	Village chief (Konyak Naga)
Antipong	:	Cock (Ao Naga)
Arju	:	Bachelor house (Ao Naga)
Asem	:	Traditional Naga drum (Ao Naga)
Ban	:	Bachelor house (Konyak Naga)
Chandals	:	Antisocial animals (Sanskrit)
Gaon Bora	:	Village elder (Nagamese)
Kenyu	:	Way of life; life virtue (Angami Naga)
Kichuki	:	Bachelor house (Angami Naga)
Kurta	:	Traditional Indian upper garment (Sanskrit)
Morung	:	Bachelor house (Assamese)
Nisung masu	:	Antisocial (lit. 'not human'; Ao Naga)
Pasaltha	:	Admirable person (Mizo)
Saree	:	Traditional Indian woman's garment that consists of a drape (Sanskrit)
Sobaliba	:	Way of life; life virtue (Ao Naga)
Tatar	:	Village council (Ao Naga)
Tsuki	:	A place where unmarried girls slept (Ao Naga)
Tsumar	:	Non-tribals; untrustworthy or unreliable (Ao Naga)
Vai	:	Non-tribals; bad, dishonest and selfish (Mizo)



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Churches<sup>1</sup> in a particular culture, while sharing the same faith heritage with their global coreligionists, can yet express distinct beliefs and practices developed through their interaction with the local culture. Thus, new ways of expressions and practices were developed, which became part of the distinctive characteristics of the local church. This research is an attempt to analyse the distinctive development of the Naga churches in the light of the cultural context of Nagaland since 1947.

The year 1947 marked a significant watershed in the history of Nagaland. On 14 August, the Naga nationalists declared Naga independence. However, the Naga people found themselves incorporated into the Indian union. Thus, began a protracted political struggle. The conflict situation and the instability created by it had enormous social and economic ramifications. Thus, the post-1947 period provided a challenging environment for the life of the churches in Nagaland. How the churches responded to this environment, and in the process, how it was influenced, is the concern of this study.

Christian tradition was first introduced in Nagaland by the American Baptist missionaries. The first contact was made in 1839 by Miles Bronson. But this endeavour was short-lived, and no converts were made. After a period of about thirty years, a second attempt was made under the initiative of Edward Winter Clark. With Clark's encouragement, Assamese (Indian) Evangelist Godhula Rufus Brown, entered the Naga Hills in 1872 and organised the first Christian community. The American Baptist

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'church' can be understood either as a building for Christian worship or as a body of Christian believers. 'Church' *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh edn* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2004), 222. In this study, unless indicated as referring to a particular building, the term is used in the latter sense, that is, in reference to or representative of the body of Naga Christian believers. The term 'church' can also be used in reference to a denomination (as in Baptist church) or to an institution consisting of clergy and laity (as in Koinonia Baptist church). In this study, when used in these senses, they are indicated by qualifying it with a specific reference to the group or place they were associated with.

Missionaries worked in Nagaland till 1955. During this period, 46 per cent of the total population of Nagaland became Christian.<sup>2</sup> However, in the aftermath of India's independence in 1947, all foreign missionaries were compelled to leave Nagaland.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the events in and around 1947 also marked a momentous shift in the history of the Naga churches.

### **1.1. Research problem**

A substantial amount of study has already been done on the history of Naga churches (see Literature Review below). They were generally written either from an institutional history or mission history perspective. Thus, the tendency is to focus on the numerical growth or the ways and means by which the Christian faith spread in Nagaland. What is lacking in the existing literature on Naga church history is an in-depth study of the interaction of the Naga churches with the culture of the society<sup>4</sup> at large. This research stems from the conviction that church history should not be studied in isolation from the general history of the society at large; rather it should examine the church in the light of its formative interaction with its cultural context. Some of the literature noted below dealt with Christian contributions to social and political changes in Nagaland. This research, however, goes beyond studying the church's 'contribution' to the society. It attempts to assess whether the church's interaction with the social, political and other aspects of culture in the society had a formative influence on the church's own development.

This research aims to evaluate critically the churches in Nagaland in the light of their cultural context in the post-1947 period. The main question of the research is: *'How*

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<sup>2</sup> According to the *Census of India 1951*, there were 98,068 Christians in Nagaland out of the total population of 213,000. 'Census of India, 1951.'

<sup>3</sup> RF DeLano, the last American Baptist missionary, left Nagaland in February 1955, thus, ending the presence of foreign missionaries in Nagaland.

<sup>4</sup> The term society has been defined variously. It could mean 'the most general reference to humankind' or 'to a relatively small organized group of people'. G Mitchel (ed.), *A Dictionary of Social Sciences, second edn* (London: Routledge, 2017), 206. In this study, it is used to refer to a community of people, who 'share a body of customs, maintain social order through application of sanctions, and are located territorially' (206).

*did the cultural context of Nagaland influence the course of the churches from the year 1947 in Nagaland?* This question is basically meant to understand ‘why and how’ the Naga churches developed the way they did after 1947.

The history of the churches in Nagaland goes back far beyond 1947. So, a preliminary sub-question can be asked,

1. *‘How did Christian missions come to Nagaland? How was a vernacular church developed prior to the study period?’*

The main part of the text, however, focused on the complex two-way relationship between events in Nagaland and the churches in the post-1947 period. The pertinent question for this section is,

2. *‘How did the cultural environment in Nagaland influence the life of the churches after 1947?’* In order to answer this question, the study period was divided into three chapters based on the major historical currents in Nagaland. For each of these, three pertinent questions were asked:

2.1. *‘What were the historical currents – political, social and economic – of the period?’*

Churches do not grow in a vacuum. They exist within a particular society, whose culture influences the life of the church. Therefore, in order to understand the Naga churches, it is necessary to first understand the condition of the Naga society of the particular period in which the church existed.

2.2. *‘What were the major religious currents in the Naga churches during the period?’*

These religious currents may come in three forms: First, it could be a continuation of traditions inherited from denominational connections. Second, it could be a result of the influences from global religious movements like Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, Liberation Theology and so on. Finally, it could be an innovative initiative from within the local culture.

2.3. *‘What were the influences of the external environment, both religious and non-religious, on the churches in Nagaland?’* Here the interaction of the Naga churches with the

major historical currents in Nagaland, both religious and non-religious, were analysed. The aim was to understand how the churches' response to the challenges and needs in the environment influenced the course they took.

## **1.2. Literature review**

Historical writings on churches in Nagaland have a history of over a century. The first writings on Christianity in Nagaland were biographical works by foreign missionaries who had worked in Nagaland. The first was Mary Mead Clark's *A Corner in India* (1907). This work was a reminiscence of the Clarks' pioneering missionary work in the Naga Hills during 1876-1911. Her main purpose was to encourage 'young men and women' who might be interested to take up mission work with the kind of people she described.<sup>5</sup> The second was Narola Rivenburg's<sup>6</sup> *The Star of the Naga Hills* (1941). This work was basically a compendium of the missionary letters of her parents, Hattie and Sidney Rivenburg, with editorial touch to complete the story. The letters of the Rivenburgs were personal, written to their families in America, informing their whereabouts and achievements during their missionary tenure in the Naga Hills, 1885-1923. Therefore, they neither give a systematic historical account nor project the formation of the native churches. Another biographical work is *Mission to the Nagas* (2008) originally written by American Baptist missionary Bengt I Anderson (edited and published by C Wallu Walling).<sup>7</sup> Anderson was a resident missionary in the Naga Hills during 1936-1948. His writing is therefore a valuable source towards understanding the period leading up to the withdrawal of the American Baptist missionaries from Nagaland. However, it did not give much information on the native churches, as it was basically a memoir of Anderson's

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<sup>5</sup> MM Clark, *A Corner in India* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), ix.

<sup>6</sup> Narola Rivenburg was the daughter of American Baptist missionary couple, Sidney W Rivenburg and Hattie Rivenburg. She was born in Nagaland, and was given a Naga name, *Narola*, meaning 'flower'. She herself worked as a missionary in the Naga Hills for two years from 1908. Narola Rivenburg (ed.), *The Star of the Naga Hills* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1941), 79, 122.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, Bengt I. 'Mission to the Nagas' C Walu Walling (ed.), *Down the Memory Lane, Vol. 1. Impur: ABAM*, 2008.

own missionary experience. All these biographical works were originally intended to apprise the friends and supporters of the missionaries back home (in the United States) of their achievements. Thus, their focus was on the expansion of the mission field, rather than the native churches. Moreover, often native contributors were left unnamed, and their contributions lost in the narrative of the missionary's own contribution. Thus, the emergence of a vernacular Christian community in its historical context was overlooked in such narratives.

Since the 1960s, church historians in India have advocated the need to focus attention on the contributions of native Christians to Indian churches and missions.<sup>8</sup> This was further promoted by the Church History Association of India (CHAI), which in 1974 initiated a multi-volume work to write 'the history of Christianity in India in the context of Indian history.'<sup>9</sup> FS Downs (1983) applied this approach in his research on the churches in north-east India, including Nagaland. Downs was an American Baptist missionary who arrived as a missionary to north-east India in 1959, and started teaching in the Eastern Theological College (ETC), Jorhat, from 1961. It was here that he came in contact with students from various parts of north-east India. Taking their accounts as sources, he wrote a number of books on the history of Christianity in north-east India. Two of his main contributions were *The Mighty Works of God: A brief history of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India* (1971)<sup>10</sup> and *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspective* (1983).<sup>11</sup> Downs' pioneering contribution to the study of Naga church history is the shift towards a perspective of social history.<sup>12</sup> He considered the history of the church as 'an integral part of a larger process of change – political, social, economic,

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<sup>8</sup> Kaj Baago, 'Recent Studies of Christianity in India,' *Religion and Society*, Vol. 14 (1967), 63.

<sup>9</sup> CHAI, 'A Scheme for Comprehensive History of Christianity in India,' *ICHR*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (December 1974), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Downs, FS. *The Mighty Works of God: A brief history of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India, Mission Period 1836 -1950*. Guahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1971.

<sup>11</sup> Downs, Frederick S. *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspective*. Delhi: SPCK, Guahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1983.

<sup>12</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, 9.

cultural and religious'.<sup>13</sup> His works contributed much towards understanding the contribution of Christian mission to north-east Indian society. However, he did not explore the influence of culture on the churches in the region. Neither locally formed denominations (like the Nagaland Christian Revival Church) nor culturally influenced practices (like the Prayer Centres) in the Naga churches were explored.

All the above writings were by American Baptist missionaries, and can be categorized as that of foreign<sup>14</sup> missionary writings. The 1970s saw the emergence of historical writings on history of Christianity in Nagaland by Indian writers. The first breed of this new development is those writings which can be classified as historical writings by native Naga writers. Since the 1970s, several books on the history of Christianity in Nagaland were published both in vernacular languages as well as in English. The first of such work was *Nokinketer Mungchen* (1972) by L Kijung Ao, written in the Ao Naga language.<sup>15</sup> Kijung (or Kijungluba) had worked with the American Baptist missionaries and was the one with whom DeLano, the last American Baptist missionary to leave Nagaland, left the charge of the Naga mission. The first part of the book gives a description of the origin of the American Baptist mission and its early growth. The second part narrates the evangelistic efforts initiated by the Ao Baptist churches among the other Naga tribes.

Phuveyi Dozo's book, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga Tribe (India)* (1978),<sup>16</sup> is probably the first book on Naga churches by a Naga to be published in English. This book traces the introduction and dissemination of Christian faith among the Chakhesang Naga people. Dozo argued that the Christian faith has

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<sup>13</sup> Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Here, the term 'foreign' refers to those who were not Indians, or whose place of origin is not from the geographical confines of present day India.

<sup>15</sup> Ao, L Kijung. *Nokinketer Mungchen*. Impur: ABAM, 1972.

<sup>16</sup> Dozo, Phuveyi. *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga Tribe*. Guwahati: CLC, 1983.



brought positive changes into the life of the Chakhesang Naga, and in implication, he urges them to reach out to the ‘neighbouring people’ with the Christian message.<sup>17</sup>

Since then a number of others have also written on the history of Christianity in Nagaland. One of them is Nuklu Longkumer’s *The Growth of Baptist Churches among the Ao Naga* (1988).<sup>18</sup> It examines the ‘factors that led to the growth of the Ao Baptist churches.’<sup>19</sup> Longkumer argued for an indigenous nature of church growth showing how native agents were actively instrumental in facilitating the introduction and dissemination of Christian faith among the Ao Naga people. However, unlike the present study, he did not explore cultural factors influencing the growth of the church; rather, he argued for an ecclesiastical reason, that is, the mission mindedness of the Naga churches, as the reason for the growth of churches among the Ao Naga people.

Another book, also on the churches among the Ao Naga is Bendangyapang Ao’s *History of Christianity in Nagaland: The Ao Naga Tribal Christian Enterprise 1872-1972* (2002).<sup>20</sup> This book is a historical analyses of the mission initiative of Ao Naga churches among the other Naga tribes. It is a mission history that traces the evangelistic endeavour of the Ao Naga churches. Like in the case of Longkumer’s work discussed above, it argued for ecclesiastical reasons, rather than cultural reasons, for the growth of Christian mission.

Finally, Ezamo Murry’s *Introduction and the Growth of Christianity in Kyong (Lotha) Area of Nagaland* (2003)<sup>21</sup> deals with the introduction and dissemination of Christian faith among the Kyong Naga people. By his own admission, Murry’s book was

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<sup>17</sup> Dozo, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga Tribe*, vi-vii.

<sup>18</sup> Longkumer, Nuklu. *The Growth of Baptist Churches among the Ao Nagas*. Changtongya: Changtongya Baptist Church, 1988.

<sup>19</sup> Longkumer, *The Growth of Baptist Churches among the Ao Nagas*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ao, A Bendangyabang. *History of Christianity in Nagaland: The Ao Naga Tribal Christian Enterprise 1872-1972*. Bangalore: Shalom Ministry, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Murry, Ezamo. *Introduction and the Growth of Christianity in Kyong (Lotha) Area of Nagaland*. Jorhat: Lireni Murry, 2003.

a 'preliminary work',<sup>22</sup> a simple narrative presentation of the works of the early missionaries among the Kyong Naga people.

All these literature by Naga writers were publications of masters or doctoral study dissertations in theological colleges. A key observation regarding all of them is that they all dealt with churches of a single Naga tribe. This means that the complexities involved in the relationship between churches of the different tribes in Nagaland (as is done in the present study) have not been considered as a factor for change. Furthermore, they are all mission history, analysing the mission initiatives (primarily the evangelistic initiatives) of, either the foreign missionaries or native churches.

The 1970s also witnessed a number of Indian scholars who had in one way or the other associated with the Naga churches, contributing to the historical writings on Naga churches. These works can be classified as Indian academic writings. PT Philip's *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland* (1976)<sup>23</sup> is the first such work, and traces the growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland. A key difference in Philip's work compared to the literature noted above is that it covers the whole Naga tribes, instead of dealing with a single tribe (though, unlike the present study, he considered only the Baptist churches). He structured his book around the tribal Baptist church associations, discussing how each Naga tribes were evangelised and consequently how the Baptist associations were formed. Nevertheless, this work is primarily an institutional history focussing on the church organizations.

Joseph Puthenpurakal's *Baptist Mission in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective* (1984), is a Roman Catholic Father's perspective of Baptist mission history in Nagaland.<sup>24</sup> This book was written as an ecumenical initiative with the stated purpose to facilitate Baptist-Catholic dialogue in Nagaland. He posited that the

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<sup>22</sup> Murry, *Introduction and the Growth of Christianity in Kyong (Lotha) Area of Nagaland*, i.

<sup>23</sup> Philip, PT. *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*. Guahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Puthenpurakal, Joseph. *Baptist Missions in Nagaland* (Shillong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984).

Naga Baptists had inherited a misunderstood view of the Catholic Church from the American Baptist missionaries. To prove this point, he resorted to narrating a history of the American Baptist missionaries, analysing the ecumenical attitude of each of them.

Catholic Church history is largely neglected by most of the writers of the history of Christianity in Nagaland. David Syiemlieh's book, *A Brief history of the Catholic Church in Nagaland* (1990), fills this gap. It traces the beginning, growth and development of the Catholic churches in Nagaland.<sup>25</sup> It is a mission and institutional history, primarily focussing on the work of foreign missionaries like Emmanuel Bars, Hubert Marrochino, John Larrea and others, whose pioneering effort resulted in the establishment Catholic churches in Nagaland.

Two common features are observed in all the works discussed thus far: first, they focussed attention on the missionary period of Naga church history. Though some of them have their demarcated study period up to the 1970s, the post-missionary period was treated more or less like an end-note to state that Christian mission continued even after the missionary withdrawal. Syiemlieh's work on Naga Catholic churches covers the period up to the 1980s. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on the mission and ecclesiastical growth, which is the second common feature of the above noted literature. Their main focus is to trace the numerical and geographical expansion of the Christian faith. These writings are helpful to see the ecclesiastical growth and organization of churches in Nagaland. However, they do not address the interaction of the Naga churches with the cultural milieu of Nagaland and the subsequent formative developments of the Naga churches.

The earliest references to the interface between the Christian faith and Naga society were found in the works of colonial officials and ethnographers. In general, they portrayed

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<sup>25</sup> Syiemlieh, David. *A Brief history of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*. Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1990.

Christianity as a negative influence on the Naga culture. British official and ethnographer, JH Hutton (1909-35) opined that the Christian missionaries made the Naga people eat the ‘forbidden fruit’ of modernity, thus, instigating the demise of ancient customs and traditions.<sup>26</sup> Hutton’s view serves as an indicator of the shift in attitude among the British colonialists since the beginning of the twentieth century. Earlier, British official James Johnstone wrote with much positivity regarding missionary work in the Naga Hills.<sup>27</sup> But influenced by anthropological interest on ‘primitive’ tribes, Hutton, and later other colonial writers like JP Mills, Christoph von-Haimendorf and Verrier Elwin, treated the Naga people with a cultural protectionist attitude. Christian missionaries were mainly at the receiving end of their tirade, though not without justification. British official Mills (1918-26)<sup>28</sup> and Austrian anthropologist von-Haimendorf (1939),<sup>29</sup> who shared a military expedition to the easternmost part of the Naga territory in 1939, both accused Christian mission of the demise of traditional institutions like the *morung* and the feast of merits.<sup>30</sup> Verrier Elwin, a British anthropologist, who became the advisor on tribal affairs to the government of independent India also shared the conservationist attitude. He was of the view that Christian mission was responsible for the deterioration of traditional culture and encouraging the Naga people to despise their own culture.<sup>31</sup>

Naga scholars like Mar Pongener and Tezenlo Thong also followed the lead of the colonial writings in their analyses of the relation between Christian missionaries/mission and Naga traditional culture. In his *Morung Speaks* (2011),<sup>32</sup> Pongener critiqued the role

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<sup>26</sup> JH Hutton, *The Sema Nagas, second edn.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), vii-viii.

<sup>27</sup> James Johnstone, *My Experiences in Manipur and the Naga Hills* Page (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1896), 43.

<sup>28</sup> JP Mills’ ethnographic work on Naga society includes, *The Lotha Nagas* (London: Macmillan, 1922) and *The Rengma Nagas* (London: Macmillan & Co. Limited, 1937).

<sup>29</sup> Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf’s ethnographic work on Naga society includes, *The Naked Nagas* (London: Methuen, 1939) and *Return to the Naked Nagas: An Anthropologist’s view of Nagaland, 1936-1970* (London: John Murray, 1976).

<sup>30</sup> Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland* (Shillong: Research Department Advisor’s Secretariat, 1961), 78.

<sup>32</sup> Pongener, Mar. *Morung Speaks: Cultural Values and Elements for the Enrichment of Naga Christian Community*. Mokokchung: CTC & TDCC, 2011.

played by Christian mission in the demise of the *morung*, which was the traditional military and educational institution of Naga society. Tezenlo, in his *Progress and its Impact on the Nagas* (2014), argued that the ‘intrusion’ of the American missionaries has ‘resulted in the gradual demise of Naga culture.’<sup>33</sup> Thus, they argued that Christian mission influence has been instrumental in the demise of the traditional culture in Nagaland.

Some other Naga writers, on the other hand, focused on what they considered was a positive influence of Christian mission towards the Naga society. Naga sociologists, A Talitemjen Jamir and A Lanunungsang, in their *Naga Society and Culture* (2005) noted the key role played by Christian mission in the field of education in Nagaland.<sup>34</sup> Naga Church historian, Bendangyapang’s *Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change* (2004) examined the contribution of Christian mission towards social changes in Nagaland.<sup>35</sup> He argued Christian missionaries were instrumental in introducing social transformation in the Naga society through ‘civilizing’ programs like education, hygiene and literature. Keviyekielie Linyu’s *Christian Movements in Nagaland* (2004) examined the response of the Naga churches to the political crises in the region through the ‘Peace Mission’ initiative since the 1960s.<sup>36</sup> The book traces the history of the ‘Peace Mission’ initiative for the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) since the 1960s.

Assessing the existing literature that deals with the interface between the Christian faith and Naga culture, three observations can be made: first, they all deal with the colonial-missionary period (the only exception being Linyu’s *Christian movements in Nagaland*). Second, the Naga Christians, in their attitude towards their own culture, are

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<sup>33</sup> Thong, Tezenlo. *Progress and its Impact on the Nagas: A Clash of Worldviews*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Jamir, A Talitemjen and A Lanunungsang. *Naga Society and Culture*. Lumami: Nagaland University, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Ao, A Bendangyapang. *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change 1872-1972*. Bangalore: Shalom Ministry Publication, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Linyu, Keviyekielie. *Christian Movements in Nagaland*. Kohima: author, 2004.

portrayed as passive collaborator with their missionary handlers. The changing attitude of the native Christians and churches in Nagaland towards the native culture in the post-colonial period is left unexplored. Third, they all deal with the churches' influence on or contribution to society. Thus they are good resources to understand what changes Christian mission and churches have brought about in the Naga society. However, they did not attempt to see what changes the churches themselves had undergone in the light of these experiences in the Naga context. Thus, there is a lack of research on the formative influence of Naga culture on the Naga churches, which is the concern of this research.

Thus, it is clear from the above literature review that substantial research has already been done on the history of the Naga churches. There is also literature that deals with the changes Christian mission and churches effected on the Naga society. However, what is lacking is a historical study on how culture influenced the formative development of the Naga churches. This research is therefore an attempt to remedy this gap in scholarship.

### **1.3. Methodology**

Historical study analyses changes over a period of time. The tools for the analysis are defined by the perspective with which the historian approaches the study. This research rests on the understanding that the history of the churches should be appropriated within the framework of the culture in which they existed. Therefore it uses a cultural history framework to analyse the history of churches in Nagaland.

Most of the previous studies on the history of churches in Nagaland were done either from the perspective of the missionaries or of church growth. The emphasis of these studies was on mission method and internal growth. The question of how the cultural context of Nagaland influenced the contours of the history of churches in Nagaland has received little or no attention.

Cultural history 'is not characterized by a unity of method.'<sup>37</sup> British historian, Peter Burke, noted: 'Some cultural historians work intuitively... Some describe their work in terms of search for meaning; others focus on practices and representations. Some see their aim as essentially descriptive, others believe that cultural history, like political history, can and should be presented as a story.'<sup>38</sup> Burke, however, suggested a 'common ground' for all cultural historians, 'a concern with the symbolic and its interpretation.'<sup>39</sup> Symbolic or symbols here refers to 'artifacts' or 'performances' (or social behaviour) which has attained certain meaning in the society, either consciously or unconsciously. Cultural 'meanings, attitudes and values', Burke posited, are 'expressed or embodied' in 'symbolic forms' like 'performances [and] artifacts [sic]'.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the concern of the cultural historians is, to borrow some words from Calaresu et al's analysis of Burke's methodology, 'to retrieve the particular cultural codes underlying the acts.'<sup>41</sup> In his introduction to the third edition of his book, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, originally written in 1978, Burke clarified that '[t]he key terms "artifacts" [sic] and "performances" were intended to be understood in a wide sense; extending the notion of "artifact" [sic] to include such cultural constructs as the categories of sickness, or dirt, or gender, or politics, and widening the notion of "performance" to cover such culturally stereotyped forms of behaviour as feasting and violence.'<sup>42</sup> Informed by Burke's approach, this study explores the role of cultural factors like politics, gender, fear, violence and others in the formative development of the churches in Nagaland.

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<sup>37</sup> Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction* (NY: Routledge, 2012), 16. This lack of a definitive method has been a source of criticism against cultural history. Subsequently, the validity of cultural history as 'proper history' as against political or social history has been questioned in certain circle. James S Grubb, 'Review of *Varieties of Cultural History* by Peter Burke; *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* by Edward Muir' *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Spring 1999), 222.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, second edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 3.

<sup>39</sup> Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, third edn (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), xiii.

<sup>41</sup> Melissa Calaresu, Joan-Pau Rubies and Filippo de Vivo, *Exploring Cultural History: Essays in Honour of Peter Burke* (London: Ashgate, 2010), 23.

<sup>42</sup> Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 17.

A criticism against cultural history approach is the ‘indirect nature’ of the sources it employs.<sup>43</sup> The problem is related to the emphasis on symbolic acts like songs, dramas, festivals and such practices, which are taken as representative of the social reality. To what extent are they representations of the whole? One cannot claim that they are holistic reflections of the social reality. But this does not negate the distinct contribution made by the study of symbols in particular, and cultural history in general, towards ‘our view of history as a whole.’<sup>44</sup> Used together with other sources, like official records and reports, as done in this study, they provide a distinct dimension to our understanding of the historical process.

Cultural history refers to an approach whereby historical objects are examined using a cultural lens. This has to be distinguished from ‘history of culture’, which has ‘culture as the object of enquiry’.<sup>45</sup> Cultural history, on the other hand, is a cultural view of history. The transition from the former to the latter occurred gradually during the last 150 years,<sup>46</sup> resulting in an approach to examining historical object that is distinct from political, social or economic history.<sup>47</sup> This approach is not fixated with culture as the sole object, though analysis of the culture remains a key component, but focusses on examining cultural factors effecting historical change. What role did culture play in effecting change in the churches in Nagaland, is therefore, the focus of this study.

In the existing literature in the Naga context, the term culture is usually used to refer to the customs and traditions passed down from generation to generation.<sup>48</sup> Thus culture

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<sup>43</sup> Calaresu, Rubies and Vivo, *Exploring Cultural History*, 26.

<sup>44</sup> Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 128-29.

<sup>45</sup> Arcangeli, *Cultural History*, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Arcangeli, *Cultural History*, 2-3; Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory, second edn* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 177.

<sup>47</sup> Cultural history is sometimes considered as an attempt at ‘cutting across the traditional subdivisions of the discipline of history’ into political, social, economic, military and so on. Arcangeli, *Cultural History*, 16.

<sup>48</sup> See Jamir, A Talitemjen and A Lanunungsang. *Naga Society and Culture*. Lumami: Nagaland University, 2005; Pongener, Mar. *Morung Speaks: Cultural Values and Elements for the Enrichment of Naga Christian Community*. Mokokchung: CTC & TDCC, 2011.



was considered as ‘a distinct layer of the past, some kind of additional superstructure to the fundamentals of economic, social or political change.’<sup>49</sup> However, in this study, culture refers to the values<sup>50</sup> and customs<sup>51</sup> that govern the way of life of the people in a society. This broader understanding of culture in cultural history has been influenced by its encounter with cultural anthropology during the last thirty years.<sup>52</sup> As Burke, who played a key role in this encounter, noted, it resulted in a gradual shift in the understanding the term culture from a reference to ‘high culture’ to include ‘customs, values and a way of life.’<sup>53</sup> Some of these customs and values may have their roots in the past; others may be innovations. But what concerns cultural historians is their relevance to contemporary society, and how they affect economic, social and political processes of the time. This study is, therefore, not fixated to the analysis of the influence of the traditional culture, that which was passed down from the past, on the churches. Instead, it is concerned with how the ideas, values and customs that govern the social, political, economic and religious processes in the society influenced the churches in Nagaland.

Given the importance given to cultural factors influencing the ecclesiastical event, this research adopts a method that goes beyond the ecclesiastical domain to acquire data for the research. Most previous studies on Naga churches depend almost exclusively on ecclesiastical sources. This research uses ecclesiastical sources. But more than that, it also uses sources that give light to the political, social and economic environment of Nagaland during the study period. These sources, on the one hand, are necessary to understand the

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<sup>49</sup> Calaresu et al, *Exploring Cultural History*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> The term ‘value’ can be defined as ‘socially conditioned desire’ in a society. Mitchel, *A Dictionary of Social Sciences*, 237. It refers to the principles that govern the way of life in a society.

<sup>51</sup> The term ‘custom’ can be defined as the ‘established modes of thought and action.’ Mitchel, *A Dictionary of Social Sciences*, 48. It refers to an established way of behaving or a belief in a society that has developed over a period of time.

<sup>52</sup> Stanislao G Pugliese, ‘Review of *Varieties of Cultural History* by Peter Burke’ *H-Italy*, *H-Net Review* (August 1998) <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2227> (Accessed on 23 April 2019).

<sup>53</sup> Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 34.

historical context of the society; on the other hand, they are key to understand the interface of the church and society, as an alternative/supplement to the ecclesiastical sources.

In terms of method for collecting data, a mixture of archival research and interviews was used. Archival resources include the reports and records in ecclesiastical offices, mission centres, state libraries and government offices. For the interview, qualitative research method was used. The choice of qualitative method was informed by the nature of the methodology. Cultural history deals with ‘motives and meanings’ that historical agents gave to ‘whatever they were doing.’<sup>54</sup> Therefore it requires a method of data collection which allows the ‘agents’ or eyewitnesses to give their accounts in their own words and meanings.

The initial list of interviewees were located through reading of primary and secondary sources.<sup>55</sup> After every interview, I asked for suggestions of people whom I should interview (See Appendix C.2.a). So there was a snowball effect with more people being identified to be interviewed.<sup>56</sup> A balanced selection of interviewees representing various constituents or divisions is necessary to minimize bias and maximize validity.<sup>57</sup> Two criteria informed the selection of the interviewees: first, balancing the number of leaders and followers being interviewed. While the latter helped ascertain the popularity and effective dissemination of ideas (like clean election, temperance and others) into the various strata of the society; the former was necessary because the leaders were often the ones who were aware of the larger picture of the historical processes. Of the thirty interviewees, nine participated as followers in the event for which they were interviewed as eyewitnesses; seven were followers at the time of the occurrence, but now hold leadership position; and fourteen participated while in leadership position (See Oral

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<sup>54</sup> Arcangeli, *Cultural History*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Herbert J Rubin and Irene S Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995), 67.

<sup>56</sup> Nigel King and Christine Horrocks, *Interviews in Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2010), 34.

<sup>57</sup> Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 69.

Source Contributor's List). Second, denominational representation. In cases where the event being examined involved two or more Christian denominations, representative interviewees were taken from each of them to ensure that all sides of the argument were being heard.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire, aimed at facilitating the interviewees to narrate their experiences in their own words. On an average, the interviews lasted for about two hours. During the interviews, I used a recording device. After the initial greetings, I took informed consent from the interviewees to record the proceeding by explaining to them the goal of the research, and how I intend to use the recorded data.<sup>58</sup> This was done orally. None of the interviewee had any reservations either for recording the interview or to use the data in the research. Their willingness means that the issue of anonymising did not arise. Explaining why it is 'always best to use people's real names and details', Karen O'Reilly noted: '[I]t seems quite unethical to delete participants from the record to which they have happily contributed.'<sup>59</sup> Using mobile for recording, helped avoid any stress that could have been caused by having a device that was unfamiliar to the interviewee. After the interview, I transcribed the data within the next few days to ensure that it was done when the details were still fresh in my mind.<sup>60</sup> This process was aided by triangulating with the notes that I have taken in a notebook during the interview in which I noted my observations in terms of emerging issues as well my impression on the process.<sup>61</sup> The interviews were conducted either in English, Nagamese<sup>62</sup> or Ao Naga, all of which I speak and understand well.

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<sup>58</sup> Rose Wiles, *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 25.

<sup>59</sup> Karen O'Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2009), 62.

<sup>60</sup> L Hoek, 'Sorting Things Out: Organising and Interpreting Your Data' in N Konopinski (ed.), *Doing Anthropological Research* (NY: Routledge, 2014), 108.

<sup>61</sup> Erin Sahlstein Parcell and Katherine A Rafferty, 'Interviews, Recording and Transcribing' in Mike Allen (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Communication Research, vol. 1* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2017), 802.

<sup>62</sup> Nagamese is the lingua franca of Nagaland. The creole developed from Assamese over years of interaction between the Naga people and the people of Assam. BN Talukdar, 'Language Problem in North-

All interviews were conducted with consent and explanation of my research goal. I am a Naga Christian. Not only did I have access to the Naga churches and society, but I was also well aware of the cultural norms and the customary code of behaviour in the Naga society. Informed consent was taken from all the interviewees to use the data they provided in the writing of the research. Having carefully designed the research proposal, I discussed it with my supervisors before submitting it to the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies for approval and registration with the university. It was agreed after due consideration that this research does not involve more than minimal risk and does not involve people from vulnerable groups as defined by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics.

I adopted an analytical strategy that is cumulative. This strategy is informed by what is known as ‘Spiral approach to analyses’ in qualitative research, whereby data collection and analysis occur ‘almost simultaneously’.<sup>63</sup> This means that I did not have to wait until I had collected all the data to start the analysis. Through reflection and interpretation, I codified the data from the various sources into patterns of recurring themes.<sup>64</sup> This process was informed by the research question of identifying cultural factors affecting changes in the church. Thus, themes like politics, fear, divisions and others emerged in the process. Triangulating these emerging themes with secondary sources and findings of similar research helped identify an overall design for the research. This was helpful in identifying areas where further attention was needed (like in the case of identifying the need to explore the role of fear or tribal divisions in the life of Naga society and churches) and thus in the subsequent formulation of research questions.

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East Region’ in Mrinal Miri (ed.), *Linguistic Situation in North-East India, second edn* (Shillong: NEICSSR, 2003), 84.

<sup>63</sup> O’Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography*, 15.

<sup>64</sup> O’Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography*, 35.

Historians, noted Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, ‘are prisoners of sources that can never be fully reliable.’<sup>65</sup> Sources are constructs of people. They are to a large extent already an interpretation. Therefore establishing the reliability of the source is notoriously elusive. But this does not preclude the judicious use of the sources. In order to ascertain reliability, each source was subjected to a critical examination to detect interpretative elements. First, every source, both oral and written, was subjected to an examination of the context and the purpose for which it was produced. Second, the data of every source was compared and contrasted with information from other primary and secondary sources. Third, in cases where there was contradiction between two sources, either a third source (if present) was consulted or preference was given to a local source.

As a theological educator with interest in church history, I have been deeply involved in the affairs of the Naga society and church, even though currently I live and work in Bangalore, south India. I am also concerned with learning how churches can best serve the society. I understand as a Naga Christian myself my analyses of the churches in Nagaland are susceptible to insider’s bias. A good number of the Nagas live in diaspora. I have been one of them since 2011. . Thus, though an insider, being a Naga in diaspora helped me to see things which I would have taken for granted, and thus keeping the familiar strange.<sup>66</sup> It helped me to maintain certain level of detachment. Moreover, through a triangulation of data from various sources, I believe I was able to maximise reliability and fairly objective analyses of the data. Data triangulation involved gathering data by employing a ‘variety of sampling strategy’ as well as a ‘variety of people’.<sup>67</sup> This helps enhanced reliability by showing points of convergence across various strategies and

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<sup>65</sup> Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Method* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>66</sup> Netta Avineri, *Research Methods for Language Teaching: Inquiry, Process, and Synthesis* (London: Palgrave, 2017), 123.

<sup>67</sup> Alan Bryman, ‘Triangulation’ in Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman and Tim Futing Liao (eds) *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods, Vol. 3* (Thousand Oaks, CA: 2004), 1142.

sources.<sup>68</sup> By comparing and contrasting data derived from archival materials and multiple interviews, I believe I was able to make a fair assessment of the reliability of the information presented.

#### **1.4. Sources**

Good and reliable primary sources are indispensable for proper critical research. Two types of primary sources were utilised:

First, written sources: These include records and reports in ecclesiastical as well as government offices. For ecclesiastical events before 1947, most of the records and reports (predominantly of foreign missionaries) are housed in the archive of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI), Guwahati. After 1947, the records at the archives of Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), the Bishop's House, Kohima and other Christian denomination headquarters were utilised as the main primary sources. For non-ecclesiastical matters, primary sources are available in the Indian parliament archive, New Delhi, Nagaland state library, Kohima, and official government websites. These sources were accessed either by visits to the archives or through the Right to Information (RTI) facility provided by the government of India.

Apart from the records and reports some biographical writings are also available. Three of them are by American Baptist missionaries: Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India*; Narola Rivenburg, *The Stars of the Naga Hills* and Bengt I Anderson, *Mission to the Nagas*. The other two are on the revival movements: Rikum Ao, *1952 nungi Naga Revival* (Naga Revival from 1952) and MI Luen, *The Fire of Revival*. Rikum and Luen were the main proponents of the 1952 and 1976 revivals respectively. A qualification however needs to be made concerning these sources. In this kind of work, there is the possibility of exaggeration of achievements and omission of setbacks and controversies.

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<sup>68</sup> Deborah K Padget, *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research: Challenges and Rewards* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), 97-8.

Autobiography, Leigh Gilmore stated, ‘offers writers the opportunity to promote themselves as representative subjects, that is, as subjects who stand for others.’ This act of ‘representativeness’, he said, put the writer in a certain state of volatility: the writer can be tempted to elevate the account ‘into an expansive sympathetic endeavour’ in which ‘knowing’ or ‘hearing’ the experience of ‘others’ allows them to ‘imagine’ themselves as the one who experienced it.<sup>69</sup> Hence, it is necessary to use them with caution, considering the intention for which they were written.

Another genre of literature used is the theological treatise of Naga Christians. Most of them were written by theologically trained Naga Christians, and deal with various issues like mission, identity and nationalism. Besides, popular songs and slogans<sup>70</sup> produced in Nagaland were also examined, assessing their relation to Naga Christians and to Christian faith. These resources were used in this research as representative of the period in which they were produced.

Second, oral sources: representative eyewitnesses of movements like the revivals, ‘Peace Mission’, temperance and political movements were interviewed. In addition, key Naga Christian leaders were also interviewed. These leaders include Naga Christian leaders who have contributed either through literature or practical work towards the discussion and development of the various aspects of the Naga churches.

A qualification needs to be made even for the usage of oral sources. Two factors can influence the oral recollection of the event: (i) the interest of the interviewee;<sup>71</sup> and (ii) the need of giving a coherent account.<sup>72</sup> Thus, a comparative evaluation along with

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<sup>69</sup> Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>70</sup> According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary a slogan refers to ‘a word or phrase used to express a characteristic position or stand or a goal to be achieved.’ ‘Slogan’ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slogan> (Accessed on 12 April 2019). This study makes references to slogans like ‘Nagaland for Christ’ and ‘Shed No More Blood’, which were statements made by churches, political groups or civil societies to declare a position they have taken in regard to certain issue in the Naga society.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Richard Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History, second edn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 131.

<sup>72</sup> Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985), 4-5.

other sources was done before integrating the information provided by them into the account.

A large number of secondary sources were also utilised in writing this thesis. These include writings by historians, political activists, anthropologists and sociologists. These resources were utilised to supplement the findings through the primary sources.

Local newspapers were generously used by church leaders, political activists as well as the general public to express opinions on historical and current events in Nagaland. Besides they give extensive coverage of both secular and religious events in Nagaland. This research therefore made extensive use of the local newspapers, especially *Nagaland Post*, *Morung Express* and *Eastern Mirror*, all published from Dimapur, Nagaland. Apart from these local papers, regional news depository, *The Keesing's Record of World Event*, and national weekly, *Economic and Political Weekly*, were also utilised.

### **1.5. Scope**

This research is a study of the churches in Nagaland. The study of the church can be approached in various ways. It can be approached as an ecclesiological exercise. Bendangjungshi's *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context: Towards a Liberating Ecclesiology* (2012) is one such work on Naga churches. This can also be approached as missiological study. Donald McGavran's 'Church Growth' principle has been widely adopted to assess Naga Churches by researchers like Phillips (1976), Dozo (1983) and Longkumer (1988).

This research is, however, a historical study. It is historical in that it traces the history of the churches in Nagaland. It falls within the sub-discipline of church history. Church history encompasses the study of the history of both the beliefs and practices of the church. While the first involves the study of the dogma of the church, the second deals



with ‘the intersection of the church with the society’.<sup>73</sup> This research falls under the latter category.

A limitation of this research is that it is concerned only with the Naga churches in the geographical confines of the Indian state of Nagaland. There are Naga churches in various Naga inhabited areas of the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur, and in Myanmar. While some of the issues discussed here have relevance to those Naga churches, the churches examined in this research are only those that are under the Indian state of Nagaland.

### **1.6. Justification**

Sebastian Kim in his *The Future Shape of Christianity from an Asian Perspective* (2007) speaks of the need to study Christian movement in Asia not only in terms of numerical growth and geographical expansion, but also in terms of the ‘*identity and mission* of the church.’<sup>74</sup> He made this comment while reflecting on Philip Jenkins’ observation of the demographic shift of the centre of Christianity to the global south.<sup>75</sup> In the light of this demographic shift, Kim saw the need for understanding the nature of the churches in the global south as paramount to understanding global Christianity. This research can contribute to the discussion on the study of churches in the global south.

Since the later part of the nineteenth century, the rise of nationalism and the looming approach of the end of western colonialism<sup>76</sup>, the concern of native Christians, missionaries and mission scholars was how best to make the transition from ‘missionary church’ to ‘vernacular church’.<sup>77</sup> It was a missiological concern. Decades after this

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<sup>73</sup> James E Bradley, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 6.

<sup>74</sup> Sebastian CH Kim, ‘The Future Shape of Christianity from an Asian Perspective’ in Frans Wijzen and Robert Schreiter (eds), *Global Christianity: Contested Claims* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2007), 69.

<sup>75</sup> Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of global Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Colonialism, as used in this study, refers to the practice of one nation exercising authority over another.

<sup>77</sup> Houghton, Graham. *The Impoverishment of Dependency: The History of the Protestant Churches in Madras, 1870-1920*. Madras: CLS, 1983; Conn, Harvie M ‘Indigenization’ in A Scott et al (eds). *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. 481-482.

transition was effected, today, it is also a historical interest. How was the transition made? How did the church respond to the changing environment? Like most former western colonies, the first few decades after 1947 were the transition period for both the Naga society and the churches. This research therefore will contribute to the discussion on the transition from ‘missionary’ to ‘vernacular’ church.

In spite of its significance, the post-1947 period is greatly neglected in the historical study on Naga churches (see Literature Review in section 1.2). One reason could be the relatively recent nature of the research. Thus, in dealing with this significant, but neglected period, this research hopes to contribute to broadening the understanding of the Naga churches.

This research can be a valuable tool to help the Naga churches in self-evaluation. History, says Cantor and Schneider, ‘informs and inspires’.<sup>78</sup> History can play a reformatory role. This research can help the Naga churches to take a retrospective reflection, thereby, hopefully spurring reformatory actions among the Naga churches.

### **1.7. Chapter preview**

Chapter One introduces the research, its purpose and limitation, and the methodology used in the research. Chapter Two discusses the key cultural features of the Naga society so as to understand the cultural milieu in which the churches in Nagaland existed.

For systematic and in-depth analyses, the study period under consideration, that is 1947 onwards, is divided into three periods, each being considered in a chapter. Chapter Three deals with the first period, 1947 to 1963. It begins with the year of India’s independence, which has large-scale mission and ecclesiastical ramifications in Nagaland. The period also saw the beginning of an intensive Naga nationalist movement and violent conflicts as a result. The conflict situation means that social life was disrupted

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<sup>78</sup> Norman F Cantor and Richard I Schneider, *How to Study History* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1967), 3.  
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and economic development stalled. The chapter deals with the response of the Naga churches to this context.

Chapter Four deals with the second period, 1964 to 1989. It begins with the inauguration of Nagaland as the sixteenth state of India. However, many of the Naga nationalists refused to accept this statehood, and so, the political crises continued. The ensuing instability bred corruption, division and moral decay in the Naga society. The chapter deals with the response of the Naga churches to this condition in the society.

Chapter Five deals with the third period, 1990-2017. The year 1990 is chosen keeping in mind the passing of the Nagaland Liquor Prohibition Bill that year, which marked a new paradigm in the way the civil societies, including the churches, began to play reformative roles in the society. Moreover, it marked the beginning of the decade, the 1990s, in which the Government of India made a paradigm shift in their policy towards the Naga political issue by initiating ‘unconditional’ dialogue. How the Naga churches responded to this context is the concern of this chapter.

Chapter Six summarizes and holds together the various issues discussed in the preceding chapters. It is intended to bring out an overall assessment of how Naga churches have grown over the study period. It also enumerates the contribution of this research on historical study of churches in Nagaland. It also suggests further avenues for researches on church history in Nagaland as well as methodological consideration for church history in similar context.



## Chapter Two

### The Nagas: A Segmentary Society

The term ‘Naga’ is used to refer to the people group, numbering about two million,<sup>1</sup> presently residing in the four Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland, and Sagaing and Kachin states of Myanmar (see Appendix two). It consists of a conglomeration of about forty tribes, each speaking different languages, but bound together by similar culture and geographical location.<sup>2</sup> Each of these tribes maintains a strong sense of autonomy and distinctiveness from the other Naga tribes, though when taken in relation to other people groups, they all subscribe to the collective Naga identity. Collective identity<sup>3</sup> refers to a shared sense of ‘oneness’ or ‘we-ness’ shared by a group, usually in contrast to a set of ‘others’.<sup>4</sup> This sense of “we-ness” enables ‘the possibility of collective action in pursuit of common interests.’<sup>5</sup> However, in societies, where sub-groups exist, there is the possibility that conflicts could arise between the sub-groups, leading to fragmentation and the creation of ‘we’ and ‘they’ within.<sup>6</sup> A sense of ‘we-ness’ characterises the various Naga sub-tribes (sub-groups) as they ordinarily relate with each other in the wider society. However, fragmentation and conflicts exist underneath this surface level sense of ‘we-ness’ across the various Naga sub-tribes. Thus, Naga society

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<sup>1</sup> As per details from *Census of India 2011*, Nagaland has population of 19.79 Lakhs (i.e., 1.979 million). ‘Census of India 2011.’

<sup>2</sup> Nagaland Board of School Education, *Nagaland, third edn* (Kohima: NBSE, 1994, 2007), 1.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘Identity’ can be examined at three levels: personal, social and collective. First, personal identity relates ‘to one’s individual perception of oneself’. Second, social identity relates to ‘one’s individual identity based on group membership.’ Jenny McGill, *Religious Identity and Cultural Negotiation: Toward a Theology of Christian Identity in Migration* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 17. Third, collective identity relates to a group’s identification of oneness or we-ness. In this study, unless indicated otherwise, the term ‘identity’ is used in the third sense, that is, collective identity.

<sup>4</sup> D Snow, ‘Collective Identity and Expressive Forms’ (2001) *UC Irvine: Center for the Study of Democracy* <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7b> (Accessed on 18 April 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Snow, ‘Collective Identity and Expressive Forms.’

<sup>6</sup> Patrick G Coy and Lynne M. Woehrle (eds), *Social Conflicts and Collective Identity* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 5.

consists of a number of segments within the larger whole, united at one level, yet divided at another level. This description aptly characterises a Segmentary society.

The term segmentary society was coined by French sociologist, Emile Durkheim in his seminal work *The Division of Labour in Society*, in which he discussed the evolution of society from a state of ‘mechanical solidarity’ to ‘organic solidarity’. While the former refers to the traditional societies where there is homogeneity of individuals; the later developed or evolved as the society became more complex and became characterised by the divisions of labour and interdependence. A segmentary society represents the social type marked by the mechanical solidarity, and consists of segments of ‘small society’ within the larger one, each with ‘its own special regulatory organs.’<sup>7</sup> Durkheim’s understanding was from a strictly evolutionary manner, and predicted ‘the progressive disappearance of the segmentary organization.’<sup>8</sup> Thus, looking through his evolutionary lenses, Durkheim saw segmentary society as a primitive type, which in future would be replaced by a more progressive one.

However, Durkheim’s evolutionary view of segmentary society has been challenged by other scholars. Citing examples of segmentary societies in Africa and Asia, Christian Sigrist argues that these societies ‘continue to function according to their structural principles even if they are juristically and administratively integrated into a colonial or post-colonial state.’<sup>9</sup> Naga society can be considered as one such society, which, in spite of its integration, first, into British India, and then into independent India, continues to function under principles of segmentary society.

In 1956, Aidan W Southall, in his monograph on *Alur Society*, built on the foundation laid by Durkheim and further formulated the concept of segmentary society.

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<sup>7</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. WD Halls (NY: Free Press, 2014), 174.

<sup>8</sup> Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 174.

<sup>9</sup> Christian Sigrist, ‘Segmentary Societies: The Evolution and Actual Relevance of an Interdisciplinary Conception’ *Difference and Integration*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2004), 15.

Southall spoke of segmentary society as one in which the various segments in the society are ‘tied together at one level’ by their opposition to ‘adjacent unrelated group’, but are in constant opposition with each other at another level.<sup>10</sup> Three key features of segmentary society can be drawn from this definition: First, autonomy of the segments: segmentary societies are made up of family, clan or village segments. Each of these segments is largely autonomous. Second, unity of the whole: the segments within the segmentary society recognizes their cultural and historic affinity with each other, and therefore exhibits solidarity and unity at a certain level. Third, collective opposition against the others: the segments within the segmentary society share a common opposition against other unrelated people groups. Taking these characteristics as the analytical framework, I discuss the nature of the Naga society in this chapter. This chapter, however, restrain from detailed discussion on the post-1947 period, so as to reserve it to be done in the appropriate chapters. Nevertheless, whenever possible, a brief note is made of how the particular cultural practice is practised even today, followed by an indication of the section (in chapter 3, 4 & 5) where it is discussed in detail.

### **2.1. Independent and Autonomy**

A distinctive feature of the Naga society was its love for freedom, a quest for which rang ostensibly throughout its history. The desire to be independent was to such an extent that every village maintained its own autonomy, a village state, independent and self-governing.

How did this system of independent village states originate? According to tradition, the Naga people had a common ancestry. Their ancestors lived in an ancient village, but ‘as the population increased, they spread to various places establishing villages all over the Naga Hills.’<sup>11</sup> These early ancestors had an autochthonous origin. There are two

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<sup>10</sup> Aidan William Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination* (Munster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 260.

<sup>11</sup> Interview of L Temjen Jamir, Tuli, 23 December 2015.

prominent traditions on the autochthonous origin of the Naga people: *Chungliyimti*<sup>12</sup> and *Kezakenoma*<sup>13</sup> traditions. While the former narrates that the Naga people emerged from the six stones at the village of Chungliyimti,<sup>14</sup> the latter is of the view that the Naga ancestors emerged out of a hole in the earth near the miraculous stone at Kezakenoma.<sup>15</sup> The autochthonous traditions probably point to the beginning of Naga civilization. It is symbolic of a society which at some point of time began to think about who they were and where they came from. Chungliyimti and Kezakhenoma probably were either the place of this enlightenment, or the farthest to which their memory could take them when people began to entertain such thoughts.<sup>16</sup> The name of the Ao Naga tribe bears testimony to the migration of the Naga people from their ancestral village to various places. Tradition has it that the Ao Naga tribe was called ‘Ao’, meaning ‘those who went away’ because they moved away from the other tribes, by crossing the Dikhu river.<sup>17</sup>

Research by modern scholars points to several waves of migration resulting in various tribal settlements. As early as the 1920s, two schools of thought dominated the

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<sup>12</sup> This tradition was held by the Ao Naga.

<sup>13</sup> This tradition was held by Naga tribes like Angami, Kyong, Sema and Rengma.

<sup>14</sup> Out of the six, three of the stones were shaped as male genitals, while the others were shaped as female genitals.

<sup>15</sup> JP Mills, *The Lotha Nagas* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 1.

<sup>16</sup> A Talitemjen Jamir and A Lanunungsang, *Naga Society and Culture* (Lumami: Nagaland University, 2005), 294.

<sup>17</sup> The researcher was told about this tradition by Naga elders during his childhood. Migration for the purpose of establishing new villages was a common practice among the Naga tribes. Each Naga village can point to another village from which their forefathers came to establish their present village. Migration also occurred during the colonial period, especially among the Sumi Naga tribe. In the early twentieth century, many Sumi Naga migrated to south-western Nagaland, around the present-day Dimapur district, and established villages. ‘Migration History and Ethnographic Sketch of the Sumi Nagas’ [https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/223769/7/07\\_chapter%202.pdf](https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/223769/7/07_chapter%202.pdf). What is different about this particular Sumi Naga migration was that, instead of establishing villages in a location near the parent village (which was usually the case), they migrated from central Nagaland to south-western Nagaland, even crossing over Lotha and Angami inhabited areas. It was not only among the Naga people, but migration story abounds among the various people groups in north-east India. For instance, the Garos locate their place of origin in Tibet, from where they migrated to the Brahmaputra Valley, stopping at various places on the way. The Mikirs narrate how they resolved to move down and place themselves under the protection of the Ahom government after they were habitually harassed by warring Khasi chiefs. These Migration stories in north-east India, noted Jelle Wouters, reveal a process of ‘fissioning, fusing and the incorporation of new entrants’ which had constantly altered the ‘demographic and social composition’ in the region. Jelle JP Wouters, ‘Keeping the Hill Tribes at Bay: A critique from India’s Northeast of James C. Scott’s paradigm of state evasion’ *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 39 (2012), 51.



migratory origin of the Naga people. The first school argued for an origin from north-west China. From there, they migrated to occupy Myanmar and Siam (Thailand). However, pressure from those behind, probably by the kuki-Lushai-Chin<sup>18</sup> population who followed them, caused the Naga people to turn aside from the large valleys and enter the present Naga Hills.<sup>19</sup> The second school of thought gave them a southern origin. This argument was based on the close cultural affinity of the Naga people with south-east Asian inhabitants like the Dyaks and Koyans of Borneo, the Battak of Sumatra, the tribes in Formosa and the Igorots in Philippines.<sup>20</sup> However, it can be noted that these theories are inconclusive due to lack of archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, that Naga people migrated to their present habitat from china-mongolia region via Thailand-Myanmar had come to be used to argue for Naga distinctiveness in nationalist debate since the mid-twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

Once settled in the land, the various Naga villages did not try to integrate themselves into a political unit. Instead, each village was an autonomous independent unit. Thus, the traditional Naga society was a conglomeration of isolated and autonomous village states.

### **2.1.1. The village**

‘Which village are you from?’ This is one of the first questions Naga people usually ask one another when making new acquaintances. The village that one belongs to is a key identity marker for a Naga.

The village, traditionally, was an autonomous unit governed by a chief or a council. Hereditary monarchy was practised among the Konyak and Sumi Naga tribes. Among the

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Fuchs, *The Aboriginal Tribes of India, second edn* (New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 1973, 1982), 34.

<sup>19</sup> LW Shakespear, *The Assam Rifles, reprinted* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1977), 14.

<sup>20</sup> Shakespear, *The Assam Rifles*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Marion Wettstein, ‘Origin and Migration Myths in the Rhetoric of Naga Independence and Collective Identity’ in Toni Huber and Stuart Blackburn (eds), *Origins and Migrations in the Extended Eastern Himalayas* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 213.

Konyak Naga, the king, called as *Angh* or *Wang*, was considered next to god, and his words were law.<sup>22</sup> Among the Sumi Naga, the chief was the founder, owner and ruler of the village.<sup>23</sup> Democratic form of government was found among the rest of the Naga tribes. In this form of government, the *tatar* or village council facilitated the affairs of the village. Normally, the oldest man of the clan was nominated to represent the clan in the council.<sup>24</sup> But in some cases, like that of the Angami Naga, leadership positions were often given based on individual abilities like bravery in war or diplomatic and oratory skills.<sup>25</sup>

The village council continues to be a key institution in Naga society even today. It has been recognized by the Government of Nagaland through the 'Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act, 1978,' which allows it to maintain its characteristic as the representative council of the villagers:

A Village Council shall consist of members, chosen by villagers in accordance with the prevailing customary practices and usages, the same being approved by the State Government, provided that hereditary village Chiefs, GBs [*Gaon Bora*, meaning, 'village elder'] and Angs shall be ex-officio members of such Council and shall have voting right.<sup>26</sup>

Through this Act, the village council is endowed with legal and administrative authority over the village jurisdiction. Decisions of the council is considered binding, and every member of the village has to abide by it, failure of which results in punitive actions like fines, excommunication and even corporal punishment.

The social life in the Naga village was governed by a moral-ethical principle, called *sobaliba* in Ao Naga, *Akhuaye* in Sumi Naga, *Kenyu* in Angami Naga, and so on. The basic principle of this life virtue was to live for the best of the community. Thus, it

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<sup>22</sup> L Metjen Konyak, *The Socio-cultural and Political Significance of the Monarchical System of the Konyak Nagas* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Veprari Epao, *From Naga Animism to Christianity* (New Delhi: Author, 1993), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Neivetso Venuh, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), 21.

<sup>25</sup> Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1974), 15.

<sup>26</sup> 'Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act, 1978.'

promoted a principle of corporate living. Individual concerns were secondary; rather, the best for the community defined the individual life and behaviour.<sup>27</sup> This commitment of the Naga people to the community was based on the idea that the community was the custodian of the individual's security and safety.<sup>28</sup> In the olden days, with dangers from both men and nature lurking all around, community survival was the only means of survival for the individuals. To live contrary to the principles of *sobaliba* was considered inhuman; thus, the common Ao Naga maxim for anti-socials, *nisung masu*, meaning 'not human'. Thus every Naga strived to be found acceptable and useful for the community. Consequently, the society's praise and blame (shame) were driving forces that regulated the Naga communitarian culture, where every member of the community strived to attain the highest virtue in the community as person of *sobaliba*.<sup>29</sup>

There was also room for individual expression and growth in the Naga society. But this social mobility was possible only in relation to the person's service to the community. As the *sobaliba* entails, the individual's wealth and prowess has no significance unless attested to by the community. Therefore the wealthy gave feasts, called the 'Feast of Merits' through which the person was given social recognition for his wealth by the community.<sup>30</sup> The Feast of Merit was, on the one hand, an act of generosity by the rich; while, on the other hand, it was also a case of climbing the ladder of social recognition. It involved a series of three to five different kinds of feasts, in a rising scale of importance and significance, which finally climaxed with the sacrifice of the Mithun. Each feast entitled the feast giver to certain social distinctions, not only for himself, but also for his family and clans too. Those with strength and courage indulged in maintaining the

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<sup>27</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context: Towards a Liberating Ecclesiology* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), 43.

<sup>28</sup> Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-economic and Political Transformation and the Future* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1986), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context*, 120.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph S. Thong and Phanenmo Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture* (Kottayam: Society of Naga Student's Welfare, 2011), 137.

security and military pride of the village. This was mainly done through the practice of headhunting raids.<sup>31</sup> Those who are credited with one or more heads were treated with respect and honour in the society. They were also conferred the right to wear certain dresses and ornaments which were not entitled to others.<sup>32</sup> In the course of time, the feast of merit and headhunting became the yardstick to measure the social significance of an individual in the Naga society.

This communitarian culture engrained a strong sense of belongingness to and identification with one's own village on the individual Naga. Even today, though many Naga have relocated themselves from their ancestral village for various reasons (like education, job and others), they still maintain a strong sense of identification with the village of their origin.<sup>33</sup>

### **2.1.2. The tribes**

A Naga tribe consists of number of villages that speak one or more common dialects, and which were traditionally confined to a certain geographical area (see Appendix 2).

Linguistic differences are one of the key distinguishing features among these tribes. Each Naga tribe speaks a distinct language, very different from that spoken by the other Naga tribes. Some tribes, however, speak a number of dialects. For instance, the Ao Naga people speak *chungli* and *mungsen* dialects, which are also very different from each other.

Each Naga tribe also were traditionally confined to certain geographical locations: Angami Naga in the south-west, Ao Naga in the west, Konyak Naga in the north, and so

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<sup>31</sup> Tradition has it that the Naga people learned the practice of head hunting from the Ants. The ants and the lizard had a mortal fight, which the ant won. The victorious ants chopped off the head of the lizard and went about a victorious procession. Seeing this, people also did the same to their enemies. Bendangyapang Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change* (Bangalore: Shalom Ministry, 2004), 38; J.P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1973), 369.

<sup>32</sup> Thong and Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> The researcher was not born in his ancestral village, Merangkong. He also did not lived in this village throughout his life. Nevertheless, in his conversation with other Naga, he always indentify himself as 'Merangkong nunger', meaning, 'a citizen of Merangkong'.

on. This ancestral tribal land division has been utilized in present days to demarcate the region into districts, sub-divisions and other such administrative units.

In the traditional Naga society, villages belonging to a single tribe had comparatively more contact with each other, than with villages of other tribes due to their geographical affinity. However, there is no evidence of any political or social associations of villages belonging to the same tribe coming together to show solidarity of any kind. There was no Angami Naga association, Ao Naga association, Sumi Naga association or any such organizations that represent a particular Naga tribe. Rather, individual Naga identified himself or herself only with his or her own village.

The earliest instance, whereby the individual Naga tribes were recognised and institutionalised, was in the formation of tribal church associations. The first such association was the Ao Baptist Arogo Mungdang (ABAM; Ao Baptist Church Council) formed in 1897.<sup>34</sup> However, it has to be noted that till the 1940s, it was not only for the Ao Naga Baptist churches, but for all Baptist churches in north and eastern Nagaland. The second association was the Angami Baptist Church Association formed in 1912. This also was for all Baptist churches in southern Nagaland.<sup>35</sup> However, beginning from the 1920s, separate Baptist church associations for each Naga tribe began to be established. The first two were the Kyong Naga Baptist Church Association and Sumi Naga Baptist Church Association formed in 1923<sup>36</sup> and 1929<sup>37</sup> respectively. During the period 1940s-50s, the rest of the Naga tribes got their own Baptist church associations, as shown in the table below:

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<sup>34</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity: Nagaland Baptist Church Council Celebrates Platinum Jubilee, 1937-2012* (Kohima: NBCC, 2012), 58.

<sup>35</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 92.

<sup>37</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 116.

<b>Sub-tribal associations</b>	<b>Formation of Association</b>
Sangtam Baptists	1946
Chang Baptists	1949
Konyak Baptists	1951
Phom Baptists	1953
Rengma Baptists	1950
Chakhesang Baptists	1950
Zelianrong Baptists	1953
Kuki Baptists	1953
Yimchunger Baptists	1959
Pochury Baptists	1958

**Table 1: Younger church organizations<sup>38</sup>**

This formation of Baptist church associations of the various Naga tribes was necessitated by linguistic and geographical challenges. In the process, it institutionalized tribal identity among the Naga tribes for the first time.

Early Naga history is shrouded with much inter-village rivalry and warfare. However, tribalism, as inter-tribe conflicts in Nagaland is usually called, did not have a history before the 1960s. The first instance of tribalism-fuelled conflict occurred in a leadership struggle in the Naga Nationalist council (NNC) in 1968 (discussed in section 4.1). However, in recent years, tribalism has become the key factor of division in the Naga society. It has been the root cause of much political and social divisions in the Naga society, resulting in communal conflicts and bloodshed. Recent years have seen a number of inter-tribal conflicts like the Konyak-Chang, Yimchunger-Tikhir and Kuki-Zeme conflicts resulting in loss of property and life (discussed in section 5.1). Factionalism among the Naga nationalists groups, which has caused much conflicts and bloodshed in Nagaland also has its root in inter-tribal rivalry among the Naga tribes (discussed in section 4.1).

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<sup>38</sup> Compiled from NBCC. *One New Humanity*.

## 2.2. Collective consciousness, unity and Naganess

‘The time had not yet arrived to say I am a Naga,’ wrote Ben Wati in his autobiographical work about life in Nagaland during 1920 to 1935.<sup>39</sup> This statement reflects the state of the Naga people till the early part of the twentieth century. Until then, there was no such sense of collective Naga identity.

British Colonialization and Christian mission work in the region contributed much in fostering a sense of collective consciousness among the Naga people. Both the colonizers and missionaries treated the Naga people as a single people group. Thus, it was during the colonial period that, for the first time, a sense of oneness emerged in the Naga context. The setting up of the Naga club, Naga National Council, the Heraka movement and relations with the ‘non-Naga other’ also contributed to the construction of a sense of unity.

The isolated existence of the Naga people was disrupted with the colonialization of the region by British India through a gradual process that started in the early nineteenth century. The British colonization of the Naga area started rather inconspicuously through the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo between the British East Indian Company and the Burmese at the end of the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826). The British were dragged into this war at the request of the Ahom rulers of Assam to protect them from the Burmese invasion. With the defeat of the Burmese in 1826, the British became the virtual master of Assam, recognised by the Treaty of Yandabo.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the area to the Burmese border was conceded as British territory. British colonial officer, Alexander Mackenzie, writing of events in 1837 said: ‘In those days we considered all upon this frontier that was not Burmese to be actual British territory.’<sup>41</sup> This included not only the Ahom territory,

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<sup>39</sup> I Ben Wati, *My Early Years in Nagaland, 1920-1935*, trans. *Impur Chanu* by Chubatula Aier (Guwahati: CBCNEI, 2008), 41.

<sup>40</sup> A Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1884), 4; Chandrika Singh, *Naga Politics: A Critical Account* (New Delhi: Mittal, 2004), 25.

<sup>41</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 88.

but also the whole of the Naga Hills, which lay in between the Ahom and the Burmese territory. Thus, unknown to the Naga people, their ancestral land became the Queen's land.

Formal annexation of the Naga territory into British India occurred in 1866 with the establishment of a British outpost at Samagoodting (present Chumukedima) in southern Nagaland.<sup>42</sup> The British colonization of Naga area can be divided into three stages. The first stage, from 1839 to 1850, involved military punitive expeditions against the raiding Naga villages.<sup>43</sup> During this period, the British and the Naga villages found themselves in an endless cycle of raiding each other. Much to the dislike of the British, they were rapidly gaining the unwanted title of 'a superior class of looters and murderers.'<sup>44</sup> Thus, in the light of the ineffectiveness of these punitive expeditions, the British adopted a policy of non-interference, and withdrew its force from the Naga Hills in 1851.<sup>45</sup> This policy lasted till 1866. The non-interference policy, however, was also found to be ineffective.<sup>46</sup> The Naga people were not only irritated and revengeful for the destruction of their houses and livelihood during the expedition; but also, the lands taken up for tea gardens were never returned. Thus, they continued to raid the British India territory in Assam. From 1854 to 1865 there were 19 raids by the Angami Naga villages alone and

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<sup>42</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 121.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam, 1883-1941* (Delhi: Eastern Publishing House, 1963), 102-103. These expeditions were known as 'Military Promenade'. The term was first used by R. B. McCabe 'to describe expeditions made by the Deputy Commissioner with an armed escort among the Frontier tribes.'

<sup>44</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam*, 106.

<sup>45</sup> Mackenzie cited the directive of the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie: 'I concur in conclusion to which the Hon'ble President in Council has come respecting the relations to be maintained with the Angami Nagas, and consider that His Honour has judged wisely in directing the withdrawal of the force which has been sent, and of the post which has been established in advance in that country. I dissent entirely from the policy which is recommended of what is called obtaining a control, that is to say, of taking possession of these hills, and of establishing our sovereignty over their savage inhabitants. Our possession could bring no profit to us, and would be as costly as it would be unproductive.' Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 113-114.

<sup>46</sup> In 1862, the Deputy Commissioner of Assam, as quoted by Mackenzie, admitted that the non-interference policy in the Naga Hills was a failure: 'It is not credible to our Government that such atrocities should recur annually with unvarying certainty, and that we should be powerless alike to protect our subjects or to punish the aggressors. It is quite certain that our relations with the Nagas could not possibly be on a worse footing than they are now. The non-interference policy is excellent in theory, but Government will probably be inclined to think that it must be abandoned.' Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 116.



233 persons were killed, wounded or carried off.<sup>47</sup> Thus, after long correspondence between the local officers, the commissioner and the Government of British India, the latter sanctioned the occupation of Samagoodting (present Chumukedima) in the Naga Hills. Consequently, in 1866, Lieutenant Gregory was ordered to establish himself at Samagoodting with a compact force of 150 policemen.<sup>48</sup> This was the beginning of the third stage, the conquest and occupation of the Naga Hills by the British India.

Under the British rule, for the first time, the various Naga villages and tribes were brought under one political umbrella. The British also treated the Naga people as one distinct group different from the other people groups in north-east India by establishing the Naga Hills as a separate administrative unit.<sup>49</sup>

Along with the colonizers, Christian missionaries also contributed significantly in fostering a sense of collective consciousness among the Naga people. Christian missionaries entered the Naga Hills around the same time as the British colonizers. The first contact of Christian missionaries with the Naga people occurred in the 1830s. American Baptist missionary, Miles Bronson, who was then based at Sadiya, Assam, acquainted himself with Naga people who had come to Assam for trade purposes. Through this contact, he entered the Naga Hills in 1839.<sup>50</sup> Mission work was briefly established with Bronson taking up residence at the Namsanghea Naga village. The mission, however, had to close down with the withdrawal of the Bronsons following decisions to focus on the work among the Assamese rather than opening a new field among the Naga people, which at that time offered no guarantee of success.<sup>51</sup> The next attempt to establish mission work in Nagaland was made in 1872 through the initiative of

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<sup>47</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969), 21.

<sup>48</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 121.

<sup>49</sup> Inato Yekheto Shikhu, *A re-discovery and re-building of Naga cultural values* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2007), 53.

<sup>50</sup> 'Journal of Mr. Bronson' *BMM*, Vol. XIX, No. 12 (December 1839), 281-287.

<sup>51</sup> 'Letter of Mr. Bronson, January 6, 1841' *BMM*, Vol. XXI, No. 10 (October 1841), 295.

American Baptist missionary, EW Clark. That year, Godhula Rufus Brown, one of Clark's Assamese assistants took the decisive step of venturing into the Naga Hills.<sup>52</sup> In 1876, following approval from the American Baptist Missionary Union, Clark took up residence in Nagaland.<sup>53</sup> Through the efforts of Clark and other missionaries, Christian mission work was established among the Naga people.

Like the British, the American Baptist missionaries treated the Naga people as one people group. From the very beginning, they called their mission initiative in the region as 'Naga Mission'.<sup>54</sup> Christian mission also facilitated inter-village and inter-tribal mobility among the Naga people. Annual ecclesiastical meetings brought Naga Christians from various tribes together. Christian missionaries also played a key role in the formation of a Baptist church association for the whole of the Naga tribes. The idea of this collective association was developed in the 1930s. Credit should be given to the American Baptist missionary, JE Tanquist, who provided the necessary guidance to the Naga leaders. He was of the view that such an organization, would 'bring the Naga people together for fellowship and joint effort in evangelizing the unreached people in the region and beyond.'<sup>55</sup> In a move to discuss this idea, the Naga Hills Baptist Church Advisory Board, which was organised in 1935, had its first meeting at Tanquist's residence on 5 April 1937. Here, the name of the association was changed to the Naga Hills Baptist Church Advisory Council (NHBCAC; present Nagaland Baptist Church Council, see section 3.2.1).<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the treatment of the Naga people as a single people group by both the colonizers and the Christian missionaries, created an environment conducive for

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<sup>52</sup> SW Rivenburg, 'Historical Sketch of the Ao Naga Mission' *Assam Mission Jubilee* (1886), 80.

<sup>53</sup> Clark, *A Corner in India*, 15.

<sup>54</sup> This is evident from the fact that the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (BMM), which was published by the American Baptist Missionary Union (the sending body of the Baptist missionaries who worked in Nagaland), published the mission report of those missionaries working in the region under the title 'Naga Mission' from the 1870s onwards.

<sup>55</sup> Keitzar, *Triumph of Faith in Nagaland*, 8

<sup>56</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 16.

nurturing thoughts of collective Naga identity in the twentieth century. Education promoted by both the missionaries and the colonizers also further contributed to this by introducing to the Naga people the modern idea of nationalism. This educational system, which was based on ‘profound achievements of the modern west in the sphere of scientific and social scientific knowledge’<sup>57</sup> was very different from the traditional education system that was prevalent in the Naga society. Traditionally, education was imparted through the *morung*<sup>58</sup> system. The *morung* was basically the place where the bachelors of the village gathered to sleep for the night. But it also acted as the principle educational institution in the Naga society. Naga boys entered the *morung* in their teens along with their peer group. The new entrants had to live a hard life of working for the older boys for the first three years. This engrained in them a sense of discipline and duty towards their fellowmen. They were then classed amongst the older boys for another three years. The final stage consisted of all unmarried men who provided the chief fighting force.<sup>59</sup> It was in the *morung* that the young Naga, along with their peers, learned their culture and tradition as the elders narrated the great deeds of the past and taught the coming generation to carry on the old traditions in the future.<sup>60</sup> This was an informal practical-oriented school, teaching the young of the village the art of communal survival. The scope of this system of education, however, did not go beyond the impartation of sub-tribal traditions<sup>61</sup> and military training for the security of the village.

Writing on the rise of Indian nationalism, Urmila and SK Sharma posited that the spread of modern education gave rise to an educated group in the society ‘which was fully

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<sup>57</sup> AR Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1948), 126.

<sup>58</sup> The term *morung* is of Assamese origin; but it became the popular name due to its widespread usage in literature since the colonial period. Otherwise the various Naga tribes have different names for it: *Kichuki* for the Angami Naga, *Arju* for the Ao Naga, *ban* for the Konyak Naga and so on.

<sup>59</sup> Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology and Naga Culture* (Aolijen: CTC, 1997), 6; Interview of Odila, Tuli, 18 August 2014.

<sup>60</sup> JP Mills, *The Rengma Nagas* (London: Macmillan & Co. Limited, 1937), 49.

<sup>61</sup> ‘sub-tribe’ here refers to various Naga tribes like Angami, Ao, Sumi and others. In the *morung* of an Ao Naga village, only Ao traditions were discussed.

conscious of the value of freedom' and 'history' of European nationalism.<sup>62</sup> This was instrumental in the nurturing thoughts of collective identity and nationalism among the educated group. Even in the Naga context, educated Naga (like Imkongliba, Sakhrie, Phizo and others) were at the forefront of advocating a collective Naga identity and nationhood. In 1947, a Naga Students' Federation (NSF) was formed, with Z Aho as its first chairman, to bring solidarity among the Naga student community. This was the earliest civil society in Nagaland. John Humtsoe, writing on the historical development of NSF pointed out that until 1971, the NSF did not function 'continuously'.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, its very existence shows the desire among educated Naga to identify themselves as a Naga community. More civil societies with similar scope were formed in the subsequent years in Nagaland. An association to represent the Naga women, called the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), was formed in 1984 by a group of Naga social workers under the leadership of Neidonuo Angami.<sup>64</sup> Today, it has attained the status of an organization that represents all Naga women. In 1994, the Naga Hoho was formed with its main objective to foster 'peace and unity' among the Naga people.<sup>65</sup> It stands as the apex organization of the Naga people. The formation of these civil societies brought solidarity among the Naga people. They provided a platform for fellowship and collective action in the Naga society.

Nevertheless, the major thrust towards collective Naga consciousness was made in the area of politics. In the first part of the twentieth century, three nationalist movements emerged in the region:

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<sup>62</sup> Urmila Sharma and SK Sharma, *Indian Political Thought* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1996), 65.

<sup>63</sup> John Humtsoe, 'Naga Student's Federation' *Nagaland Journal* (5 April 2013) <https://nagalandjournal.wordpress.com/2013/04/05/naga-students-federation-nsf/> (Accessed on 2 June 2017).

<sup>64</sup> Sanghamitra Choudhury, *Women and Conflict in India* (London: Routledge, 2016), 126.

<sup>65</sup> 'A recapitulation of the formation of Naga Hoho and its activities' *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 7 November 2013).

### 2.2.1. The Naga Club

During the First World War 2,000 Nagas were recruited into the British Labour Corps.<sup>66</sup> These Naga people were engaged with the task of building roads in France.<sup>67</sup> Through this experience far away from home, they developed an awareness of their ethnic peculiarity and identity, and a sense of mutual love and service for each other.<sup>68</sup> On their return some of them initiated the Naga Club.

The Naga Club was formed with the purpose of representing the Naga people to discuss their socio-political needs with British India. The club was also informally supported by local British administrators.<sup>69</sup> Dedicated towards uplifting the Naga society, the club ran cooperative stores in Mokokchung and Kohima. They also formed a football club which produced players of renown in the region like the 1948 Indian national captain, Talimeren Ao.<sup>70</sup> However, the most significant act of the Naga club was its political representation of the Naga people before the Simon Commission.

The Simon Commission was the Indian statutory commission appointed by the British government in November 1927 to go into the question of constitutional reform in India. It was named after its chairman Sir John Simon.<sup>71</sup> It was an attempt by British India to subdue the growing nationalism in India.<sup>72</sup> The Commission visited the Naga Hills (Kohima) in January 1929. On this occasion, the Naga Club submitted a memorandum on behalf of the Naga people on 10 January 1929. In regard to the reform scheme, the referendum sought the withdrawal of the Naga people from any such reform, since

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<sup>66</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam*, 162; Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969), 26.

<sup>67</sup> Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas* (London: Methuen, 1939) 126.

<sup>68</sup> Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency, 2001), 22; Keviyekielie Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland* (Kohima: author, 2004), 54.

<sup>69</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 55; Thong and Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture*, 43.

<sup>70</sup> Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, 80.

<sup>71</sup> Bipan Chandra, *History of Modern India* (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009), 302.

<sup>72</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 76.

they ‘never asked for any reforms’ nor ‘wish for any reforms’.<sup>73</sup> This statement was probably to distinguish themselves from the rest of British India, and to show that their needs and aspirations were different, and therefore, they needed to be treated differently. It was clear from the memorandum that the political desire of the Naga Club was for the Naga people to be separated from the rest of India. ‘We have no social affinities with the Hindus and Mussalmans’ of the rest of India, claimed the memorandum. They wanted the Naga people to be either placed ‘directly under British Government,’ or to be left ‘alone to determine’ for themselves ‘as in the ancient times’.<sup>74</sup> Thus, it was on the basis of ‘their unique cultural identity’ that the Naga Club ‘demanded for political separation’.<sup>75</sup>

The Simon Commission did not make any separate recommendation for the Naga people. However it recommended that the areas inhabited by compact tribal populations be classified as ‘Excluded Areas’ and should be excluded from the reform scheme. These areas were to be placed directly under the Governors rather than provincial governments.<sup>76</sup> In accordance with this recommendation, the two Naga inhabited areas, the Naga Hills District and the North East Frontier Tract were declared Excluded Areas on 1 April 1937.<sup>77</sup> It was also stated that no Act of the Federal Legislature (of British India) or of Assam was to apply to the Naga Hills.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the administration of the Naga Hills was put outside the purview of the Indian administrative policy.

The memorandum submitted by the Naga Club to the Simon Commission was the first document stating the political desire of the Naga people. It represents a parallel but

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<sup>73</sup> ‘Memorandum on the Naga Hills, 26 March 1928.’ The following were the signatories of the Memorandum: Nihu, Nisalo Peshkas, Nisher, Khosa, Gepo, Vipunyu, Goyiepra, Rushukhrie, Zupulhoulie, Dkhrie, Zopulie, Lengjang, Nikhriehu, Miakrao, Levi, Katsumo, Nuolhoukelie, Luzevi, Apamo and Resilo.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Memorandum on the Naga Hills.’

<sup>75</sup> Thong and Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture*, 43-44.

<sup>76</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam*, 178.

<sup>77</sup> Elwin, *Nagaland*, 38.

<sup>78</sup> Bendangangshi, *Glimpses of Naga History* (Mokokchung: Naga Patriots, 1993), 48.

regional nationalism that was being developed among the Naga people at a time when Indian nationalism was gaining strength.

### **2.2.2. The *Heraka* movement**

Another movement that arose in the aftermath of the First World War was the *Heraka* movement. It started under the leadership of Haipuo Jadunang, who had served in the labour corps in Mesopotamia during the First World War.<sup>79</sup> In 1925 he began preaching on equality, freedom, rights and duties.<sup>80</sup> Setting himself up as the ‘Messiah-King of the Kabui (or Rongmei) and Kacha (or Zeme and Liangmai) Naga,’<sup>81</sup> he declared that all those who ate in ‘wooden platters’ (meaning, the Naga people) will unite together to drive away the ‘alien rulers’ (meaning, the British) and form a Naga rule under a Naga King.<sup>82</sup> In March 1930, Jadunang instigated the murder of four Manipuri traders at Kambiron.<sup>83</sup> In this connection, Jadunang was arrested on 19 February 1931, and sentenced to death on 13 June 1931. He was hanged at Guwahati on 29 August 1931 on the charge of human sacrifice of the Manipuri traders.<sup>84</sup>

Jadunang’s execution, however, did not stop the movement. The movement continued under his cousin, Gaidinliu Kamei. She was regarded as the ‘spiritual incarnation’ of Jadunang.<sup>85</sup> Within a year, on 17 October 1932, she was also arrested, at Pulomi village, tried and convicted of murder, and sentenced to ‘transportation for life’.<sup>86</sup> Gaidinliu’s stock as a nationalist grew with Indian nationalist, Jawaharlal Nehru’s reference to her as Naga *rani*, meaning ‘Naga queen’, though it has to be noted that her influence was only among the Zeliangrong Naga (referred to as *Kabui* and *Kacha* Naga

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<sup>79</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context*, 46.

<sup>80</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 79.

<sup>81</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam*, 167.

<sup>82</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 79.

<sup>83</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam*, 170.

<sup>84</sup> Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland, 1881-1947* (New Delhi: Scholars Publishing House, 1972), 146; Thong and Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture*, 44.

<sup>85</sup> Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 146.

<sup>86</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam*, 172.

in colonial record) of southern Nagaland. She was released in 1948, after India's independence.<sup>87</sup>

The movement, as Arkotong Longkumer pointed out, is known by various names: Kacha Naga movement, Gaidinliu movement, *Periese* (old Practice), *Kelumse* (prayer practice) *Ranise* (practice of the queen) and *Khampai* (a derogatory name, meaning, 'those who have missed the mark').<sup>88</sup> Longkumer further opined that the term *Heraka* (meaning, 'not impure'<sup>89</sup>) came to be used only from 1974.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, Asoso Yonuo is of the view that the term has been in use since the 1920s.<sup>91</sup> This debate and the many names attributed to it reflect the contours of its development over the year.

Samson Kamei argued that the movement started as a 'Naga movement', but later became a 'homeland movement' for the Zeliangrong Naga tribe.<sup>92</sup> He maintained that Jadunang not only proclaimed the 'Naga Raj', but also 'tirelessly preached for unity among the Nagas.'<sup>93</sup> However, under the leadership of Gaidinliu, the political aspiration of the movement was changed towards a demand for a separate homeland for the Zeliangrong people.<sup>94</sup> It was in 1977 that Gaidinliu formally moved a memorandum for a separate Zeliangrong state.<sup>95</sup> This 'change of characteristic' of the movement, according to Kamei, is explained by 'both changes in the ideology influenced by external factors and change in leadership.'<sup>96</sup> The 'ideological influence' here refers to the changes introduced by 'neo-Hindu' organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and

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<sup>87</sup> Thong and Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture*, 45.

<sup>88</sup> Arkotong Longkumer, *Reform, Identity and Narratives of belonging: The Heraka Movement in North East India* (NY: Continuum, 2010), 2.

<sup>89</sup> Longkumer, *Reform, Identity and Narratives of belonging*, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Longkumer, *Reform, Identity and Narratives of belonging*, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Asoso Yonuo, *Nagas struggle against the British rule under Jadunang and Rani Gaidinliu, 1925-1947* (Kohima: Leno Printing Press, 1982), 53.

<sup>92</sup> Samson Kamei, 'The Zeliangrong Movement in North-East India: An Exegetical Study' *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (May-August 2012), 328.

<sup>93</sup> Kamei, 'The Zeliangrong Movement in North-East India...', 328.

<sup>94</sup> Kamei, 'The Zeliangrong Movement in North-East India...', 327.

<sup>95</sup> 'Gaidinliu: Queen of India' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 16 September 2015).

<sup>96</sup> Kamei, 'The Zeliangrong Movement in North-East India...', 327.



the Vishva Hindu Parishad with whom it had developed close association. The ‘change in leadership’ is in reference to Gaidinliu and her blossoming relationship with the Indian leadership, especially Nehru, which put her movement on a collision course with the Naga National Council (NNC; discussed below). The *Heraka* cadres are reported to have even collaborated with the Government of India (GoI) against the NNC.<sup>97</sup> Ram Narayan Kumar and Laxmi Murthy reported: ‘They not only give logistic support to the Indian Army, but [were] involved in open conflict with the NNC. One of their most gruesome acts was the abduction and murder of nine NNC cadres in January 1965.’<sup>98</sup> Thus, in the post-independent India, the *Heraka* movement ceased to be a Naga nationalist movement.

The shift of focus of *Heraka* movement from a Naga movement to a Zeliangrong homeland movement is an example of the fragile nature of the collective Naga identity, and the tendency towards fragmentation in a segmentary Naga society. Local interest, in this case, of the Zeliangrong tribe, took precedence over the collective Naga interest.

### **2.2.3. The Naga National Council**

The British were very appreciative of the contribution of the Naga people in the Second World War. In one of the most decisive battle between the Japanese and the Allied forces, with the possession of India at stake, the Naga people sided with the Allied force and fought against the Japanese in the fateful battle of Kohima. The Lezami Naga village even captured twenty-six Japanese soldiers on their own and delivered them to the Allied forces.<sup>99</sup> In his memoir, British Field Marshall William Slim spoke about the active participation of the ‘gallant Nagas’ in repelling the Japanese invasion:

they guided our columns, collected information, ambushed enemy patrols, carried our supplies, and brought in our wounds under the heaviest fire and thus, being the gentleman they were often refused all payments. Many a British and Indian soldier owes his life to the naked, head-hunting Naga ...<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ram Narayan Kumar and Laxmi Murthy, *Four Years of the Ceasefire agreement between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim: Promise and Pitfalls* (New Delhi: Other Media Communications, 2002), 26-27.

<sup>98</sup> Kumar and Murthy, *Four Years of the Ceasefire agreement ...*, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Elwin, *Nagaland*, 102.

<sup>100</sup> William Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London: np, 1956), 341-342.

Meanwhile, the War caused widespread damage in the Naga Hills. The *Census of India 1951* summed up the damage:

During the decade Naga Hills suffered the worst catastrophe in its history in the shape of the Japanese invasion of India. The Japanese came as far as Kohima town in April 1944. In their attempt to dislodge the Japanese from the hill strongholds into which they had dug themselves, the allies subjected Kohima and neighbouring villages to heavy aerial bombardment repeatedly. As a result most of the houses at Kohima and elsewhere were destroyed or damaged.<sup>101</sup>

It was in this post-World War II context of social, political and economic need, mixed with the British gratitude toward the Naga people for their loyalty that the Naga National Council (NNC) came into being. The then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, CR Pawsey, was at the heart of it. In April 1945, he initiated an institution which was then called The Naga Hills District Tribal Council (NHDTTC), with the aim of uniting the Naga people and repairing some of the damages done during the War.<sup>102</sup> On 2 February 1946, the council met at Wokha and changed its name to Naga National Council. On 19 June, the same year, the NNC made a political decision stating its demand for autonomy of the Naga inhabited area.<sup>103</sup> With this the NNC took centre stage in the political scene in Nagaland, and in the process triggered the long-drawn Indo-Naga political struggle.

The uncertainties caused by the impending independence of India stirred the imagination of the Naga leaders and led them to dream for a separate existence from India for the Naga people. Nevertheless, even in the mid-1940s, Naga nationalistic aspiration was not yet a mass movement. It was basically either among the educated few (Naga Club and NNC) or within a particular geographical area (*Heraka* movement). Naga nationalism as a mass movement was to be seen only after 1947.

The movements discussed above enlarged the Naga consciousness and brought together the otherwise autonomous Naga villages and tribes for a common purpose. However, as in any segmentary society, the unity these movements produced was

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<sup>101</sup> 'Census of India, 1951.'

<sup>102</sup> Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 151.

<sup>103</sup> Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 151; Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, 84.

precarious in nature given the continuing autonomy maintained by the segments. Inter-tribal rivalry, even warfare, continued to trouble the Naga society (see section 3.4). Nevertheless, despite the presence of disunity, an appeal to collective Naga consciousness continues to bring unity of purpose and action among the Naga people even today. This especially comes to the fore when set in opposition to other unrelated groups, a typical characteristic of segmentary society, to which we turn in the next section.

### **2.3. Naga and the Others**

Before the British colonialization, the Naga people had very minimal contact with people beyond the Naga Hills. The only contact they had with other people of present day India were the Ahoms (of Assam) and the Meities (of Manipur). With the kingdom of Ahom, the western Naga tribes like the Ao, Lotha, and Konyak had political contacts. Sometimes these contacts were hostile.<sup>104</sup> In fact the very first time the two came into contact was when the Ahoms made their way to the plains of Assam from Myanmar through the Naga Hills. The Ahom general, Sukhapa,<sup>105</sup> ravaged the Naga villages with ‘ghastly barbarity’.<sup>106</sup> There were also times of peaceful coexistence. Some of the Ahoms were beneficiaries of Naga hospitality in times of trouble. For instance, in 1546 and 1563 when the Koches<sup>107</sup> invaded the capital of Ahom, many of them fled for shelter in Naga villages.<sup>108</sup> With the kingdom of Manipur, it was the southern Naga tribes like the Angami, Mao, Zeliang and Thangkhul, who were involved in a relationship characterised

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<sup>104</sup> Bendangangshi, *Glimpses of Naga History*, 13.

<sup>105</sup> The Ahom migration to Assam took place under the leadership of prince-general Sukhapa. He had a fight with his brother; consequently, in 1215, he left his homeland, Maulung, in the northeastern hill tracts of upper Burma (Myanmar) and proceeded towards the plains of Brahmaputra (Assam). For thirteen years he, along with his followers (about 9000 men, women and children), wandered about the Patkai range (in the Naga Hills), until finally in 1228 he entered the plains of Assam and established the Ahom dynasty. E Gait, *A History of Assam, third edn* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink, 1933), 78; Nirmal Kumar Basu, *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826* (Calcutta: author, 1970), 18.

<sup>106</sup> Alemchiba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima: The Naga Institute of Culture, 1970), 30; M Horam, *Naga Polity* (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1992), 25; Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 29-30.

<sup>107</sup> The Koch dynasty ruled part of Assam and Bengal from 1515-1949.

<sup>108</sup> E Gait, *A History of Assam, third edn* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink, 1933), 52, 55.

by both hostility and friendship. The hostility was generally related to the attempts by the kings of Manipur to extend their rule over the hills.<sup>109</sup> One such attempt is recorded to have occurred in 1833, when the Raja of Manipur caused havoc over most of southern Naga Hills up to the present day Kohima.<sup>110</sup> There were also times of friendship and mutual treatment of each other, especially in terms of helping each other in times of war: The Manipuris assisted friendly Naga villages by supplying weapons, while these Naga villages helped the Manipuris in their war against the Burmese.<sup>111</sup>

Many Naga tribes also had trade relations with the people of Assam. Naga traders carried to the plains bamboo mats, ginger roots, red peppers, betel leaves and earthen pots. In return they brought back salt and raw iron (which was used by local blacksmiths to make implements like dao, spade, spear and others).<sup>112</sup> This trade relation with the people of Assam also led to the development of Nagamese creole, derived from Assamese, which today has become a common language for the Naga people.<sup>113</sup> Along with English, Nagamese has aided the Naga people to overcome the linguistic barriers among themselves.

Thus, historically, the relationship of the Naga people with their neighbours, the Ahoms and the Meities, was characterised by a love-hate relationship. Prospect of mutual benefits often brought them together. However, there was also much distrust and disdain towards each other. The Assamese, for instance, regarded the Naga people as 'savages'. This was what the American Baptist missionaries discovered when they consulted their Assamese acquaintances on the possibility of starting mission work among the Naga

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<sup>109</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, 50; Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, 9.

<sup>110</sup> JH Hutton, *The Angami Nagas, second edn* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 13-14.

<sup>111</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, 50; Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, 9.

<sup>112</sup> These Naga blacksmiths made various iron implements like dao, spear-heads and other agricultural tools. WC Smith, *The Ao-Naga Tribe of Assam: A Study of Ethnology and Sociology* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1925), 36.

<sup>113</sup> BN Talukdar, 'Language Problem in North-East Region' in Mrinal Miri (ed.), *Linguistic Situation in North-East India, second edn* (Shillong: NEICSSR, 2003), 84.

people. 'They are savages, Sahib,' was what the missionaries were told.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, for the Naga, the Assamese (and other Indians) were the *tsumar* (in Ao Naga), which has the attribute of being untrustworthy and unreliable. British colonial officer, JH Hutton captured this mutual feelings of antipathy very well when he noted that the Naga people 'feel for the people of the plains a rooted antipathy which seems generally to be heartily reciprocated.'<sup>115</sup>

This already existing feeling of antipathy was further aggravated by the experience of alienation in India by the Naga people, along with other tribal people. India is a land of many ethnic groups of people. However, discourses in India often defined nation state in terms of the Aryan-Dravidian heritage. Consequently, tribal people, like the Naga were treated as the 'others'.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, assimilating these people into 'the general Indian cultural pattern' was perceived as the goal of modern India's dealing with the tribal people.<sup>117</sup> Such attitude towards the Naga and other tribal people caused much resentment among the tribal people in independent India. Their reaction was often directed towards asserting the superiority of their own culture or demand for political secession from India. Tribal theology (discussed in section 5.4) and Naga nationalist movements among the Naga people are examples of such movements.

#### **2.4. Dynamics of segmentary Naga society**

The above discussions explained how the three characteristics of segmentary society, that is, autonomy of segments, unity at certain level and opposition against other unrelated group, were all evident in the Naga society. This section discusses the tension involved amidst the presence of unity and fragmentation in the segmentary Naga society

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<sup>114</sup> Clark, *A Corner in India*, 9-10.

<sup>115</sup> JH Hutton's note to the Simon Commission along with the Memorandum of the Naga club, as quoted in Morkut Ramuny, *The World of the Nagas* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1988), 14.

<sup>116</sup> Soihiamlung Dangmei, *Christianity and De-Politicization of Naga Movement* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2014), 95.

<sup>117</sup> BG Gokhale, 'Nagaland: India's Sixteenth State' *Asian Survey*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (May, 1961), 36.

In segmentary society, ‘family relations’ and ‘shared territory’ effects the formation of layers of segments.<sup>118</sup> Families are unified to clans, clans are unified to villages, and villages are unified to tribes. Loyalty of the individual to each level plays its part in the dynamics of the society. Generally, family loyalty precedes clan loyalty, clan loyalty precedes tribe loyalty and so on.

What keeps the family, clan, village or tribe together is a sense of ‘solidarity’, which according to Durkheim, comes when the ‘collective consciousness’ of the society envelops individual consciousness.<sup>119</sup> In the Naga society, this collective consciousness was encapsulated in an idea of corporate living, called by various names among the Naga tribes, *akhuaye* in Sumi or *kenyu* in Aingami or *sobaliba* in Ao, which engrained among the Naga people a strong sense of collective consciousness, where collective interest was given preference over individual interest (see section 2.2.1). This principle still governs the way villages function in Nagaland today. The village makes collective decisions either through a general meeting of all adult males or through the village council. Once a decision is made by the council or the general meeting, every citizen is expected to abide by it, whether the person argued for or against it during the discussion.

Each segment in the segmentary society maintains ‘its own special regulatory organs.’<sup>120</sup> For instance, in the Naga society, villages maintain a strong hold over its constituents with a regulatory organ in the form of the village council. The function of this council is both legal and administrative with authority to excommunicate, impose fine or effect corporal punishments. Within its jurisdictions, its decisions are considered as binding. Interference of any kind from any others is considered as trespassing the legitimate domain of the village council, and guarantees strong resistance.

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<sup>118</sup> Daniel B. Lee and Achim Brosziewski, *Observing Society: Meaning, Communication, and Social Systems* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), 188.

<sup>119</sup> Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 101.

<sup>120</sup> Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 174.

Excluding the others is central to identity formation of a segmentary society. A key characteristic of segmentary society, according to Southall, is its 'opposition to adjacent unrelated groups.'<sup>121</sup> In the Naga society, their 'opposition' to other people groups, even India as a whole, defined their identification as a single people group (See Section 3.4; 5.4). Exclusion in a segmentary society can involve 'regulating access to the site and time of special interactions.'<sup>122</sup> In the Naga society, for instance, attendance in the annual village general meeting is permitted only for adult male citizens of the village, and thus, excluding all 'outsiders' (other villagers, tribes and so on).

It is worth noting that not only the 'outsiders', but also women and children are ~~were~~ not allowed to attend the village general meetings. On a general sense, women are treated with respect and dignity in the Naga society. In a Naga home, the wife has a large say at making decisions. This, however, is not so when it came to matters of leadership and decision making in the wider society. Takotosula, an elderly Naga remarked: '*Yimten meeting nung tetsur atentsu mesura ola adoktsuji asen yimsu nung mali*' (Our culture does allow women to attend and speak in village meetings).<sup>123</sup> The Ao Naga maxim *tetsur tanur*, meaning 'woman and children', summarised the attitude of the society towards woman. The opinion of *tetsur tanur* is not taken into consideration in the decision making process of the village.

In a segmentary society, there is a tension between the centre and the periphery. '[N]umerical peripheral foci' exists in the segmentary society over which the the centre exercises only a limited control.'<sup>124</sup> Traditionally, there were no government or organisation that bound the various villages into tribes or the tribes into a single Naga body. The formation of Naga Hoho, NMA, NSF and other Tribal Councils (Angami

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<sup>121</sup> Southall, *Alur Society*, 260.

<sup>122</sup> Lee and Brosziewski, *Observing Society*, 188.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Takotosula, Tuli, 22 December 2014.

<sup>124</sup> Southall, *Alur Society*, 248.

Public Organization, Ao Senden and others) in the twentieth century have provided certain organisational structure to the Naga society. However, these civil societies have only limited authority, playing only advisory roles, unlike the privileges enjoyed by the powerful village councils. In the light of this, in the Naga context, the actual authority in the society lies at the local level. The commitment of the local segments is key to the effectiveness of the working of the segmentary society. Their vigour, noted Durkheim, 'is necessarily proportional to the intensity of this more local activity.'<sup>125</sup> Effective implementation of ideas in the Naga society, therefore has much to do with its effective dissemination at the local level.

Religion in segmentary society exhibits both coherence and differences. While the various segments may share certain beliefs and practices, there could also be elements of 'disagreement, confusion and ignorance.'<sup>126</sup> In the Naga context, the common features include the belief in a creator god, who was also believed to be the judge of all humanity, who sees everything and will judge everyone according to their own deeds.<sup>127</sup> Naga people also believed in the existence of innumerable spirits, which were both benevolent and malevolent. While the former were considered as a source of blessing, the latter was considered as malignant; when the former possessed a person, the person became a *shaman*,<sup>128</sup> but if the latter possessed a person, the person fell ill.<sup>129</sup> The religious functionary in the Naga traditional religion consists of the village priests and the *shaman*. The priest represents the official religious establishment, and directed all the religious

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<sup>125</sup> Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 174.

<sup>126</sup> Southall, *Alur Society*, 98.

<sup>127</sup> Bendangangshi, *Glimpses of Naga History*, 30.

<sup>128</sup> The term 'Shaman' is used to refer to religious functionaries who are believed to have access to the world of the spirits. Andrei Aznamenski, *Shamanism: Critical Concepts in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2004), xiix. They are themselves believed to have been possessed by spirit. Margaret Stutley, *Shamanism: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2003), 3. Several terms like 'witch doctors' 'medicine men', 'magicians', 'conjurers' or even 'jugglers' are also used to refer to this group of religious functionaries. Graham Harvey, *Shamanism: A Reader* (NY: Routledge, 2003), 1.

<sup>129</sup> S Liangao Soto, *Tribal Theology of Integral Humanhood: A resource from Shamanism of the Nagas* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2011), 88-89.



rituals both during festivities as well as in seeking blessings for sowing seeds and success in warfare. The *shaman*, on the other hand, was an individual, who was believed to have the ability to communicate with the spirit world, especially for the purpose of exorcizing malevolent spirits.<sup>130</sup> Unlike the village priests, who were always male, many of the shamans were women.

Thus, the religious belief and practices of the various segments in the Naga society shows fundamental unity. However, there were also local variants both in terms of dogma and practices. For instance, there were variants in the understanding of the nature of the creator god. The Angami Naga, for instance, had a feminine understanding, which was reflected in the term used to refer to the divine being: *Ukepenuopfu* (meaning, ‘birth spirit’). Not only is it conceptually feminine, that is, related to birth, but also has *pfu*, the feminine suffix in Angami Naga.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, the Ao Naga people have a masculine understanding of the deity. All the three functional names they used, *Anungtsungba* (meaning, ‘one who fills the sky’), *Meyutsungba* (*meyu*, meaning, ‘thousand’ or ‘many’) and *Lizaba* (meaning, ‘one who walks on the earth’),<sup>132</sup> were suffixed with *ba*, which is indicative of the male sex. There was also differences in the rituals and sacrifices they performed. Each Naga village had its own pattern of rituals and sacrifices, which had developed over time through their ‘communal life, wisdom and experience.’<sup>133</sup> They were performed under the direction of the village priest, whose jurisdiction was also confined to his own village. Thus, in the Naga context, there was hardly any sense of a collective religious organization. The introduction of Christian faith in the nineteenth century challenged this fragmented religious establishment. Christian

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<sup>130</sup> JP Mills, *The Ao Nagas* (London: Macmillan, 1926), 244.

<sup>131</sup> Tezenlo Thong, *Progress and its Impact on the Nagas: A Clash of Worldviews* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 155.

<sup>132</sup> O Alem Ao, *Tsungremology: Ao Naga Christian Theology* (Aoligen: CTC, 1994), 66.

<sup>133</sup> Thong, *Progress and its Impact on the Nagas*, 155.

teaching of a universal faith and Christian fellowship promoted a religious idea that transcended village or tribal jurisdiction.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

Fundamental to cultural history is the understanding of the cultural milieu of the society. What was the nature of the Naga society? What were its key cultural characteristics? This chapter is an attempt to answer these questions.

This chapter has described the many facets of the culture of the Naga people including village independence, ethnic consciousness and antagonism against other unrelated people groups. All these point towards Naga as fiercely independent people. This characteristics goes a long way towards explaining the implications of segmentary divisions of the Naga people in the political, social and religious aspects. A related theme is the tension pertinent to unity versus disunity in the political, social and religious domains of the society. Much tension and competitiveness exist among the various segments, while on the other hand, they are also in constant opposition to the 'other', which is a key aspect of their identification as a single people group.

Thus, segmentation is a cultural characteristic of the Naga society. However, this cultural characteristic has not been accounted for in the existing literature on Naga society and churches (see Literature Review in section 1.2). In the following chapters, I will analyse the history of the churches in Nagaland, using this cultural lens. This will be done by analysing how churches overcame or were influenced by the cultural milieu of the segmentary Naga society, and how these experiences shaped the churches.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Naga churches in the whirlwind of transition, 1947 to 1963**

The following three chapters deal with the history of the Naga churches since 1947. The study period is further divided into three sub-periods: 1947-1963, 1964-1989 and 1990-2017, each based on significant historical developments in the Naga society. The first two sections of each of the following chapters discuss the context, both of the society and the church, during a particular period. The rest of the sections discuss the response of the Naga churches to various issues in the society during that particular period of time.

This chapter deals with the history of the Naga churches from 1947 to 1963. This period of Naga history was a time of transition in a number of ways. Politically, the Naga people witnessed the transition from a British colonial district (under Assam Province) to an Indian state. This transition, unfortunately, was accompanied by the beginning of the Indo-Naga conflict. Socially, the Naga people experienced transition towards an understanding of collective identity both as Nagas and Indians. Even ecclesiastically, there was transition from foreign missionary control to native leadership. This chapter examines the historical development of the Naga churches in the midst of these transitions.

A variety of primary sources were used in this chapter. Ecclesiastical sources include minutes of meetings, correspondence and Jubilee souvenirs. Biographical writings of missionary (Anderson, 2008) and key church leaders (Ao, 1978; Ben Wati, 2008), who were eyewitnesses of the events described, were also utilised. Public documents used in the chapter include memorandums, agreements and parliamentary debates. Letters of key political figures of the time like Zaphu Phizo and Jawaharlal Nehru were also utilised. Literature produced by former bureaucrats like Verrier Elwin (1961), BN Mullick (1972) and Morkut Ramuny (1988) who played vital roles in the decision-

making process of the GoI in the region were also consulted. Contemporary News reports especially the *Keesing's Record of World Events* were also utilised. Key eye-witnesses to the ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical events were also interviewed.

### **3.0. Churches in Nagaland prior to 1947**

The first contact between Christian mission and the Naga people occurred in 1830s. The historical context of the region at the time was largely bracketed by the experience of the Naga society coming out of an isolated existence with the British colonization of the region. British colonization of the region took a gradual process starting from the 1920s, and culminating in the formal annexation of the region in 1866.<sup>1</sup> With this, for the first time, the otherwise autonomous Naga villages were brought under one political control. The British did not advocate a wholesale change to the administrative structure of the villages. They kept the existing system, the village chieftains and councils, intact.<sup>2</sup> However, now that they were subject to the British rule, they no longer enjoyed the autonomy and ultimate authority they once enjoyed over their jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup> Colonial restrictions of Naga practices like headhunting<sup>4</sup> and feast of merit<sup>5</sup> also have largescale impact on the social life of the people. It removed the two principle means of attaining social status in the Naga society (see section 2.1). The alternative provided by the colonial administration (and Christian missionaries) was educational qualification, which became the new maxim to measure social standing. Education opened doors for employment

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<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier of India*, 121.

<sup>2</sup> Elwin, *Nagaland*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 53.

<sup>4</sup> One of the main reasons for the British expansion into the interiors of the Naga Hills was to prevent headhunting raids on British interests both in the plains of Assam and within the Naga Hills. Thus, from the very beginning the prohibition of headhunting was actively pursued by the colonial government. Fines in the form of grains and cattle or debarring from trade with the plains were the usual method adopted to impose this prohibition. Michael Cabe, 1887 as quoted in BB Ghosh, *History of Nagaland* (New Delhi: S Chand & Company, 1982), 113-114.

<sup>5</sup> The British government saw the feast of merit as instigating headhunting. This was because during the feast, the people would dance around the *mangkoterong*, meaning mound of head or head tree (in Ao Naga). Thus, since 1880, the British government prohibited the feast of merit. Pongener, *Morung Speaks*, 59. However, later European officials and ethnographers like Mills (1918-26) and Furer-Haimendorf (1939), lamented the demise of this practice. Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 52.

opportunities for many Naga people. As early as 1915, there was already a Naga headmaster, Gwizao Meru Zeliang (a matriculate), for the mission school at Impur.<sup>6</sup> The first Naga graduate (in 1927), Mayangnokcha<sup>7</sup> later became the headmaster of the same school.<sup>8</sup> Mayangnokcha later joined the government high school in Mokokchung. Many other educated Naga like Subongmeiba, Panger, Kumbho and Pehielie were employed in the colonial government in various capacities. Thus, a new class of educated Naga emerged who were exposed to both the economic and intellectual benefits of modern education.

The introduction and early dissemination of Christian faith among the Naga people was made in this context of colonization, whereby the Naga society as a whole was coming out of its isolated existence and in contact with the outside world. In this context, Christian faith was one of the many new ideas to which the Naga people were exposed to. This brief section highlights the formative influences of the historical context, like the colonial policy, missionary-colonialists relationship and others, on the Naga churches.

Christian faith was first introduced in Nagaland by the American Baptist missionaries. The first contact was made in 1839 by Miles Bronson. But this endeavour was short-lived, and no converts were made. After a period of about thirty years, a second attempt was made under the initiative of another American Baptist missionary, Edward Winter Clark and his Assamese assistant Godhula Rufus Brown. The later entered the Naga Hills in 1872 and organised the first Christian community in the region.<sup>9</sup> This initiative lasted and resulted in the establishment of Baptist churches in Nagaland. The American Baptist Missionaries worked in Nagaland till 1955.

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<sup>6</sup> Kiremwati, *Education and the Nagas* (Kohima: Author, 1995), 77.

<sup>7</sup> Jamir and Lanunungsang, *Naga Society and Culture*, 331.

<sup>8</sup> Kiremwati, *Education and the Nagas*, 83

<sup>9</sup> 'Report of Clark,' *BMM*, vol. 11, No. 4 (April 1872), 125-26.

The British took up permanent residence in the Naga Hills in 1866. However, until the late 1870s, their presence was limited to the outpost at Samagooding and its adjacent villages in southern Nagaland (see section 2.2). When Christian mission started in north-western Nagaland (at Molungkimong village) in 1872, the region was not yet under British control. However, soon the area of operation of the missionaries and the colonizers overlapped with the former opening mission centres at the colonial-occupied Kohima and Wokha in 1879 and 1885 respectively, and the latter annexing the whole of the western Naga Hills by 1889.<sup>10</sup>

The official policy of the British East India Company on religious matters was neutrality. It feared that meddling with the religious matters of the natives would jeopardize its commercial interest.<sup>11</sup> Therefore it discouraged Christian missionary activities, and even banned missionaries from entering the company territory. However, in many cases, the company and its officials did not hesitate to collaborate with Christian missions if it was found to serve its purposes. Thus, on the one hand, the colonial policy towards Christian mission in India was characterised by hostility and restrictions; on the other hand, when there were what FS Downs called ‘areas of mutual coincidence of interests,’<sup>12</sup> the government collaborated with the Christian missions and even promoted missionary activities. Initially, the colonial government in the Naga Hills found Christian mission as a useful tool for promoting their colonial interest. They saw ‘Christianization’ of the Naga people as a valuable means of ‘stabilization of the British empire’ in the region.<sup>13</sup> A ‘large population of Christian hill-men between Assam and Burmah,’ noted James Johnstone, one of the early political agents in the Naga Hills, ‘would be a valuable prop to the state.’<sup>14</sup> The ability of Christian missionaries to connect with the people of the

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<sup>10</sup> Shakespear, *The Assam Rifles*, 170.

<sup>11</sup> Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Downs, *History of Christianity in India*, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Johnstone, *Manipur and the Naga Hills*, 43-44.

<sup>14</sup> Johnstone, *Manipur and the Naga Hills*, 44.

land and their resources in the field of education were seen as an instrument that could be utilised for this purpose.<sup>15</sup> Thus, during the early encounter, the British officials harboured a friendly attitude towards the Christian mission.

The missionaries also found the British annexation of the Naga Hills as a welcome development. The British abolished the inter-village warfare, and opened new roads of communication; thus, creating a safe environment for Christian missionaries and evangelists to travel from one village to another.<sup>16</sup> The establishment of British outposts also allowed Christian mission to employ more missionary forces.<sup>17</sup> Thus, first at Samagoodting, then at Kohima and Wokha, the American Baptists opened mission centres following the establishment of British headquarters in these places.

However, there were also instances whereby the colonial government proved to be a hindrance to Christian mission. One such involved the government restrictions on missionary activities in certain areas of Naga inhabited areas. The British divided the Naga territory into two: First, the Administered area: The Naga villages of this area paid house tax as a recognition of the British authority. In return they received British protection from raids by other villages.<sup>18</sup> Most western Naga tribes were under the administered area: the Angami area from 1870s, the Sumi (Sema in colonial and missionary writings) area from 1887 and the Ao and Kyong (Lotha in colonial and missionary writings) area from 1889.<sup>19</sup> Second, the uncontrolled tribal area. In this area, a policy of non-interference was followed.<sup>20</sup> This area included the present day northern and eastern Nagaland which was never annexed or administered by the British.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Annual Administration Report of the Naga Hills Political Agency for 1876-77* (Calcutta: The Foreign Department Press, 1877), 3, 24.

<sup>16</sup> 'Report of M.M. Clark' *BMM*, Vol. LXVIII, No 9 (September 1888), 371; 'Report of M.M. Clark' *BMM*, Vol. LXVIII, No. 6 (June 1888), 160.

<sup>17</sup> GG Philips, 'Assam' *BMM*, Vol. LXVII, No 7 (July 1887), 258.

<sup>18</sup> Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland, 1881-1947* (New Delhi: Scholars Publishing House, 1972), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Shakespear, *The Assam Rifles*, 170; Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Venuh, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, 18-19; Bendangangshi, *Glimpses of Naga History*, 44.

The British Government restricted the movement of its subjects to areas beyond the administered area. They feared that the missionary activities could cause disturbance in the ‘unadministered’ area, requiring British interventions. Thus, both missionaries and natives living in the administered areas were restricted from entering the ‘unadministered’ areas of the Naga Hills on pain of fines.<sup>22</sup> The government restriction literally stopped the American Baptist missionaries from active involvement in the evangelisation of the ‘unadministered’ area. However, in the long run, it turned out to be a blessing for the Naga churches as it obligated the missionaries to employ more native workers in the mission. The restriction also applied to the native Naga, since they were also British subjects. However, it was more difficult for the government to detect their movements. This gave rise to what Bendangyapang Ao called the ‘mission enterprise under American Sponsorship,’ where ‘there were no direct involvements of the missionaries’; but they sponsored the native evangelist’s salary, and even paid the ‘fines as and when the government caught them’.<sup>23</sup>

Credit also should be given to the policy of the American Baptist missionaries towards developing native leadership and mission initiative in the Naga churches. A key characteristic of American Baptist mission in north-east India was its emphasis on indigenization of Christian mission. The 1898 editorial of the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (BMM) noted: ‘The growth of self-support in the missions under the care of the American Baptist Missionary Union has always been an object of solicitude on the part of the management of the society, as well as of many of the missionaries on the field ...’<sup>24</sup> One of the ways in which they did this was by encouraging financial self-support. ‘The people are poor, and frequently have no money at home,’ wrote Clark, ‘but we must

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<sup>22</sup> Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: The Ao Naga*, 47; Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, 130.

<sup>23</sup> Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: The Ao Naga*, 47.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Editorial’ *BMM*, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 3 (March 1898), 84.



educate the people to do the best they can.’<sup>25</sup> The Naga students were taught, wrote Perrine, another early missionary, that ‘the idea that the salvation of their own people should lie with themselves more than on American money and endeavour.’<sup>26</sup> The missionaries also facilitated self-propagation among the native churches by engaging a generous number of native workers in the mission. From very early on, the missionaries were of the view that the evangelization of the Naga people would not be possible without the involvement of the Naga people themselves. Clark wrote in 1896: ‘Why not let the principle be fairly recognized, not only at the Mission Rooms, Boston, but also in other mission fields, that the evangelization of the people must be largely the work of the people themselves.’<sup>27</sup> Starting with the appointment of native Naga, Tongpangla and Kilep, as teacher and pastor respectively in 1888 and 1889,<sup>28</sup> a steady flow of native workers were engaged by the mission. The following table shows the number of missionaries as well as the native workers in the various mission centres from 1900 to 1920.<sup>29</sup>

Year	Mission centres	Missionaries		Native workers	
1900	Impur	4	4	15	17
	Kohima	-		2	
1910	Impur	4	6	18	29
	Kohima	2		11	
1920	Impur	4	6	94	109
	Kohima	2		15	

**Table 2: Number of foreign missionaries and native workers, 1900-1920**

The above table shows that by 1920, the missionaries were employing a large number of native workers in the mission. However, they were usually engaged as evangelists, pastors and teachers in the villages; and not in any leadership position in the mission establishment.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the missionaries were also concerned that the native

<sup>25</sup> ‘Report of E.W. Clark’ *BMM*, Vol LXVIII, No. 7 (July 1888), 259.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Report of S.A. Perrine’ *BMM*, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 7 (July 1898), 357.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Report of E.W. Clark’ *BMM*, Vol. LXXVI, No. 10 (October 1896), 517.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Report of E.W. Clark’ *BMM*, Vol LXX, No. 7 (July 1890), 267; ‘Report of E.W. Clark’ *ABMC* (January 14-22, 1893), 29; ‘Report of M.M. Clark’ *BMM*, Vol LXVIII, No 6 (June 1888), 160; Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: The Ao Naga*, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 254.

<sup>30</sup> JE Tanquist, ‘Centralization of Educational Work in the Naga Hills and Manipur’ *ABMC* (January 29-February 5, 1918), 31.

churches were not taking enough initiative in the mission work; instead, they were only following the dictate of the missionaries. Observing this as a malady, in 1918, the American Baptist missionaries in Assam resolved to empower the native churches to engage in policy making and mission initiative. In its conference held at Guwahati, it resolved (i) to define ‘the position of the Missionary to the Native Community as one of helper’ and (ii) to emphasize ‘the necessity of the Native Christian body assuming larger and larger responsibility in the supervision and support of the Kingdom’s work in Assam.’<sup>31</sup> This was a landmark decision towards giving a free hand to the native Christians in running the churches.

In the light of the 1918 resolution, the missionaries followed a policy of facilitating native mechanisms to take initiatives in the mission work. For instance, in 1937 they initiated the ‘Mission Council’ in the Kohima field to encourage ‘self-determination in the mission work’ among the native Christians.<sup>32</sup> The missionaries also began to employ native workers in a number of leadership positions, which was not done in the earlier period. For instance, in 1936 the Ao Naga evangelist Kijungluba was given the responsibility of supervising the evangelization of the trans-Dikhu region.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the Angami Naga church leader, M Savino was given the responsibility of establishing an association among the neighbouring Chakhesang Naga churches in 1949.<sup>34</sup>

By 1947, some form of Christian faith had become the religion of a significant section of the Naga population.<sup>35</sup> This growing community was also showing promise for self-sustainable growth through much native involvement in mission work in the region. The contribution of native Christians towards Christian mission in the Naga Hills

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Reports of Resolutions Committee’ *ABMC* (January 29-February 5, 1918), 16.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Report of J.E. Tanquist’ *ABMC* (December 8-13, 1937), 36.

<sup>33</sup> Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: The Ao Naga*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 114.

<sup>35</sup> According to the *Census of India 1951*, 46.04 per cent of the Naga population was Christian. ‘Census of India, 1951.’

was well attested in the 1913 mission report, whereby it was reported that the evangelistic activity in the Naga Hills was ‘almost entirely’ carried on ‘by the native Christians, who get no help from the missionaries except their pay and a little encouragement.’<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, as of 1947, the churches were still very much a mission church under the leadership of the missionaries. Until 1955, the year in which all American Baptist missionaries were withdrawn from Nagaland, the missionaries maintained a supervising presence. As noted above, there was a progressive policy in which the missionaries were increasingly handing over responsibilities of the mission to the native Christians and churches. Nevertheless, whether the native churches can stand on its own in the eventual withdrawal of the missionaries was not yet tested.

### **3.1. Context: political, social and economic**

On the eve of the end of British rule in India, uncertainty hung over the fate of numerous princely states and tribal areas scattered all over India. The British and Indian leaders held parleys with the rulers and leaders of these regions to convince them to join the India Union. The Naga leaders were however apprehensive of this proposal. Therefore, they wanted to go through an interim period at the end of which the Naga people could decide their own future. This issue was taken up by the Naga National Council (NNC). As noted in the previous chapter, the NNC was formed in the aftermath of the Second World War with the initial purpose of helping the government in rehabilitation work. But during the period leading up to the withdrawal of the British from India, the NNC took a political stand: on 20 February 1947, the NNC submitted a memorandum appealing to the ‘H.M.G. (Her Majesty’s Government) and the Government of India’ ‘to set up for the Naga people an Interim Government for a period of 10 years at the end of which the Naga people will be left to choose any form of government under which they will live.’<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> ‘A Survey of the Field’ *ABMC* (January 4-13, 1913), 11.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Memorandum of case of the Naga people for self-determination and an appeal to H.M.G. and the Government of India, 20 February 1947.’

In an effort to convince the Naga nationalists to join the India Union, Akbar Hydari, the then Governor of Assam in British India was assigned to negotiate with the NNC. Accordingly, Hydari held negotiations with the NNC between 27-29 June 1947 at Kohima. The result was the *Nine Point Agreement* (or *Hydari Agreement*). It was agreed that the 'District Officer' and the NNC would share the administration of the Naga Hills for a period of ten years, after which, the NNC could decide whether to continue with the same arrangement or 'a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people be arrived at.'<sup>38</sup> The agreement, however, became controversial due to differing interpretations of the scope of the 'new agreement' at the end of the interim period. The Indian leaders insisted that this had to be done within the Indian Union. The NNC, on the other hand, insisted that it meant that the Naga people had the full freedom to either remain within or opt not to join the Indian Union. These contrasting interpretations<sup>39</sup> prevented the implementation of the 'agreement'.

Why was the GoI unwilling to listen to the Naga demand for independence in spite of Indian leaders like Gandhi<sup>40</sup> and Nehru<sup>41</sup> admitting that the Naga people had no historical background of being part of India? Why did the GoI want to hold on to Nagaland which has less historio-geographical affinity with the rest of India than

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<sup>38</sup> 'The 9-Point Agreement, 29 June 1947.'

<sup>39</sup> Phizo blamed Hydari for the failure of the implementation of the 'agreement', questioning his sincerity, in the whole process. 'Letter of A.Z. Phizo, President NNC to C. Rajagopalachari, Governor General, India, 22 November 1948' reproduced in NNC (ed.), *The Naga National Rights and Movement* (Kohima: Publicity and Information Dept. NNC, 1993), 25-41. The then NNC president, Aliba Imti, on the other hand, accused Assam Chief Minister Gopinath Bordoloi (1946-1950) as the 'mysterious hands in New Delhi' which influenced the Indian leadership to abandon the agreement. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, 200. It was Bordoloi who declared that the *Hydari Agreement* was no longer considered to be in existence by the GoI on 9 November 1949 (108-109).

<sup>40</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, in his discussion with a Naga delegation on 19 July 1947 said: 'Nagas have every right to be independent ... If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you to do that.' Asoso Yonuo, 'Nagas and Mahatma Gandhi,' in NNC (ed.), *The Naga National Rights and Movement* (Kohima: Publicity and Information Dept. NNC, 1993), 24.

<sup>41</sup> Nehru wrote: 'We must not judge them as we would others who are undoubtedly part of India. The Naga have no such background or sensation and we have to create that sensation among them by our goodwill and treatment.' 'Letter of Nehru to Bishnuram Medhi, New Delhi, dated 13 May 1956' in SK Sharma and Usha Sharma (eds), *Documents on North-East India: Vol. 9 Nagaland* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2006), 161-164.

Pakistan, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka with which it parted ways? The GoI's refusal to negotiate with the Naga nationalists ought to be understood in the context of south-east Asian politics of the time. In the aftermath of 1947, north-east India was the playground where the emerging powers, India, Pakistan and China played their game of suspicion, fear and open conflicts. The region was flanked by China on the north, Myanmar (an ally of India) on the east, and on the west, excepting the thin passageway to Bengal, was East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) wedged in between the region and the rest of India. With China, the situation was tense throughout the 1950s, culminating in the Sino-Indian war in 1962.<sup>42</sup> Thus, India could not afford to have the Naga Hills isolated between India and China. In a letter written to NNC leaders on 1 August 1946, Nehru wrote: The Naga territory 'lies between two countries India and China ... They could not be isolated between India and China. Inevitably, this Naga territory must be part of India and Assam with which it has developed such close association.'<sup>43</sup> The partition in 1947 and India's sympathy to the cause of East Pakistan nationalists (Bangladesh) had soured the relation between India and Pakistan. With the latter forging a military alliance with the United States in 1952,<sup>44</sup> suspicion fell on the American missionaries in north-east India including the American Baptist missionaries in the Naga Hills as instigating the nationalist movement in the region to aid the Pakistan-United States interest. American Baptist missionary, Bengt I Anderson, wrote: 'the government (of India) suspecting us of being undercover agents of the U.S.A. military serving their Pakistani enemies ... Much questioning by government agents was endured patiently ...'<sup>45</sup> In the light of these

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<sup>42</sup> David R Devereux, 'The Sino-Indian War of 1962 in Anglo-American Relations' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (January, 2009), 71.

<sup>43</sup> 'Letter of Nehru to NNC Secretary, New Delhi, dated 1 August 1946.' Cited in Reisang Vashum, *Naga's Right to Self Determination: An Anthropological-historical Perspective, second edn* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), 69.

<sup>44</sup> Hamza Alavi, 'Pakistan-US Military Alliance' *Economic and Political Weekly* (20 June 1998), 1551, 1552.

<sup>45</sup> Bengt I Anderson, 'Mission to the Nagas' C Walu Walling (ed.), *Down the Memory Lane, Vol. 1* (Impur: ABAM, 2008), 93-94.

developments in the region, the GoI was not willing to accept the Naga nationalists' demand for secession of any kind, even on an interim term.

Meanwhile, on 14 August 1947 (a day before India's independence), the Naga nationalists declared Naga independence.<sup>46</sup> The GoI, on the other hand, dismissed the Naga nationalist movement as insignificant, promoted by a minority. The NNC leadership therefore decided to hold a plebiscite to counter this accusation. In a letter addressed to the President of India the NNC informed and stated the reason for the plebiscite:

to remove from the minds of the people and Government of India any possible difficulty to accept and recognise the genuinely responsible function of the Naga National Council for its nationals in Nagaland, to remove any possible element of doubt as to the passionate desire in the hearts of the Naga people for freedom and independence from India, and lastly but with a genuine feeling of goodwill, to avoid any possible injury that may otherwise be done to the reputation of India in the event of a plebiscite held under international auspices should such a reference to the people result in a hundred per cent Nagas being in favour of severing government connections with India.<sup>47</sup>

The letter further informed:

The exact date on which the plebiscite would commence will be announced before long. It is the desire of the Naga National Council that the Government of India will send their observers to witness the whole processing of the plebiscite from the beginning to the end.<sup>48</sup>

The plebiscite began on 16 May 1951 with NNC volunteers visiting all Naga villages, to ascertain whether they wished to remain independent or join the Indian Union by collecting signatures or thumb impressions from all adult Naga. During the interview, Ayimneken, an elderly Naga, spoke of how volunteers came to his village (Longkhum) in the month of June, 1951: 'The plebiscite began in May 1951. The volunteers came to my village in the month of June. I also gave my thumb impression.'<sup>49</sup> The result of the plebiscite was tabulated showing ninety-nine per cent favouring independence.<sup>50</sup> The NNC presented the result of the plebiscite to Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister

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<sup>46</sup> NNC, *The Naga National Rights and Movement* (Kohima: Publicity and Information Dept. NNC, 1993), 16.

<sup>47</sup> 'Letter of A.Z. Phizo, President NNC to President, Republic of India, dated 1 January 1951' reproduced in NNC (ed.), *The Naga National Rights and Movement* (Kohima: Publicity and Information Dept. NNC, 1993), 42-46.

<sup>48</sup> 'Letter of A.Z. Phizo, President NNC to President...

<sup>49</sup> Interview of Ayimneken, Mokokchung, 12 July 2016.

<sup>50</sup> NNC, *The Naga National Rights and Movement*, 46.

of India (1947-1964), during his visit to Assam in December 1951. But Nehru dismissed it as an ‘absurd’ demand.<sup>51</sup>

Disappointed with the dismissal of the result of the plebiscite, the NNC called for a series of boycotts. First, they boycotted all government initiatives. Virrier Elwin, who was then an advisor to the GoI for tribal people in north-east India, wrote:

The People began to refuse to pay house-tax or to co-operate with Government in, for example, development schemes or the repair of roads and bridle paths. They forced teachers to resign and children to leave their schools. They would no longer give labour or sell supplies to officials and police. Village headmen returned their cloaks in token of resignation. They boycotted national and official celebrations.<sup>52</sup>

Second, they boycotted the first general election of India in 1952. *Keesing’s Record of World Events* (1952) noted: ‘the three seats allotted to the Naga Hills district were not filled, as no candidate submitted nomination papers.’<sup>53</sup> Elwin also wrote of this boycott:

No Naga sought election to the parliament or the Legislature of Assam and no Nagas exercised their right of voting. Government, however, went through – it had to go through – the whole procedure of the General Election. Electoral rolls were prepared, election-booths were established everywhere, ballot boxes and papers were provided and election officer were placed in position. Yet there were no applications from anyone, no nominations from any side and no candidates to vote for. This caused the Nagas a lot of simple amusement and as a method of emphasising their political desires was effective.<sup>54</sup>

Third, they boycotted the Indian Prime Minister’s (Nehru) visit to the Naga Hills, along with his Burmese counterpart U Nu on 30 March 1953. Initially, the NNC leaders saw this as an opportunity to voice their grievances. But having been refused to present a memorandum to the visiting Prime Ministers, the NNC instigated the entire crowd to walk out. American Baptist missionary, Anderson, who was present at the meeting wrote: ‘We were seated close to the platform and did not know what was taking place until we saw the Nagas turn their backs on Nehru and slowly find their way to the bazaar and the village above it.’<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. X No. 12 (December 1956), 15276.

<sup>52</sup> Elwin, *Nagaland*, 54.

<sup>53</sup> *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. VIII-IX No. 3 (March 1952), 12083.

<sup>54</sup> Elwin, *Nagaland*, 53.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas’, 94.

Immediately after this incident, stringent measures were initiated against the Naga nationalists. Arrest warrants were issued against the NNC leaders. The nationalist monthly, *Naga Nation*, was banned.<sup>56</sup> In April 1955 the Indian army was brought in (earlier, the Assam Police was responsible for the security issues in the Naga Hills) and largescale military action against the Naga nationalists began.<sup>57</sup> The GoI also instituted three acts within a span of six years empowering the security personnel in the Naga Hills: First, *The Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous District) Act* in 1953, which empowered the Assam state government to impose fines or imprisonment on anyone whom it deemed to be involved in causing public disorder. It also empowered the state government to restrict ‘a class of persons or organizations’ from holding meetings or processions if it suspected their involvement in jeopardizing public order.<sup>58</sup> Second, the *Assam Disturbed Area Act* in 1955, which empowered military personnel operating in areas which the government declared as ‘Disturbed Area’ with power to even shoot to death in order to restore public order.<sup>59</sup> On 20 July 1955 Nagaland was declared as a ‘disturbed area’.<sup>60</sup> Third, the *Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act* (AFSPA) of 1958, which gave unrestricted power to the security forces, ‘powers to even non-commissioned officers to shoot to kill on mere suspicion.’<sup>61</sup> Though the AFSPA was originally enacted to deal with the Naga issue, it became the standard for internal military action in India. It was implemented to deal with infractions of law and order in most states (except Sikkim) of north-east India (Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram) as well as in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

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<sup>56</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 118; Thong and Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture*, 50; Singh, *Naga Politics*, 60.

<sup>57</sup> *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. X No. 12 (December 1956), 15276.

<sup>58</sup> ‘The Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous Districts) Act, 1953.’

<sup>59</sup> ‘The Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955.’

<sup>60</sup> *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. X No. 12 (December 1956), 15276.

<sup>61</sup> ‘1958 Armed Forces (Special Power) Act.’



Naga nationalists went underground and began fighting a guerrilla war. Their military strategy was to ambush army convoys, attack police outposts and snatch their arms and ammunitions.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore on 22 March 1956, the NNC formed the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN), under the leadership of the NNC president AZ Phizo. A military organization known as the Naga Army was also set up.<sup>63</sup>

Some among the Naga nationalist leaders were concerned about the violent turn of the nationalist movement. They were the ‘moderates’ like TN Angami, Imkongliba, T Sakhrie and JB Jasokie who wished for a peaceful solution, and openly protested against the NNC leadership of Phizo and the ‘extremists’. These Naga leaders saw the impracticality of achieving the complete independence of the Naga people in the light of GoI’s determination, as Imkongliba pointed out: ‘the mass of the Nagas favoured complete separation from India, but in view of the practicalities of the solution they were prepared to accept less.’<sup>64</sup> Thus, these moderate leaders formed the Reforming Committee in 1957 (under the chairmanship of TN Angami), which subsequently organised the first Naga People’s Convention (NPC<sup>1</sup>) from 22-26 August 1957 at Kohima under the chairmanship of Imkongliba. The NPC<sup>1</sup> was attended by 1,735 representatives from different Naga tribes. Two more NPC<sup>1</sup>s followed at Ungma and Mokokchung on 21-23 May 1958 and 22-26 October 1959 respectively; both of which were well attended with 2,705 and 3,000 delegates respectively.<sup>65</sup>

The documentary result of the NPC<sup>1</sup>s was the *Sixteen Point Memorandum*.<sup>66</sup> It envisioned the formation of Nagaland as an Indian state with a Governor appointed by the GoI and a council of elected Ministers with a Chief Minister as the head. The NPC<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> According to a NNC record, quoted by Kaka D. Iralu, by ‘the end of 1956’ in the Sema Naga region alone the Naga Army cadres had captured 370 arms and thousands of ammunition. Kaka D Iralu, *Nagaland and India: The blood and the Tears* (Kohima: Author, 2000), 169.

<sup>63</sup> Zapuvisie Lhousa, *Strange Country: My experience in Naga Nationalism* (Kohima: author, 2015), 124.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, 64.

<sup>65</sup> *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. VI No. 1 (January 1960), 17200.

<sup>66</sup> ‘The Sixteen Point Agreement, July 1960.’

delegates discussed the *Sixteen Point* with the Prime Minister (Nehru) and Foreign Secretary officials of GoI on 26 July and 27-28 July 1959 respectively.<sup>67</sup> After further discussions an agreement to establish a separate Naga State within the Indian Union was reached on 30 July 1960.<sup>68</sup> On 28 August 1962, *The Nagaland State Act* was passed by the Indian parliament.<sup>69</sup> The following month on 4 September the President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1962-1967), gave his assent to the bill.<sup>70</sup> Nagaland was inaugurated on 1 December 1963 by the President of India as the sixteenth state of the Indian Union.<sup>71</sup>

What the NPC<sup>1</sup> through the *Sixteen Point* bargained for was a separate administrative unit within the Indian Union rather than a separate independent nation. The NNC strongly opposed this initiative of settlement within the Indian Union. In 1960, the NNC president, Phizo, who was then in London, declared the agreement as nothing more than a 'bribe' given by the GoI to the members of NPC<sup>1</sup>, the NPC<sup>1</sup> as 'a puppet assembly' and those who negotiated the statehood as 'traitors'.<sup>72</sup> Subsequently, the NNC reacted violently, epitomised by the assassination of Imkongliba (on 22 August 1961) the chairman of the Interim Body formed in the build up to the inauguration of Nagaland state.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the creation of Nagaland as a state could not solve the Naga political problem. Instead it worsened the situation, with conflicts arising between the radical and moderate Naga, creating a chronic divide within the Naga society.

The common people suffered a lot in the conflict situation, especially with both the Indian army and Naga nationalists resorting to extreme violence. *Keesing's Record of*

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<sup>67</sup> 'Lok Sabha debate, Statement Re: The Naga Hills and Tuensang Area '(1 August 1960); *The Third Naga People's Convention* (Mokokchung, October 1959), 10.

<sup>68</sup> *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. VI No. 12 (December 1960), 17568.

<sup>69</sup> 'Lok Sabha debate, Thirteenth Amendment and State of Nagaland Bill' (28 August 1962).

<sup>70</sup> 'The State of Nagaland Act, 1962'; *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. IX No 2 (February 1963), 19255.

<sup>71</sup> *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. X No. 12 (December 1964), 19864.

<sup>72</sup> *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. VI No 12 (December 1960), 17568.

<sup>73</sup> *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. 7 No. 12 (December 1961), 18488.

*World Events* (1960)<sup>74</sup> reported the excesses from both sides that troubled the common people:

The methods adopted by the security forces to fight the campaign of violence in its early years... perhaps unavoidably increased Naga dislike of other Indians. Apart from the incidents which flowed actually from implementation of the accepted methods, there were excesses. 60 to 70 complaints of killing of villagers by troops running amok and of assaults on women have been received by the authorities, who have inquired into them and punished those guilty.

The hostiles [the Naga Nationalists] have alienated the sympathy of villagers by ruthless methods of extorting co-operation and supplies, while the security forces have become unpopular through punitive measures. Soon after an I.A.F. Dakota had been brought down by the hostiles at the village of Purr the security forces raided a nearby village, Metikhuma, and took away nine men who were alleged to have been killed later. Suspecting its alliance with the security forces, the hostiles attacked the village of Chakhabama, near Kohima, in 1956. All 48 elderly men of the village were murdered and the houses destroyed. The people's reaction to such incidents is identical.<sup>75</sup>

It was the civilians who suffered the most. Dozo wrote:

Many villages were burned and reburned [sic]; people were left homeless. They had to rush to the jungle for security. I myself remained in the jungle for three months with my maternal uncles. Naturally, many people died, and economic problem was severe – many people went without rice and salt for months together.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, with the eruption of violent conflicts, the general Naga public found themselves in a very difficult situation. Caught in the cross fire of suspicion and bullet, the common people suffered.

Another feature of the Indian military operation that affected the normal life of the common people was what was known as 'grouping'. The fundamental idea behind the use of 'grouping' as a counterinsurgency measure was not new. Also known as 'villagization', it was used by the British in Malaya in their operation against the communist in 1950 and in Kenya during the *Mau Mau* uprising in 1953.<sup>77</sup> BN Mullick, the then Personal Secretary to Nehru (the then Prime Minister of India), later wrote:

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted from the report on the *Statesman* (Calcutta) by a member of the six Indian and five foreign journalists who were allowed to visit Nagaland from 15-22 December 1960.

<sup>75</sup> *Keesing's Record of World Events*, vol. VII No. 3 (March 1961), 17986.

<sup>76</sup> Dozo, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga Tribe*, 61.

<sup>77</sup> Hack, Karl. 'The Malayan Emergency' in Gregory Fremont-Barnes (ed.), *A History of Counterinsurgency, vol I*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015. 125-176; Veilleux-Lepage, Yannick and Jan Fedorowicz. 'The Mau Mau Revolt in Kenya, 1952-1956' in Gregory Fremont-Barnes (ed.), *A History of Counterinsurgency, vol I*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015. 177-204; Bennett, Huw. *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

‘Following the plans adopted in Malaya to cut off the rebels from the civilian population, it was planned to group the villages.’<sup>78</sup>

‘Grouping’ in Nagaland began in 1957 as an effort to sabotage the supplies and intelligence system of the Naga nationalists.<sup>79</sup> In the words of Murkot Ramuny,<sup>80</sup> who was one of the architects of the Indian Army operation in Nagaland, ‘it means a number of villages were joined together under the Army’s protection. They were given rations and were not allowed to go out of the stockade area even for cultivation.’<sup>81</sup> In practice, however, it functioned like a ‘concentration camp’.<sup>82</sup> First of all, the inhabitants of several villages were herded to a centrally located village. These abandoned villages were then burned to the ground. The exiled villagers stayed in the host village for several months as refugees.<sup>83</sup> Every morning and evening there were roll calls conducted by the military at the village gate. While male members were not allowed to leave the stockade except for the purpose of cutting the jungles for the military operation, the females were allowed to leave the stockade from time to time to collect food and firewood. Nevertheless, while leaving, they were ‘sealed for identification with a rubber stamp in their arms’; and if in any case it was found removed, ‘they were either not permitted to re-enter the village or imprisoned for interrogation.’<sup>84</sup> Phizo’s letter to Frederick H Boland, the then President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, in 1960 highlighted the condition in the ‘grouping’ villages:

The prisoners in the concentration camps are cruelly treated and 10 people died in 13 days in two concentration camps alone (Kilomi and Sataka). Among the dead two (2) were mothers, three young

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<sup>78</sup> BN Mullick, *My Years with Nehru* (Delhi: Caxton Press, 1972), 125.

<sup>79</sup> *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. VII No. 3 (March 1961), 17986.

<sup>80</sup> Morkut Ramuny was the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills from 1958-1960.

<sup>81</sup> Ramuny, *The World of the Nagas*, 70.

<sup>82</sup> The reference to the ‘Grouping’ as a ‘concentration camp’ was first made by the NNC President Phizo in his protest against the practice. *Keesing’s Record of World Events*, vol. VII No. 3 (March 1961), 17986.

<sup>83</sup> Interview of MI Luen, Tuli, 26 December 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Interview of Luen.

girls and two elected village chiefs. In another imposed tragedy 10 men and one woman died by being forced to starve which is often the case. This occurred between July 4 and Aug. 2 this year.<sup>85</sup>

Thus the grouping system totally destroyed the normal social life of the Naga people during this period. Kept under restriction, while children could not go to school, the adults could not work their fields. Thus, the whole social system practically came to a standstill.

The disruption of normal life hit the dominantly agricultural society very hard. Many villages and granaries were also burned by the Indian military in their attempt to apprehend the nationalists and prevent food supply. According to Kaka D Iralu, out of the 860 Naga villages that were in existence at that time, 645 were reduced to rubble along with their granaries.<sup>86</sup> Through the grouping system many were herded away from their villages and kept in other villages for years, making it impossible to work their fields. Thus, they had to survive on wild leaves and roots collected from the jungles when they were allowed to go out of the enclosure from time to time.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the economic condition of the Naga society during this period was in a pitiable state. Some even died of famine and starvation. To cite some examples: A letter written by three villagers of Satakha (VK Sukhai, KG Kiase and N Chuvetsi) to the Peace Commission in 1964 listed 29 villagers aged between six and seventy, who died of starvation in the jungle after the Army had burnt their villages on 24 March 1956.<sup>88</sup> A NNC report in 1956 stated that over 2,000 had died through 'torture, starvation and exposure.'<sup>89</sup> There are no alternative sources to compare the NNC report with, due to lack of statistical report from the GoI and independent sources, since at that time journalists were not allowed to enter the region by the GoI: writing in 1984, Udayon Mishra noted: 'Prior to this (that is, the 1970s),

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<sup>85</sup> 'Letter of A.Z. Phizo, President of NNC to Frederick H. Boland, President of UNO, 8 October 1960' reproduced in NNC (ed.), *The Naga National Rights and Movement* (Kohima: Publicity and Information Dept. NNC, 1993), 54-57.

<sup>86</sup> Iralu, *Nagaland and India*, 99.

<sup>87</sup> Interview of Jamir.

<sup>88</sup> 'Letter of V.K. Sukhai, K.G. Kiase and N. Chuvetsi to Peace Mission, Khuivi, Dated 15 June 1964' in Iralu, *Nagaland and India*, 154.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Iralu, *Nagaland and India*, 89.

Nagaland was virtually forbidden territory for Indian newsmen who are completely barred from entering the North-East.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, the Naga society underwent difficulties during the period, 1947-63. Politically, it marked the beginning of the Indo-Naga crisis characterised by violent conflicts. Socially, it suffered displacement (jungle camps and Grouping), disruption of normal life (education and daily activities) and psychological crises (militarization). Economy-wise, abject poverty and starvation prevailed as a result of the inability of the villagers to work their fields and the burning of fields and granaries in the military operation.

### **3.2. Mission and ecclesiastical changes**

In 1947 there was already a large Christian community in Nagaland. As noted earlier, Christian faith was first introduced in Nagaland by the American Baptist missionaries. The first contact was made in 1839 by Miles Bronson. But this endeavour was short-lived, and no converts were made. After a period of about thirty years, a second attempt was made under the initiative of another American Baptist missionary, Edward Winter Clark and his Assamese assistant Godhula Rufus Brown. This initiative lasted and resulted in the establishment of Baptist churches in Nagaland. The American Baptist Missionaries worked in Nagaland till 1955. During this period, 46 per cent of the total population of Nagaland became Christian.<sup>91</sup>

Until 1947, there was only one Christian denomination in Nagaland, the Baptists. However, since the late 1940s Catholics as well as Charismatic forms of Christian faith entered Nagaland. Consequently, by the end of this period, there were Naga churches

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<sup>90</sup> Udayon Mishra, 'Human Rights Violations in North East' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XIX No. 52&53 (22-29 December 1984), 2157.

<sup>91</sup> According to the *Census of India 1951*, there were 98,068 Christians in Nagaland out of the total population of 213,000. 'Census of India, 1951.'

belonging to four different Christian traditions: Baptist, Catholic, Nagaland Christian Revival Church (NCRC) and Pentecostal.

### **3.2.1. The Naga Baptist churches**

Among the Baptists, this period was prominently characterised by the transition from foreign missionary control to native leadership. The last American Baptist missionary RF DeLano, handed over the files of the Naga Baptist mission to Kijungluba on 8 January 1955. It marked the beginning of the post-foreign missionary period among the Naga Baptists.

The Naga Baptist churches of the time can be divided into two groups based on their stages of development: the older churches and the younger churches. The ‘older’ churches are those of the Ao, Angami, Kyong and Sumi tribes among whom most of the mission work during the foreign missionary period was done. It was among these tribes that the mission centres were established and consequently investments were made in education and leadership. Most of the Naga Baptists by the end of the missionary period belonged to these Naga tribes. These ‘older’ churches played a pivotal role in the evangelization of the rest of the Naga tribes. They took over the role of the American Baptist missionaries and nurtured the ‘younger’ churches, providing personnel and finances, until they were in a position to stand on their own. Thus, the Angami Baptists worked with the Rengma, Chakhesang, Kuki and Zeliangrong; the Ao Baptists worked with the Phom, Sangtam, Chang, Konyak, Kheamnungan and Yimchunger; and the Sumi Baptists also with the Yimchunger tribe. The 1965 *ABAM (Ao Baptist Arogo Mungdang) Border Tribe Report*, gave the number of ministers (evangelists, pastors, teachers and field secretaries) from the ‘older’ churches working among the ‘younger’ churches in the Trans-Dikhu (eastern and northern Nagaland):

Name of the tribe	Number of Older church ministers
Konyak	43
Phom	20
Chang	12
Sangtam	9
Kheamnungan	5
Yimchunger	7
<b>Total</b>	96

**Table 3: Ministers from older Baptist churches working with younger churches<sup>92</sup>**

The data given in the table above is not comprehensive in that it shows only Trans-Dikhu. Nevertheless, it at least gives an idea of the number of personnel from the ‘older’ churches who were involved with the ‘younger’ churches during this period.

The ‘younger’ churches are those of the rest of the Naga tribes among whom Christian mission started later. Their membership was still small. They were also still dependent on the ‘older’ churches for finance and leadership. Thus, many of them had pastors, evangelists and field secretaries from the ‘older’ churches. The table below shows younger churches along with the year in which mission started among them and the year from which they were headed by person of their own tribes:

Tribal associations	Beginning of Baptist Mission; *First contact	First local leadership
Sangtam Baptists	1912	1959
Chang Baptists	1892*, 1936	1968
Konyak Baptists	1839*, 1932	1967
Phom Baptists	1855*, 1925	1971
Rengma Baptists	1918	1950
Chakhesang Baptists	1895*, 1930	1953
Zeliangrong Baptists	1905*, 1951	1954
Kuki Baptists	1899*, 1908	1961
Yimchunger Baptists	1942	1964
Pochury Baptists	1938	1973

**Table 4: Younger Baptist church organizations<sup>93</sup>**

The table above clearly shows that many of the younger churches were still dependent on the older churches for leadership even up to the 1960s and 70s.

<sup>92</sup> ABAM Border Tribe File, 1965. Source: Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: The Ao Naga*, 73.

<sup>93</sup> Compiled from NBCC. *One New Humanity*.



Another significant development among the Naga Baptists during this period was the reorganization of the Naga Hills Baptist Church Advisory Council (NHBCAC). As discussed in the previous chapter (see section 2.2), the NHBCAC was formed in 1935. However, until the 1950s it did not function properly. With the missionaries stationed at the four mission centres (Impur, Kohima, Wokha and Aizuto) functioning as the authority over the mission decisions and strategies, the existence of the NHBCAC was only nominal. In 1953, the NHBCAC was renamed as the Naga Baptist Church Council (NBCC). The change in nomenclature was from a geographically based 'Naga Hills' to an ethnic based 'Naga'. On the eve of the inauguration of the Nagaland state, in 1958, the term 'Naga' was replaced by 'Nagaland', and thus the present form, Nagaland Baptist Church Council.<sup>94</sup> It was also in the year 1958, after the missionary withdrawal, that the NBCC reorganised itself into a fully operational body. The reorganization was affected through the regularization passed in a meeting from 28-31 March 1958:

Voted that the three NBCC Secretaries will be appointed for the three Districts in Naga Hills-Tuensang area [Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang] ... Voted that Bye-Law (o) There will be Executive Committee of seven members who will be elected by NBCC. At least one member should be from each District ...<sup>95</sup>

The three 'honorary secretaries' were Kijungluba, Longri Ao and Mhalie representing the then three districts of Nagaland, that is, Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang.<sup>96</sup> Later, in its Council meeting at Kohima from 26-29 November 1959, Kenneth Kerhuo was appointed as the first Executive Secretary of NBCC from 1960.<sup>97</sup>

The NBCC galvanized the Naga Baptists, providing a unified platform to express their views and concerns. For instance, it was through NBCC that the Naga Baptists began to express the Naga Baptist churches' concern in the light of the socio-political difficulties the Naga people were facing. It also helped the Naga Baptists to channel resources to do

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<sup>94</sup> NBCC No. 8-10, Kohima, March 28-29, 1958.

<sup>95</sup> NBCC No. 8-10, Kohima, March 28-29, 1958.

<sup>96</sup> NBCC EC 59-4, Kohima, February 6-8, 1959.

<sup>97</sup> NBCC NC-59/917, Kohima, November 26-29, 1959.

mission work. The NBCC also created its own mission wing with the formation of the 'Home Mission Board' (HMB, present Nagaland Mission Movement, NMM) in November 1960,<sup>98</sup> which became the premier mission agency of the Naga Baptists. The NBCC also provided the platform for Naga Baptists to help each other in times of difficulties. As noted above, due to the conflict situation, the entire Naga population endured a difficult time in the form of loss of life, property and livelihood. Along with the society, the churches were also afflicted. Many church buildings were occupied,<sup>99</sup> defiled<sup>100</sup> and burned<sup>101</sup> by the military, causing serious physical and economic damages. The pitiable economic condition of the members meant that many churches struggled economically. For the Naga Baptists, the NBCC provided the platform to help struggling churches in financial needs. For instance, in 1963 the NBCC designated 'a sum of Rs 1080', a substantial amount of money at the time, 'to support one pastor in each of the three fields, Zeliang, Phom and Keomnungen [sic].'<sup>102</sup>

Naga Baptist women also played a prominent role in the mission of the churches during this period. Many of them were involved in active evangelistic activities. In 1949, a certain Mayangmetongla was appointed by the Ao Baptist women's association to work as evangelist 'to spread the gospel' among the non-Christian Ao Naga.<sup>103</sup> Dzuvinno, an Angami Baptist woman, worked in a similar capacity. Her work, according to Aphuno Chase-Roy, included 'visiting homes, and taking classes for interested women.'<sup>104</sup> Such teacher-evangelist women were known as 'Bible women', whose role involved

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<sup>98</sup> NBCC NCA-60/29, Mokokchung, November 24-26, 1960.

<sup>99</sup> NBCC's meeting minutes of 5 February 1962 read: 'Voted: that we appeal to the Government again for immediate evacuation of Church buildings which are still under occupation of the army.' NBCC ANBC-62/77, Mokokchung, February 5, 1962.

<sup>100</sup> One of the most outrageous acts was the rape of Mayangkokla inside the Ungma Baptist Church on 24 February 1957 under the command of Major Trilok Singh of the Jat Regiment of the Indian army. Interview of Mayangkokla by Kaka D Iralu. See, Iralu, *Nagaland and India*, 229-231.

<sup>101</sup> Ao, *Nokinketer Mungchen*, 129.

<sup>102</sup> NBCC ANBC-63/106, Dimapur, February 15-17, 1963.

<sup>103</sup> Narola Imchen, *Women in Church and Society: The Story of Ao Naga Women* (Jorhat: ETC, 2001), 66;.

<sup>104</sup> Aphuno Chase-Roy, *Women in Transition: Angami Naga Women From 1878 to the Present* (Kohima: author, 2004), 114, 181.

evangelism, teaching in the primary schools and promoting adult literacy by teaching womenfolk in the village how to read and write. Howard Houston, one of the last American Baptist missionaries in Nagaland, reported in 1951:

some young Angami women have shown remarkable consecration in going to completely non-Christian villages spending several months in village teaching children during the day and women in the evening and receiving only Rs. 20/- month for this life of loneliness ...<sup>105</sup>

Since the 1940s, Naga Baptist women began to form associations to promote women's involvement in the mission of the church.<sup>106</sup> The first being the Ao Baptist Women's Association (ABTM: Ao Baptist Tetsur Mungdang), which was formed on 24 February 1944. The formation of the Baptist women's associations also fostered greater women involvement in the Baptist mission. These associations played a big role in evangelism. For instance, PT Philip noted in his *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland* that the Angami Baptist women's association supported two evangelists to work among the Konyak Naga and one for the Zeliang Naga. Similarly, the Ao Baptist women's association supported 21 pastors and an evangelist among the Trans-Dikhu tribes.<sup>107</sup>

During the British rule, Protestant Christian mission agencies in north-east India functioned under a comity agreement between themselves, whereby each mission was to confine their areas of operation to certain geographical areas, and that they would not 'encroach upon each other's field.'<sup>108</sup> Thus, the Baptists were in upper Assam, Naga Hills, Garo Hills, southern Mizoram and Manipur; the Presbyterian in northern Mizoram and the Garo Hills of Meghalaya; and the Anglicans and Lutherans among the tea garden labourers in the plains of Assam. The British India government saw this agreement as essential to maintain tranquillity in their realm; and thus helped maintain it. The Catholics were not part of this comity agreement. Nevertheless, due to the government's support of

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<sup>105</sup> 'Report of Howard Houston, Council of Baptist Churches in Assam, 30 December 1950 – 5 January 1951' as quoted in Roy, *Women in Transition*, 178.

<sup>106</sup> ABTM Silver Jubilee Minutes 1944-1968 Register in Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change*, 157.

<sup>107</sup> Philip. *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 91, 77.

<sup>108</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 36.

the agreement, and the fact that various missions had to first ask the government permission to work in certain areas,<sup>109</sup> their movements were also restricted.

There were some instances, whereby attempts were made by other Christian missions to enter the Naga area. For instance, in 1885, the Church of Scotland missionary, W MacFarland showed interest in starting mission work among the Kyong Naga tribe. He asked CD King, an American Baptist missionary who was then based at Kohima, useful information on the Kyong Naga area.<sup>110</sup> This prompted the Baptist missionaries to make haste and established a mission centre of their own among the Kyong Naga. On 9 April 1885, WE Witter and his wife (Mary), moved from Sibsagar in Assam to Wokha in Naga Hills to work with the Kyong Naga people.<sup>111</sup> In another instance, in the 1920s, the suggestion by Bishop Hubback of Dibrugarh (Assam) to establish an Anglican church at Mokokchung was rejected by the 'Ao Committee', an association that represented the Ao Naga Baptists in the early part of the twentieth century. Kijungluba, who was present in this meeting noted the words of Ao evangelists Supongwati: 'The American Baptist mission is good enough for the Nagas... if we allow or accept another denomination that would be something like an old man marrying two wives, causing dissension and unrest in the family.'<sup>112</sup>

Thus, till 1947, Nagaland was purely Baptist territory. This Baptist monopoly was broken with the introduction of Catholic mission in 1948.

### **3.2.2. The Naga Catholic churches**

The beginning of Catholic mission in Nagaland was associated with the government's initiative to open a hospital at Kohima. The hospital was a 'war gift' of British India for

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<sup>109</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 35.

<sup>110</sup> Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 100.

<sup>111</sup> WE Witter, 'Historical Sketch of the Lotha Naga Mission,' Assam Mission Jubilee (1886), 91; Mason, 'These Seventy-Five Years,' 47.

<sup>112</sup> L Kijung Ao, *Ao Arogo Meyipa Reprangshiba* (Retrospection of Ao Churches) (n.d.), 3. Cf. Ao, *Nokinketer Mungchen*, 99.

the Naga people in appreciation for their help during the Second World War.<sup>113</sup> Akbar Hydari, the then Governor of Assam, requested the Bishop of Shillong, Stephen Ferrando, for assistance to staff the hospital.<sup>114</sup> The Bishop responded positively by sending two sisters of the Spanish congregation of the *Missioneras de Christo Jesu* (Missionary of Christ Jesus), Margarita and Guadalupe, along with their chaplain, Emmanuel Bars, a Salesian priest, to Kohima. They arrived at Kohima on 31 December 1948.<sup>115</sup> However, being under contract with the government, the sisters and the chaplain were under restriction prohibiting them from doing pastoral work among the natives.<sup>116</sup> Thus in the initial years, no evangelistic activities were done. But slowly, through medical work and personal contacts, the sisters and their chaplain (now Hubert Marocchino, who replaced Bars in 1952<sup>117</sup>) befriended a small group of people. This group included Paulus Keviprale, Louis Neizo and Philip Suosahie, who by 1952 began to attend the Sunday mass at the hospital chapel. They formed the first core of Naga Catholics in Kohima.<sup>118</sup>

The first Naga Catholic community however was formed a year earlier at Lakhuti, a Kyong Naga village north of Kohima. It occurred rather fortuitously out of a dispute among the members of the Baptist church in the village in 1950, resulting in the excommunication of three of its members, namely, Shambano Humtsoe (church treasurer), Yantsao Yanthan (chowkidar), and Chenisao Humtsoe (deacon). David Syiemlieh in his *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland* (1990) stated that

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<sup>113</sup> Hutton, *Problems of Reconstruction in the Assam Hills*, 3.

<sup>114</sup> Interview of Chacko Karinthayil, Dimapur, 24 October 2016; Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 41.

<sup>115</sup> 'History' [www.kohimadiocese.org/history.html](http://www.kohimadiocese.org/history.html) (Accessed 1 July 2016); Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 42.

<sup>116</sup> Interview of Karinthayil.

<sup>117</sup> O Paviotti, *The Work of His Hands* (Shillong: Archbishop's House, 1987), 103.

<sup>118</sup> Interview of Carlos Neisalhou, Kohima, 27 October 2016; Interview of Karinthayil.

five members were excommunicated.<sup>119</sup> However, local sources, both Baptist and Catholic, indicated during the interview that only three were excommunicated.<sup>120</sup>

The controversy started in the light of the Kyong Baptist Church Council's (KBCC) circular to give a yearly increment of Rupees 2.50 towards the salary of the village pastors (under the council). The three were in favour of following the directive. However, the rest of the 'Official Board' (that is, the local church's administrative council including the pastor, deacons, treasurer and secretary) were against it 'as they felt that they did not have enough resources to do so.'<sup>121</sup> Unable to resolve the dispute by themselves,<sup>122</sup> the KBCC was invited. Three representatives of the council, Phantheo Shitiri (chairman), Nphyo Kikon (secretary) and Ahamo Patton (evangelist) came and investigated the case in October 1950. The verdict was given against the three accusing them of 'disobedience to the majority decision of the Official Board.'<sup>123</sup> This decision was evidently taken on the basis of the Naga cultural way of making decisions whereby the majority decision was considered binding.

In the light of the verdict against them, on 2 April 1951, the family members of the three (twenty one in number) took a resolution to approach another Christian denomination.<sup>124</sup> To seek advice on the matter they travelled to Wokha (the administrative headquarter of Kyong Naga Area) on 7 April 1951 and met Nchemo Kinghen (Chairman of Lotha Bench Court), Mhondamo Kithan (President of Lotha Tribal Council), and Howard Houston (the then American Baptist missionary among the Kyong Naga). All three of them told the dissidents of their universal right to embrace any religious faith of

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<sup>119</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 49.

<sup>120</sup> Interview of Ezambemo Lotha, Lakhuti, 7 July 2016; Interview of Daniel Yanthan, Lakhuti, 14 July 2016.

<sup>121</sup> Interview of Ezambemo.

<sup>122</sup> Daniel Yanthan reasoned that 'the decisive role that a pastor usually plays is the case of a stalemate like this was probably blunted by the fact that the issue was regarding his own salary. Thus, the then pastor, Tsungmongo Yanthan, took a neutral stand.' Interview of Yanthan.

<sup>123</sup> Interview of Ezambemo.

<sup>124</sup> Interview of Yanthan.

their own choice.<sup>125</sup> Encouraged by this, on 9 April 1951, they went to Koragaun (Assam) where they met the Catholic Christians of the neighbouring Adivasi community. Along with the catechist of Koragaun, on 12 April 1951, they went to Golaghat (Assam) to see the Parish Priest, F Bollini who shared with them the teachings and practices of the Catholic faith.<sup>126</sup> They returned home on 15 April 1951 and declared that they had accepted the Catholic faith.<sup>127</sup> After constructing a small thatched house, on 1 May 1951, they had their first religious service.<sup>128</sup> Soon many joined the new congregation resulting in the baptism of 200 men, women and children on 28 November 1953 at Lakhuti by Orestes Marengo, the then bishop of Dibrugarh.<sup>129</sup>

According to Syiemlieh, the appointment of Marengo as bishop of the newly established diocese of Dibrugarh, Assam, was done 'to speed up the work in the Lotha hills.'<sup>130</sup> The bishop took a personal interest in the Lotha Catholics learning their language and visiting them often. In 1954, John Larrea, a Spanish Salesian priest, was put in charge of the Kyong Naga mission. However he continued to be based at Golaghat, Assam, from where he engaged in periodic visitations for preaching, baptisms, film shows and Catechisms.<sup>131</sup> Thus, unlike the Catholic mission among the Angami Naga, where there were always the resident priests (Bar and Marrochino) at Kohima, among the Kyong Naga, the priest only made occasional visits. In the light of this, travelling catechists played a vital role in the growth of the Catholic mission. The first travelling catechist was Yantsao Yanthan.<sup>132</sup> The role of these catechists and lay Catholic witnesses is evident in that during 1955 to 1958, when the priest (Larrea) could not visit Nagaland due to the

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<sup>125</sup> Interview of Ezambemo; Interview of Yanthan.

<sup>126</sup> Interview of Yanthan. According to Syiemlieh, the meeting with Fr Bollini took place on 28 December 1950. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 49. But local sources, both Catholic and Baptist, indicated that it was 12 April 1951. Interview of Ezambemo; Interview of Yanthan.

<sup>127</sup> Interview of Ezambemo.

<sup>128</sup> Interview of Yanthan.

<sup>129</sup> Interview of Yanthan. He was also one of those baptised that day.

<sup>130</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 52.

<sup>131</sup> Interview of Yanthan.

<sup>132</sup> Interview of Yanthan.

political situation, the Catholic population in the Lotha Naga area, increased from 415 in 1955 to 1,165 in 1958.<sup>133</sup>

In the Kohima area, lay Catholics played a vital role in the growth of the Catholic mission. Many of them were instrumental in spreading the Catholic faith in most of the surrounding villages. For instance, at Jotsoma, Joseph Vitsutha and Guovi, who were baptised into the Catholic faith at Kohima, attracted their friends to the Catholic faith, resulting in the establishment of a Catholic church in their village. At Kohima village, it was Kezevillie, a school teacher, who convinced a few villagers to learn more of ‘the true church’, resulting in the establishment of a Catholic church in that village. Gouvi and Kezevillie were also instrumental in taking the Catholic faith to Zubza and Poilwa respectively.<sup>134</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1952, the Spanish sisters left Kohima, their contract with the government having expired.<sup>135</sup> But for an unknown reason Marocchino was not given the quit notice. Paviotti suggested that the authority might have ‘forgotten’ or overlooked him.<sup>136</sup> But there is the possibility of the favourable role of the then Deputy Commissioner at Kohima, SJD Carvalho (1953-1957), who was a devout member of the Kohima Catholic congregation, and who, according to Rocus Rokoselhu Chasie, had earlier allowed Marocchino to stay outside the hospital compound.<sup>137</sup> Thus, Marocchino stayed on till October 1963. He was replaced by Joseph James Felix, a Salesian priest from Tamil Nadu (South India). Thus, 1963 marked the end of foreign (non-Indian) missionary leadership for the Naga Catholic churches, though it had to wait till the late 1980s for native Naga leadership.

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<sup>133</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 56, 59.

<sup>134</sup> *Silver Jubilee Catholic Church Kohima, 1952-1977* (Kohima: [no pub.], 1977), 24-29.

<sup>135</sup> *Diocese of Kohima: Directory 2013-2014* (Kohima: Bishop House, n.d.), 7.

<sup>136</sup> Paviotti, *The Work of His Hands*, 103.

<sup>137</sup> Rocus Rokoselhu Chasie, *The Angami Catholic Church* (Kohima, ACU Publishing Board, 2013), 7-8.



Until 1951, the diocese of Shillong covered the whole of north-east India. With the division of the diocese of Shillong into two in 1951, the Naga Catholics came under the new diocese of Dibrugarh.<sup>138</sup>

During the early years, the Catholic mission in Nagaland faced strong opposition from the Baptist churches and the Baptist majority society. Early Catholic converts in Kohima were threatened with excommunication from their villagers.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, by 1963, the Catholic communities were firmly established among the two south-western Naga tribes of Angami (Kohima) and Kyong (Wokha) communities.

### **3.2.3. The Nagaland Christian Revival Churches**

The Nagaland Christian Revival Church (NCRC) was a product of a revival among the Baptist churches in the 1950s through the preaching of a Baptist minister, named Rikum Ao (detailed discussion on the revival in section 3.5). The charismatic nature of the revival alarmed the Baptist church leaders. Rikum was summoned to Impur Mission Centre where AS Truxton, the then resident missionary and the Ao Baptist Church Council (ABAM) examined him. He was subsequently asked to recant, but having refused, he was excommunicated.<sup>140</sup> He was later reinstated with the recommendation of Truxton, who examined Rikum over a period of two years, at the end of which he was satisfied with the written doctrinal position that Rikum wrote for him.<sup>141</sup>

It was at this juncture that the foreign missionary withdrawal occurred among the Naga Baptists, leaving the controversy in the hands of the native leadership. Unfortunately, they were unable to bring about an amicable solution. One reason for this failure could be the extra-cautious attitude that often characterises transitional leadership. As the native leaders took full responsibility over the matters of the Naga churches for

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<sup>138</sup> Paviotti, *The Work of His Hands*, 108.

<sup>139</sup> Jacob Aluckal, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India* (Shillong: Bishop's House, 2006), 104; Chasie, *The Angami Catholic Church*, 6.

<sup>140</sup> Rikum Ao, *1952 nungi Naga Revival* (Mokokchung: Author, 1978), 3-4.

<sup>141</sup> Ao, *1952 nungi Naga Revival*, 6-7.

the first time, they were very cautious in making sure that they did not get it wrong. This made them take a rigid stand in the face of challenges, demanding recantation and not giving room for any theological discussions.

Another reason could be the lack of adequate theological training among the Naga Baptist leaders to deal with challenging theological issues. Most of the Baptist leaders of the time were products of the training schools run by the missionaries at the mission centres. These schools offered basic training programs focussing on equipping teachers, pastors and evangelists for the villages.<sup>142</sup> A few like M Savino (Pierce Divinity School, Rangoon) and Longri Ao (Jorhat Bible School, Assam) were graduates of the Bible Schools run by the American Baptists. These Bible Schools offered subjects like ‘historical’ and ‘exegetical’ knowledge of the Bible, church history, ‘principle doctrines of the Bible’ and ‘comparative religions’, apart from other practical subjects like ‘Church government, conduct of church services, preaching ... [and] personal Christian life.’<sup>143</sup> But how far the students were equipped by these missionary-run schools to deal amicably with issues that challenged the teachings of the missionaries is questionable: the very purpose of these schools was to ensure Baptist continuity among the native churches. Thus, faced with the challenge that questioned their missionary-inherited faith, they did what they knew best; vigorously insisted on recantation, which proved to be ineffective to bring about any remedial solution. It is worth noting here that Rikum did his theological studies at the Allahabad Bible Seminary, an interdenominational college run by the One Mission Society (formerly Oriental Missionary Society), rather than a Baptist missionary-run seminary. While as a student of this seminary, he came in contact with the Pentecostal movement.

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<sup>142</sup> ‘Report of the Ao Naga Field’ *ABMC* (December 14-22, 1895), 44.

<sup>143</sup> SAD Boggs, ‘Bible School Report’ *ABMC* (November 23-December 1, 1927), 28.

Meanwhile the revivalists took two steps that took them further away from the Baptist church. First, they came under the influence of The Pentecostal Mission (TPM, earlier known as the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission). This connection was made through Imkongtoshi (I Toshi), a pioneer revivalist, who during his student days at the Allahabad Agricultural Institute, Allahabad, had come in contact with the Pentecostal church there. In 1958 a delegate of Naga revivalists attended the TPM convention at Kolkata. Some of them (Chubasoa, Longriyangla, Pangmayangba and others) also went to Chennai and were trained in the TPM practices.<sup>144</sup>

Second, in 1959, at Wokha, some of the revivalists, doubting their earlier baptism, were 're-baptised'.<sup>145</sup> This was done under the influence of an independent preacher named Benjamin. The identity and church affiliation of Benjamin is shrouded in mystery. Local tradition only had him as an 'independent preacher' who befriended Chubasoa, a revivalist who at that time was studying at the Eastern Theological College (ETC), Jorhat. Benjamin was also not attached to ETC, but was simply visiting the college campus 'in search of Christian fellowship.'<sup>146</sup> Chubasoa took him to the revivalist meeting at Wokha. His preaching convinced some of the revivalists to renounce their earlier baptism and were re-baptised.<sup>147</sup> This became 'the main issue' of resentment for the Baptist church leadership as it practically annulled the baptism offered by the Baptist church. Even today, elderly Naga Baptists often refer to the NCRC members as 'twice-baptised' group ('*Anaben tsusener telok*' in Ao Naga), though the NCRC churches do not practise double baptism. The incident of re-baptism noted above was performed by only a few early NCRC members.

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<sup>144</sup> Interview of Imchayanger, Dimapur, 2 November 2016. Imchayanger is a first generation NCRC member; NCRC, *Revival: Golden Jubilee, 1962-2012* (Dimapur: NCRC, 2012), 10.

<sup>145</sup> Interview of Chenrochila and Sakutula, Longkhum, 12 July 2016; Interview of Imchayanger.

<sup>146</sup> Interview of Imchayanger.

<sup>147</sup> Interview of Imchayanger.

For about a decade, the revivalists remained an unorganised group of excommunicated Baptists. In order to bring solidarity and fellowship, a convention was organised by the revivalists at Keruma (now Zhadima) from 5-8 January 1961. About 700 revivalists gathered amidst government prohibition of gathering of more than four persons due to the political situation. Inadvertently, the gathering attracted the attention of the Indian army who surrounded them. Following ‘a prophecy’ the congregation started shouting ‘Praise the Lord’. At this the captain of the army, realising that it was a religious meeting, ordered his troops to withdraw.<sup>148</sup> The utterance of ‘Praise the Lord’ after every prayer or testimony became a distinctive feature of NCRC churches.

A second convention was held at Gariphema from 6-9 January 1962. The speaker for this convention was TPM preacher, Selvaraj, who urged the revivalists to join the Pentecostal denomination. After much deliberation, the revivalists decided to refuse the offer of the Pentecostals; but rather formed an ‘indigenous independent’ organization called Nagaland Christian Revival Church (NCRC),<sup>149</sup> with Neihulie Angami as the first President.<sup>150</sup>

Women played a significant role during the early days of the NCRC. Zachipralu, a Chakhesang Naga woman, for instance, was instrumental in introducing the revival movement among her own tribe.<sup>151</sup> The 1950s revival also brought into prominence the ‘prophetic’ and ‘prayer’ ministry of women. Women with ‘prophetic’ gifts were revered and sought after. For instance, at Longkhum village, where the revival started, a woman with a prophetic gift named Malemtetla was revered and her directions were instructive. It was in response to her prophetic call that the first pastor of the NCRC at the Longkhum village, Tsuinluin, was appointed.<sup>152</sup> Many women also gave themselves to fasting and

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<sup>148</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 9.

<sup>149</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 10; Interview of Tesang Jamir, Mokokchung, 12 July 2016.

<sup>150</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 11.

<sup>151</sup> Phuveyi Dozo, *The Cross over Nagaland* (Guwahati: CLC, 1983), 15.

<sup>152</sup> Interview of Chenrochila. Chenrochila (73 years) is the daughter of Malemtetla.

prayer,<sup>153</sup> which later gave rise to the establishment of ‘Prayer Centres’ (discussed in section 4.2).

#### **3.2.4. The Pentecostal Mission, Nagaland**

The Gariphema convention of the revivalists in 1962 decided to refuse the invitation to join the TPM. However some of the revivalists joined the TPM. One of them, Sasiokuo Sekhose, started a Pentecostal church at his house at Kohima village. He was joined by some elderly women from his village (Kohima village).<sup>154</sup> Another, Ayangba, who had been trained at the Faith Home in Chennai, opened a Pentecostal church at Changtongya village.<sup>155</sup> These were the earliest Pentecostal churches in Nagaland from which they spread to other places in the following years.

#### **3.2.5. Summary**

By the end of this period, 1947-1963, some form of Christian faith had become the religion of the majority of the Naga population. According to the *Indian Census 1961*, 52.98 per cent of the Naga population was Christian.<sup>156</sup> Thus, for the first time, Christianity became the religion of majority in Nagaland during this period.

The period examined in this chapter was a time of transition for Naga churches. It was during this period that Naga churches took the vital step of transition from being a ‘mission field’ to an independent native Christian community. Most churches came under native Christian leadership with the withdrawal of all foreign missionaries between 1955 and 1963. Thus, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise as it hastened the indigenization of native leadership in the Naga churches. Among the Naga Baptists another clear impact of this was the reorganization of the NBCC which had remained in the shadow of the missionaries until then. Now it began to play an assertive role among the Naga Baptist

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<sup>153</sup> Chase-Roy, *Women in Transition*, 160.

<sup>154</sup> Interview of Kesa Sekhose, Kohima, 27 October 2016.

<sup>155</sup> Interview of Imchayanger.

<sup>156</sup> 195,588 out of the total population of 369,200 were Christians. ‘Census of India, 1961.’

churches. The Catholic churches also lost all their foreign missionaries by 1963, and they were replaced by Indian missionary priests. Due to a lack of adequately trained Naga candidates they had to wait until the 1980s for local/Naga leadership (clergy).

Denominationalism was a significant introduction during this period. Denominationalism in Nagaland was both imported as well as of local origin. It had a local flavour in the sense that the introduction of Catholic and Charismatic traditions were associated with experiences of division within the existing Baptist churches. Both, however, were not of totally isolated origin. The former was in line with the great divide of the Catholic and Protestant traditions. The latter, through the role played by the Pentecostal preachers, was influenced by the global Pentecostal movement. This bitter experience of accusations, persecutions and schisms, associated with the denominational rivalry introduced the Naga people to diverse Christian traditions. For the first time it also challenged the Naga churches to define their faith statements as each of them tried to set themselves apart from the others.

### **3.3. Independence, political crisis and Christian mission**

India's independence initially did not have any negative effect on Christian mission in Nagaland. Even in 1947 the American Baptist mission was bolstering its field for the long haul by appointing new resident missionaries for the formerly neglected mission centres at Wokha and Aizuto.<sup>157</sup> The new environment also brought good fortune for Catholic mission as it facilitated the establishment of Catholic mission in a formerly exclusive Baptist territory. Thus, during the first few years of India's independence, it looked like Christian mission would continue unhindered. The violent turn of the Indo-Naga political crisis however changed the scene. The first to suffer were the American Baptist missionaries who were suspected of instigating the nationalist movement at the behest of

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<sup>157</sup> 'Report of J.E. Tanquist,' *ABMC* (December 10-14, 1947), 30; 'Report of B.I. Anderson,' *ABMC* (December 10-14, 1947), 28.

the United States military.<sup>158</sup> In a failed attempt to refute this accusation, the American Baptist missionaries even made an appeal to the Naga nationalists to ‘move slowly and within the framework of the new government.’<sup>159</sup> But it only provoked accusation from the latter for ‘interference’.<sup>160</sup> The missionaries saw the Indian Prime Minister Nehru’s visit to Kohima in 1953 as an opportunity to explain their ‘neutral attitude’ to the Indian government.<sup>161</sup> But they were denied from meeting the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, they were given the permission to attend the ‘mass meeting at which he was to speak.’<sup>162</sup> The meeting, however, turned ugly with the walk-out by the Naga people. In the subsequent speech, Nehru made it clear that the days were numbered for the foreign missionaries. Nehru’s speech, as published in the *National Herald* (31 March 1953), clearly indicated his suspicion of the role of foreign hands in the Naga nationalist movement: ‘The outsiders who are misleading the Naga people against the best interests of the country may face serious consequences if they continue to indulge in their activities. We shall have to put an end to it.’<sup>163</sup> Anderson, who was present in the meeting, later wrote:

In his speech, he made no secret of his suspicions and declared the incident to be irrefutable evidence of the sinister influence of foreigners, whose presence in the Naga Hills would in a short time be terminated. Since we were the only foreigners there we knew what to expect in the future.<sup>164</sup>

In the military action that followed, the missionaries were questioned, their houses searched and they were summoned to the court to be interrogated regarding their relations with the nationalists.<sup>165</sup> Anderson wrote:

A police patrol searched our home for material evidence of political activity, they searched for any writings that would be related to the memorandum the Naga National Council had presented, they carried away the records of the Mission to be examined by an expert from Shillong ...

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<sup>158</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 93-94.

<sup>159</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 86.

<sup>160</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 93.

<sup>161</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 94.

<sup>162</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 94.

<sup>163</sup> *National Herald*, 31 March 1953 in Sharma and Sharma (eds), *Documents on North-East India: Vol. 9 Nagaland*, 146.

<sup>164</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 94-95.

<sup>165</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 94-95.

My summons to the court did not end for ten months until a lawyer was engaged to handle the case and secure my freedom from what had been virtually house arrest.<sup>166</sup>

Eventually in 1954 all missionaries were ordered to leave the Naga Hills. Consequently, all the American Baptist missionaries left the Naga Hills, the last being RF DeLano (1950-1955), who left the Naga Hills on 8 February 1955.<sup>167</sup> Later non-American (Catholic) missionaries were also to follow suit as the GoI tightened its security in the region. This, according to Downs, was because the GoI was fearful that ‘the presence of foreigners in such disturbed areas could be used by the rebels to internationalize their cause.’<sup>168</sup> The last Catholic foreign missionary, Marocchino, left the region in October 1963. Thus the suspicion instigated by the political situation turned the GoI against the missionary presence in the region. Even as late as 1969, it has been reported in the Indian media that the ‘money’ for the Naga nationalists comes ‘from foreign missionaries’,<sup>169</sup> though the missionaries were long gone by then.

The missionary withdrawal turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the Naga churches as it hastened indigenization of leadership. Among the Baptists, though the American Baptist missionaries were ostensibly committed to propagating native ‘self-governing’ churches,<sup>170</sup> the missionaries tarried from devolving full responsibility of the churches to the native leaders and continued to control the mission and ecclesiastical affairs. John Stuart in his *British Missionaries and the End of Empire* wrote of similar practice by British missionaries in Africa whereby in spite of their commitment to establish ‘self-governing churches’, until the late 1950s, the ‘control of ecclesiastical affairs remained ... largely in European missionary hands.’<sup>171</sup> The tendency was to think that the road to self-government would be long and gradual, and that the natives were still

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<sup>166</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 95.

<sup>167</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 96.

<sup>168</sup> Downs, *History of Christianity in India*, 118.

<sup>169</sup> ‘In no mood to compromise’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 4, No. 42 (18 October 1969), 1660.

<sup>170</sup> ‘Editorial’ *BMM*, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 3 (March 1898), 84.

<sup>171</sup> John Stuart, *British Missionaries and the End of Empire, East, Central and Southern Africa, 1939-1964* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 6-7.



unprepared for leadership. The changing context of decolonization however made the immediate devolution of responsibility to the native leadership inevitable. John CB Webster in his discussion on ‘Christianity in North-west India Since [India’s] Independence’ pointed out how a combination of factors pertinent to decolonization – ‘government’s new visa policy, the growing number of Indian Christians qualified for positions of leadership, and the mounting costs of missionary support the sending church had to bear’ – moved the foreign missionaries ‘first out of the church work and then out of institutions.’<sup>172</sup> In the case of the Naga churches, the political crisis however played the pivotal role of triggering the devolution of missionary control of the churches to native leadership. With the missionary withdrawal, native leaders like Kijungluba, Rikum Ao and Longri Ao among the Ao Naga, Kelhousekho, M Savino and Kenneth Kerhou among the Angami Naga, Ahamo and Nzanbemo among the Kyong Naga and Shihoto, Puntha and Zazhekhu among the Sumi Naga, took over the leadership of the Naga Baptist churches.

Unlike the Baptist mission, in 1963, the Catholic mission was only a little over a decade old. Thus, they had not enjoyed the luxury of decades of effort to develop native leadership. The Catholic missionaries had recognised the need to develop native leadership very early on. The sending of some Kyong Naga boys and girls for education to Dibrugarh in 1954, noted Syiemlieh, was with the hope that ‘they would become leaders in their villages.’<sup>173</sup> But 1963 came too early to have any ordained native priests, which according to Chacko Karinthayil, the Rector of Good Shepherd Seminary, Dimapur, needed at least ten years of preparation after their matriculation.<sup>174</sup> Thus, Catholic mission resorted to importing priests from other parts of India (usually from the

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<sup>172</sup> John CB Webster, *A Social History of Christianity: North-west India since 1800* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 292.

<sup>173</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 57.

<sup>174</sup> Interview of Karinthayil.

states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala). The aforementioned, Karinthayil, for instance, was originally from Kerala, but joined as a diocesan priest of the Naga Catholic church in 1960, and has been serving the church in different capacities since then. Joseph James Felix, from Tamil Nadu, who replaced Morrachino was the first of many Catholic priests from others parts of India to serve in Nagaland. It was only in 1989 that the first Naga Catholic Priests were ordained (discussed in section 4.2).

Not only within the churches, Naga Christians provided leadership in the society as a whole, living as they were in conflict situations. Often pastors and evangelists were the only educated ones in the rural areas, and thus the only ones with the necessary language skills to mediate between the security forces and the common people. Naga church leaders like Longri Ao also took up the role of apologists, taking up the case of the sufferings and afflictions of the people and writing to people in the government on their behalf. For example, when Pangyan Konyak, pastor of Chinglong village was arrested on 16 May 1955, and jailed for preaching in the restricted Tuensang area,<sup>175</sup> Longri wrote two letters to the Political Officer.<sup>176</sup> In another instance, when pastor Longkoi was killed by the security forces in August 1956, Longri Ao again wrote to the Governor on behalf of the Christian community.<sup>177</sup> Longkoi was killed for protesting against military excesses. First of all, in June 1956, he was fined Rs 100 by the nationalists (NNC) for speaking against their violent activities. Second, in August 1956, he was arrested by the Indian security force. He died in their custody.<sup>178</sup> Thus Christian leaders like Longri and Longkoi provided bold and courageous leadership amidst the dire circumstances in the society, often representing not only their own congregation but the whole society in dealing with

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<sup>175</sup> The GoI restricted Christian mission activity in Tuensang area, which was then under the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), and not under the Naga Hills (detailed discussion in section 3.4).

<sup>176</sup> Letter of Longri Ao to the Political Officer, 16 May 1955'; and 'Letter of Longri Ao to W. Rynjah, 31 May 1955.'

<sup>177</sup> Letter of Longri Ao to Governor of Nagaland, 19 August 1956.'

<sup>178</sup> 'Letter of Longri Ao to Governor of Nagaland, 19 August 1956.'

issues of military excesses and sufferings of the common people. These acts demonstrated to the Naga people that the churches' message of 'hope' was not merely a promise of a distant future, but a practical reality for a society in dire circumstances.

### **3.4. Nationalism and the Naga churches**

The rise of Naga nationalism and the ensuing conflict with the Indian government was one of the key issues that the churches in Nagaland had to face since the late 1940s. The Indo-Naga conflict was in fact one of many such conflicts that started in north-east India in the aftermath of India's independence. Apart from Nagaland, India faced similar nationalist movements in most of the states in the region: The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in Assam, The United National Liberation Front (UNLF) in Manipur, The Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram and the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in Tripura. All these, except the ULFA in Assam, were among the so-called tribal people. In India, the term 'tribal' or its related term *Adivasi* or 'Indigenous People' (further discussion in section 5.4), is generally used to refer to people who are not part of the caste system (caste and outcaste).

The relation between the 'caste' people and the 'tribals' in India had been marred by feeling of 'otherness' and contempt. The attitude of the former towards the 'tribals' is encapsulated in the use of Sanskrit terms like *chandals*, meaning 'anti-social element in the society', in the Vedas.<sup>179</sup> The attitude of the 'tribals' towards the 'caste' people was also uncomplimentary. The various tribal groups in north-east India, for instance, have specific terms to refer to the non-tribal Indians, which are generally pejorative in meaning. For instance, the Mizo people used the word *vai* to refer to non-tribals. According to Lalsangkima Pachuau, a Mizo scholar, *vai* is undoubtedly, 'bad, dishonest and selfish.'<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Nirmal Minz, *Rise up, My people, and Claim the Promise: The Gospel Among the Tribes of India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1997), 8.

<sup>180</sup> Lalsangkima Pachuau, 'Nationhood in Conflict: Ethnonationalism and (Indian) Political Nationalism in Northeast India' in Mark TB Laing (ed.), *Nationalism and Hindutva: A Christian Response* (Delhi: CMS, 2005), 63.

Similarly, a popular term used among the Naga people to refer to the non-tribals is *tsumar*. For a Naga, *tsumar* has the attribute of being untrustworthy and unreliable for relationship, especially marriage. Thus, they were the ‘others’ in whom the Naga people cannot fully put their trust. Thus, there had been mutually reciprocated feelings of antipathy between the ‘tribals’ and the ‘other Indians’. Hutton noted this mutual detestation between the two as follows:

The hill district of Assam are populated by tribes [i.e. Naga people] that are neither Bengali, Shan or Indian origin and have remained untouched by either Hinduism or Islam... none of these tribes are Indian at all except in the barest geographical sense and they feel for the people of the plains a rooted antipathy which seems generally to be heartily reciprocated.<sup>181</sup>

Thus, Hutton opined that the union between the Naga people and the ‘Plains people’ would be ‘an unnatural union’ of ‘irreconcilable culture[s]’.<sup>182</sup> Nationalism among the tribal people, especially in north-east India, was rooted, to a large extent, in this feeling of otherness shared between the ‘tribals’ and the ‘other’ Indians.

However it can be argued that this feeling of ‘otherness’ may not necessarily be identifiable with nationalistic feeling. Feelings of ‘otherness’ existed even among the various Naga tribes. Until the early twentieth century, a Naga would identify himself or herself only with his or her own village or tribe<sup>183</sup>; while what lay beyond were the ‘others’. Anthropologist, Furer Haimendorf who researched on the Naga people both in the 1930s and in the 1970s stated that for a Naga of old, mankind was ‘divided between a small inner circle of co-villagers, clansmen, and allied villages, on whose support he could depend and to whom he owed assistance in emergencies.’<sup>184</sup> Those beyond the ‘inner circle’ (even Naga) were the ‘others’. Allies with communities ‘outside the narrow circle of the in-group had no place in the Naga’s picture of the world.’<sup>185</sup> Thus, there was

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<sup>181</sup> JH Hutton’s note to the Simon Commission along with the Memorandum of the Naga club, as quoted in Ramuny, *The World of the Nagas*, 14.

<sup>182</sup> Hutton as quoted in Ramuny, *The World of the Nagas*, 14.

<sup>183</sup> There are about forty Naga tribes living both in India and Myanmar.

<sup>184</sup> Furer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, 251.

<sup>185</sup> Furer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, 251.

much feeling of ‘otherness’, even among the various Naga villages/tribes. This segmentary nature of the Naga society was the source of much friction and divisiveness in the Naga society throughout their history.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, a collective sense of Naga-ness was absent. Of the period 1920-30, Ben Wati wrote in his autobiographical work, *My Early Years in Nagaland*: ‘The time had not yet arrived to say I am a Naga.’<sup>186</sup> Even as late as 1974, M Horam stated: ‘The only binding factor among the [Naga] tribes is the fact that they are “different” from the Indians.’<sup>187</sup> Feelings of otherness among the various Naga tribes, commonly called ‘tribalism’ in the Naga context, was to continue to cause much distrust and conflict over the years (see section 4.1 and 5.1).

The idea of a Naga nation was a twentieth-century construct. Nation, as Benedict Anderson noted is an ‘imagined political community.’<sup>188</sup> Its constituent members may not have held any sense of belonging in the past; yet over time or through certain experiences a nation is imagined, first by a few, and gradually diffused to the masses. Certain experiences of the Naga people in the nineteenth and twentieth century nurtured the rise of the idea of the Naga nation. The coming of the British rule in the first place brought the various Naga territories into a single unit by bringing them under one political system. The British also treated the tribes in the Naga Hills as a homogenous group of people as distinct from the other group of people in the region. This, for the first time, promoted a sense of collective identity for these tribes. The spread of education and the use of English language also bridged the linguistic diversity among the Naga people. Exposure during the two World Wars as part of the British force further acted as a catalyst to nurture Naga nationalistic ambition. Naga people participated in the First World War as part of the

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<sup>186</sup> Wati, *My Early Years in Nagaland*, 41.

<sup>187</sup> M Horam, ‘Waiting for the Peace that never comes’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 9, No. 31 (3 August 1974), 3.

<sup>188</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

British labour corps in France.<sup>189</sup> There they saw the full extent of European nations battering each other for their national interest. It was these returnees who formed the Naga club, which in 1929 submitted the first political document expressing the desire for a Naga nation. The Naga experience of the Second World War was in their own backyard, as Kohima became the bastion of British defence against Japanese invasion of the Indian sub-continent. The NNC which was formed in the aftermath of the Second World War spearheaded the Naga nationalist movement. It was NNC's activities since the late 1940s that facilitated the diffusion of the idea of Naga nationalism from the imagining of a few to that of a mass movement.

The above discussion is the conventional line of argument for the emergence of Naga nationalism in the existing literature.<sup>190</sup> This literature however overlooked the religious factors that were instrumental in the rise of Naga nationalism. It can be argued that commitment to Christian faith was a key factor in the rise of Naga nationalism against India. This is evident in the very first Naga political document, the memorandum submitted by the Naga Club to the Simon Commission in 1929. In the first place, the memorandum did not ask for independence from British rule. It stated that in case the British withdrew from India, the Naga people did not want to be part of India on the ground that they shared no social affinity with the 'Hindus and Mussalmans [sic].'<sup>191</sup> There was a clear religious, or rather Christian, motivation behind the memorandum. In a later interview, Ruzhukhrie Sekhose, who wrote the draft of the memorandum, expressed his belief in divine providence in producing the document: 'How was I to know

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<sup>189</sup> Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam*, 162.

<sup>190</sup> See Alemchiba. *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*. Kohima: The Naga Institute of Culture, 1970; Sema, Hokishe. *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-economic and Political Transformation and the Future*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1986; Horam, M. *Naga Polity*. Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1992; Aosenba. *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict*. New Delhi: Regency, 2001; Singh, Chandrika. *Naga Politics: A Critical Account*. New Delhi: Mittal, 2004.

<sup>191</sup> 'Memorandum on the Naga Hills.'

that I would be writing such an important statement? It was truly the hand of God that moved my hand to write the memorandum.’<sup>192</sup>

The only exception of nationalist movement in Nagaland that is not Christian is the *Heraka* movement, a religio-political movement based on the claim of one Jadunang as ‘the Messiah-King’ who would drive away the ‘alien rulers’ (the British) from the Naga territory (see section 2.2). However this movement was against the British rather than India. On India’s independence they quickly sided with the Indian Union, nonetheless through the tactful act of Nehru (the first Prime minister of India) who declared Gaidinliu, Jadunang’s successor, as the ‘Naga Rani’ (Naga Queen) and enlisted her as one of India’s freedom fighters. A general trend could also be observed in north-east India, whereby sanskritized Assamese (Assam) and Mieties (Manipur) generally accepted the Indian Union, while the mostly Christian hill-tribes like the Naga, Mizo<sup>193</sup> and others resented joining the Indian Union.

The earliest prominent nationalist leaders like Zaphu Phizo, Imkongliba, T Sakhrie and others were all Christians. American Baptist missionary, Anderson, noted: ‘Our Christian young people were especially vocal in their presentation for this demand, this was due to their superior training as compared to those who had not accepted the Christian religion.’<sup>194</sup> They were also very vocal about their Christian faith and conviction about nationalism. Phizo, for instance, claimed to have got his divine commission in Acts 18:9-10: ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent, for I am with you, for I have many people in this city.’<sup>195</sup> The NNC also invoked Christian religious blessing in their

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<sup>192</sup> Interview of Ruzhukhrie Sekhose, Kohima, 17 November 1975 by Zapuvisie Lhousa. See, Lhousa, *Strange Country*, 18.

<sup>193</sup> For instance, the Christian affiliation of the Mizo National Front (MNF) was evident in the use of biblically inspired ‘Operation Jericho’ to refer to their first uprising on 28 February 1966. Operation Jericho was a coordinated attacks on the Government offices and security forces post in different parts of the Mizo district in Assam by MNF on 28 February 1966. Dangmei, *Christianity and De-Politicization of Naga Movement*, 62.

<sup>194</sup> Anderson, ‘Mission to the Nagas,’ 86.

<sup>195</sup> Lhousa, *Strange Country...*, 26.

activities through prayer and reading of the Christian scripture. Thong and Kath narrated the religious ceremony performed on the event of the formation of the FGN:

National Flag was hoisted by the Chief of the Naga Home Guard (NHG) Mr. Thungdi Chang C-in-C after reading from the Holy Bible St. Matthew 6: 33: 'But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you' by Mr. Khriesanisa Angami, Romans 8: 18 by W. Rengma followed by singing their National Anthem ...<sup>196</sup>

The dominance of Christians in the nationalist leadership and Christianization of the movement meant that Naga Christians became suspects of anti-India activity. Bishu Ram Medhi, the second Chief Minister of Assam (1950-1957; Naga Hills was under Assam till 1963) accused Christians of the spread of the nationalist movement: 'I cannot think of any demand for independent sovereign Naga state raised by a few handful Naga leaders, mostly Christians.'<sup>197</sup> Thus, many Christians faced persecution from the military. Naga church leaders like M Savino (Field Director of the Chakhesang Baptist Association) and Kenneth Kerhu (the first Executive Secretary of NBCC) were imprisoned on suspicion. Others like Pelesatuo (who succeeded Savino as the Field Director of Chakhesang Baptist Association) were less fortunate, suffering the fate of being put 'in a gunny bag, and tortured to death on 16 April 1956.'<sup>198</sup> These church leaders and their congregations were caught in the crossfire of suspicion and revenge between the military and the nationalists.

The GoI also imposed restrictions on the movement of Christian evangelists in eastern Nagaland, then known as the Tuensang division of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). This separation of Naga inhabited Tuensang area from the Naga Hills had its roots in the British administrative division of the Naga-inhabited area. The British divided the Naga territory into Administered Area (Naga Hills) and the Uncontrolled Tribal Area (Tuensang). In the Administered area, Naga villages paid house tax as a recognition of the British authority. In return they received British protection from raids by other

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<sup>196</sup> Thong and Kath, *Glimpses of Naga Legacy and Culture*, 51.

<sup>197</sup> Quoted in Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, 208.

<sup>198</sup> Dozo, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga Tribe*, 61; Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 123.



villages.<sup>199</sup> Most western Naga tribes were under the administered area: the Angami area from 1870s, the Sumi (Sema in colonial and missionary writings) area from 1887 and the Ao and Kyong (Lotha in colonial and missionary writings) area from 1889.<sup>200</sup> In the Uncontrolled Tribal Area, the British followed a policy of non-interference.<sup>201</sup> This area included the present day northern and eastern Nagaland which was never annexed or administered by the British.<sup>202</sup> In 1954, when the NEFA (It included the Tirap, Siang and Lohit district of present day Arunachal Pradesh along with the Tuensang Frontier Division) was formed as a district of Assam, the 'Uncontrolled Tribal Area' was made the Tuensang Frontier Division of this new district. Thus, in doing so, the eastern and western Naga people were put under two separate administrations, the Naga Hills and NEFA. While foreign missionary activities were restricted within the whole of Naga territory, in eastern Nagaland, even native Naga evangelists were restricted. A prohibition order issued in April 1955 by WS Rynjah, the then Assistant Political Officer posted at Mon stated:

This is to ask you not to entertain any outsiders from the State area side (that is, the Naga Hills) when they come to your village for propagation of Christianity or for any purpose. These people have no permission to enter our area. You must immediately report to me the arrival of such outsiders.<sup>203</sup>

This policy, as OM Rao noted, was influenced by the fear among the Indian administration that the expansion of Christian mission into these areas would lead to the spread of the nationalist ideas in the same.<sup>204</sup> Consequently, pastors and evangelists from the Naga Hills area were persecuted by the Indian security forces. The arrest and torture of pastors A Pangyan, Yongkongwapang and others were examples of such. Pangyan was arrested by the Assam Rifles on 16 May 1955 for residing in Chinglong village of NEFA (where he was the pastor) without 'valid permission to stay' since he was from the Naga

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<sup>199</sup> Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 15.

<sup>200</sup> Shakespear, *The Assam Rifles*, 170; Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, 1.

<sup>201</sup> Venuh, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, 47.

<sup>202</sup> Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, 18-19; Bendangangshi, *Glimpses of Naga History*, 44.

<sup>203</sup> Quoted in OM Rao, *Longri Ao: A Biography* (Guwahati: CLC, 1986), 40.

<sup>204</sup> Rao, *Longri Ao*, 39

Hills area.<sup>205</sup> He was also accused of having ‘entertained’ ‘some undesirable persons’ in his house.<sup>206</sup> According to Rao, this accusation was later found ‘incorrect’, and he was released, though with orders restricting him from returning to Chinglong.<sup>207</sup> Yongkongwapang was also arrested and removed from Muhung village, where he was pastoring, for failure to produce a ‘valid permit’ to stay. Further accusations were put against him for aiding the nationalists.<sup>208</sup> Thus, in both the cases, apart from the charge of illegally residing in the NEFA region, accusations were made about nationalist connections. These incidents illustrate the prevailing suspicion of Naga Christian–nationalist nexus among the Indian military leadership.

In the light of the accusations noted above, the challenge for the Naga churches at the time was how to present themselves as a neutral entity. The responses of the different Christian denominations were varied: For the Catholics and Pentecostals, the leadership was still under missionary priests/pastors from other parts of India (usually from Kerala and Tamil Nadu). Thus, they maintained distance from the political development. The NCRC was still at a formative stage. Moreover, their emphasis on the spiritual aspect meant that engagement in the political process was not going to be a key agenda as indicated in the words of Imchayanger, a first generation member: ‘The church is a heavenly organization. It is a body of Christ so we do not object individuals involving there (meaning politics) but as a church we would not.’<sup>209</sup> The Baptists, on the other hand, found it necessary to engage in the political crises. One reason was because they were already suspects as associates of the American Baptist missionaries who were expelled out of suspicion. Their engagement also came out of the conviction that the church should

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<sup>205</sup> M Mankang Walim, *History of the Konyak Baptist Church Association from 1950 to Present Time* (Mon: MTC, 2005), 16.

<sup>206</sup> Rao, *Longri Ao*, 40.

<sup>207</sup> Rao, *Longri Ao*, 42.

<sup>208</sup> Rao, *Longri Ao*, 42.

<sup>209</sup> Interview of Imchayanger.

be the herald of peace. Thus, leaders of the Baptist churches formed the ‘Naga Church Minister’s Mission for Peace’ in February 1957. The mission consisted of Kenneth Kerhuo, Shihoto Sema, Longri Ao, Toniho Chishi, Ahamo Patton, S Litsase and Dupor Vasa.<sup>210</sup> They sent appeals and toured the Naga areas ‘having meetings and prayers with [the] underground fighters inside deep forests and with those in prison.’<sup>211</sup> Longri Ao, a member of the ‘Mission’, later noted:

Those days were filled with exciting moments of walking through deep forests crossing swelling rivers in mid-summers, clearing the paths between the villages as people had already stopped visiting their neighbouring villages due to insecurity and fear, and clearing the spikes along the path that were planted for defence measures.

We also visited jails in Nagaland and Assam where our underground friends were imprisoned and had spiritual fellowship with them through prayers and reading of the Word of God.<sup>212</sup>

Of the prison visits, Longri recorded the visit of the prisoners at Mokokchung jail:

In Mokokchung, we found one hundred and twenty men, women and children locked up by the Indian army ... we sang together the hymn ‘In the Cross’ and all said ‘The Lord’s Prayer’. I read to them from Matthew 6 – God clothes the lilies and feeds the birds. Do not be anxious.<sup>213</sup>

The mission lasted for a year and then had to be wound up due to lack of a full time worker ‘to co-ordinate the work.’<sup>214</sup> It did not make any substantial achievement. Nevertheless, it sowed the seed for the later peace initiative of the churches in Nagaland.

### **3.5. Fear, hope and revival**

Militarization of the region created fear. According to Mullick, ‘two Divisions of the army and thirty-five battalions of Assam Rifles or armed Police were in operations’ in the region.<sup>215</sup> A division in the Indian military has 15,000 soldiers while a battalion has 1,000 soldiers. Thus, the total number of military personnel deployed in the region was  $15,000 \times 2 + 1,000 \times 35$ , which amounts to 65,000. Looking at it in the light of the total Naga population at the time, which according to *Census of India 1951* was 213,000,<sup>216</sup> there

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<sup>210</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 149.

<sup>211</sup> Longri Ao, ‘Greetings from Wakching Hills, 10 December 1964’

<sup>212</sup> ‘Speech of Longri Ao, Inaugural Service of the Nagaland Peace Council, Chedema, 29 May 1974.’

<sup>213</sup> Quoted in Rao, *Longri Ao*, 80.

<sup>214</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 151.

<sup>215</sup> Mullick, *My Years with Nehru*, 312.

<sup>216</sup> ‘Census of India, 1951.’

was one security personnel for every 3.28 Naga. The situation was amplified by the empowerment of the military personnel by a draconian law, the AFSPA. In April 1996 a 14-member Fact Finding Mission consisting of, among others, lawyers and journalists visited the states of north-east India where the AFSPA was under operation. The mission's report summarized the condition of the civilians under the Act as follows:

In all the states, the teams met with countless people and heard accounts of the harassment that they face regularly in the 'safe of their own homes'. At times like this women and children are manhandled, and the men most often, beaten up and taken away for 'interrogation'.

It was found that during this kind of harassment, the women are doubly victimised. Even routine road checks have sexual overtones, and molestation and rape by security personnel is frighteningly rampant. In many rural areas, women no longer dare to go to the fields, the market or even customary gatherings alone ...<sup>217</sup>

Military outposts were established by the Indian army and paramilitary forces in every village with check-posts every few miles.<sup>218</sup> The public suffered the most through frequent frisking and interrogation for suspicion in these check-posts. Writing from his own personal observation of the treatment of the common people by the security personnel in Nagaland, Indian sociologist, Walter Fernandes, noted:

More than once I have had the experience of a bus, in which I was travelling, being stopped by security forces at the Nagaland border and all the Nagas and their luggage being searched. But two of us non-Nagas were not examined, thus the local people are treated as foreigners in their own land.<sup>219</sup>

Thus the whole society lived with constant terror of being frisked, interrogated or even killed by the armed personnel. It was in this context that the so-called 1950s Naga revival began and spread among the Naga Baptist churches. The Jubilee Souvenir of the Nagaland Christian Revival Church (NCRC) summarized the context of the 1950s revival as follows:

The overall political situation was very dark ... Almost all the villages were burnt down and people of different villages were grouped together in new places. With no shelter, food and other basic necessities

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<sup>217</sup> *Where 'Peacekeepers' have declared war: Report of violations of democratic rights by security forces and the impact of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act on civilian life in the seven states of the north-east* (New Delhi: National Campaign Committee Against Militarisation and Repeal of AFSPA, 1997), 96-97.

<sup>218</sup> 'Main roads are often nothing more than a series of check posts, where locals are subjected to the harassment of identification, questioning and even detention without being furnished any reasons.' *Where 'Peacekeepers' have declared war*, 96.

<sup>219</sup> Walter Fernandes, 'Limits of Law and Order Approach to the North-East,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39. No. 42 (16-22 October 2004), 4610.

of life with atrocities, they suffered untold sufferings. Thus, a spiritual bankruptcy, coupled with the turbulent political situation, the people cried for a new visitation of God.<sup>220</sup>

Thus, it was in the context of the socio-political uncertainty and the conflict situation that the 1950s Naga church revival occurred. In this predicament, many found solace in the Christian message of hope. People turned to the churches for spiritual succour and spent time in fellowship ‘that lasted for many hours of praying and singing, crying and confessing of sins.’<sup>221</sup> The revival, noted Bendangjungshi, was ‘a herald of salvation, a longing for heaven and release from present tyranny.’<sup>222</sup>

However, it would be wrong to speak of the 1950s revival as simply a reaction to the socio-political predicament. It was also, as noted by NCRC in the above quotation, an attempt to deal with ‘spiritual bankruptcy and stagnation’ that many felt needed to be dealt with. Already in 1943 American Baptist missionary, JE Hunter had expressed concern over the spiritual condition of the Naga Baptist churches: ‘The Spiritual condition of the churches leaves much to be desired. A revival is greatly needed. Legalism and ritualism are two tendencies that work even in Baptist churches to hinder their spiritual life.’<sup>223</sup> Rikum Ao, whose ministry triggered the revival movement, also noted how many people at that time, like him, were Christians by virtue of being born in a Christian home without an actual ‘personal’ experience.<sup>224</sup>

According to the existing literature, the revival movement could be traced back to the teaching of the aforementioned American Baptist missionary, Hunter, from whom Rikum Ao learned about the revival.<sup>225</sup> This was based on Rikum’s own statement: ‘From 1949 late Dr. C.E. Hunter showed the way. He was filled with the Holy Spirit ... Through Scripture and song, he taught about examination of sin, seeking the Holy Spirit, filling

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<sup>220</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 2.

<sup>221</sup> Chase-Roy, *Women in Transition*, 156.

<sup>222</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context*, 90.

<sup>223</sup> JE Hunter, ‘Digest of Field Reports: Impur’ *ABMC* (November 5-9 1943), 18.

<sup>224</sup> Ao, *1952 nungi Naga Revival*, 2.

<sup>225</sup> Longkumer, Akumla. *Revival in Nagaland: Fact or Fallacy?* Aolijen: CTC, 1986; NCRC, *Revival: Golden Jubilee, 1962-2012* (Dimapur: NCRC, 2012).

with the Holy Spirit, seeking the power of Pentecost, persistent prayer, believer's witness everywhere by everyone' (English translation mine).<sup>226</sup> Rikum had worked with Hunter at the Impur Mission Centre for two years, from 1949 to 1950.<sup>227</sup>

However, Rikum also wrote that it was only while attending the 'Allahabad Holy Spirit Revival'<sup>228</sup> that he had the practical experience of the revival. Rikum did his theological study at the Allahabad Bible Seminary during 1950-51. Temsu Imchen, Rikum's son, also noted during the interview that it 'was after he returned from Allahabad that he started the revival.'<sup>229</sup> This brought to question the key role attributed to Hunter in the beginning of the 1950s Naga church revival. There is no doubt that Hunter and Rikum shared the same concern for the poor spiritual state of the Naga Baptist churches of the time, and that the former must have mentored the latter in his pursuit of a response to it. But the charismatic nature of the revival clearly indicates a Pentecostal origin. Hunter's name was thrown into the mix possibly in an attempt to present a missionary origin of the revival. In a context of transition, where much emphasis was given on continuing the missionary legacy, this was a key bargaining power. Thus, it can be argued that although Hunter might have spoken about the need for revival, the 1950s Naga church revival traced its root to the Pentecostal revival at Allahabad. This locates the 1950s Naga church revival in the global Pentecostal movement.

When the Pentecostal movement started in the early twentieth century, there was much opposition from the mainline churches. However, by the middle of the twentieth century, Pentecostal beliefs and practices were finding their way into the mainline churches. Many outside the classical Pentecostal churches were by then exposed to

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<sup>226</sup> Ao, 1952 *nungi Naga Revival*, 1.

<sup>227</sup> They were also neighbours. Interview of Temsu Imchen, Dimapur, 20 October 2016. Temsu Imchen is the son of Rikum Ao.

<sup>228</sup> From the 1940s, a charismatic revival, characterised by 'all night prayer meetings' and emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit swept the city of Allahabad. 'The Allahabad Pentecostal Church: A Brief History' Available at <http://allahabadpentecostalchurch.com/our-church.html> (Accessed on 21-10-2015).

<sup>229</sup> Interview of Imchen.

Pentecostal experiences through contact with Pentecostal ministry or literature. This resulted in what came to be known as the charismatic movement in the mainline churches. This often resulted in division within the mainline churches resulting in formation of charismatic churches, which though sharing many of the Pentecostal beliefs and practices, do not consider themselves to be Pentecostal. The charismatic revival among the Naga Baptist churches in the 1950s was one such incident.

In 1952 Rikum began to teach his new-found experience calling people to ‘total repentance.’<sup>230</sup> In the month of June he visited Longkum Baptist church and held an evangelistic meeting. His preaching in the village Baptist church resulted in church services characterised by prayer and crying in repentance.<sup>231</sup> Seven members of the church also declared to have received the Holy Spirit. They were: Ayimneken, Armakba, Lanuwati, Ngangshimeyu, Tsupongngangchet, Tsuinloin and Tiameren.<sup>232</sup> Ayimneken, one of the first ‘seven’, shared during the interview that Rikum’s message at Longkum Baptist church in 1952 had two components: first, repentance, which when true will be experienced as a ‘cold’ sensation (*mekong mekonga*) by the penitent; second, receiving of the Holy Spirit, which the recipient will feel as ‘warm’ sensation (*lem lema*).<sup>233</sup>

The revival was charismatic in nature, and many spiritual happenings were reported. Phuveyi Dozo, an eyewitness of the movement, summarized the nature of the 1950s revival as follows:

Miracles were performed, revival songs were heard everywhere, reconciliations were made, Christian love was restored, vision, prophesy, ecstasy and glossolalia (languages) were phenomenal, non-Christians rushed to see the miracle and became Christians in individuals and groups. Churches were all packed. Food, sleep and farming were all forgotten, but the believers lacked nothing; Church extensions became necessary in so many places.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ao, *1952 nungi Naga Revival*, 3.

<sup>231</sup> Ao, *1952 nungi Naga Revival*, 3.

<sup>232</sup> Interview of Ayimneken. He is presently the only surviving member of the ‘seven’.

<sup>233</sup> Interview of Ayimneken.

<sup>234</sup> Dozo, *The Cross over Nagaland*, 16.

As such, the 1950s revival introduced for the first time a charismatic element to the Naga Christian spirituality. It is also very significant for the development of Naga Christian theology. For the first time, it challenged the Naga Christians to wrestle with the differing doctrinal understandings of the third person of the Trinity. It led to the first theological controversy among the Naga churches.

The message of the revival was repentance and experience of the Holy Spirit. This message found fertile ground for acceptance in a context where people lived in a state of fear, both temporal and eternal. People look beyond their daily misfortunes and yearn for a deeper experience of the divine. In such a context, the Christian message of hope, both temporal and eternal, was found attractive.

### **3.6. Societal needs and the mission of the church**

The revival also provided renewed impetus for evangelism. Keviyiekellie Linyu noted in his *Christian Movements in Nagaland*:

In a tense critical situation in the hills that made the people turn their allegiance to the living God alone, people in the villages fled to the jungles for safety; they experience unusual working of the Holy Spirit in the jungle camps. This was the period when the Nagas practically moved to Christian faith. When the people returned from the jungles, they built their churches first and afterwards their living houses. This was how the phenomenal surge of church growth took place in the hills.<sup>235</sup>

Moved by the spirit of revival, evangelistic teams were formed by volunteers who went around the jungle camps giving Bible study and baptism.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, jungle hide-outs and grouping villages, instead of being a hindrance, facilitated the spread of Christian faith. Dozo recalled during the interview:

In the jungle camp we are [sic] controlled of our voice: don't sing, don't pray, like that. But in the jungle camp, riverside, under the tree, movement of the Holy Spirit was mighty, very powerful. And so [we] could not control, began to pray loud, sing out loud.<sup>237</sup>

The enthusiasm created by the revival moved people to engage in evangelistic activities in spite of the difficult predicament they were in. Thus, the spirit of revival gave Naga

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<sup>235</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 63.

<sup>236</sup> Interview of Phuveyi Dozo, Dimapur, 24 October 2016. During the interview he made mention of one Dsoveri who was the leader of the Evangelistic team he witnessed.

<sup>237</sup> Interview of Dozo.



churches a reason to be involved in evangelistic activities in spite of the challenging context in the society.

Evangelism was central to the understanding of mission among the Naga churches during the period examined in this chapter. They were primarily motivated by the desire to reach out to the remaining half of the Naga population which was still following the traditional Naga religion. New Christian denominations that entered the region during this period were also proactive in their attempts to get a foothold in the region. Nevertheless, apart from evangelism, the Naga churches were also involved in education, health care and peace initiatives, as they responded to the needs in the society.

As noted above, due to the volatile socio-political situation, the education system in the region was disrupted. First, because of the grouping system, all village schools were closed down.<sup>238</sup> Second, the nationalists shut down all government schools.<sup>239</sup> The result was twofold: (i) Many semi-educated Naga youth found themselves ‘bossed around by the military personnel’ for forced labour. Discouraged by this predicament, many joined the nationalist ranks.<sup>240</sup> (ii) Some travelled to different parts of India for education. They could not come back home for years for fear of persecution from the military as well as the nationalists.<sup>241</sup>

During this period Catholic mission provided an alternative by facilitating Naga boys and girls to study at their parish centre at Dibrugarh (Assam).<sup>242</sup> On 1 February 1954, three Kyong boys and two girls were sent to Dibrugarh for education. Another group of boys joined Don Bosco School, Dibrugarh on 4 January 1957.<sup>243</sup> In 1958, a ‘Naga school’ was opened at Golaghat, which was nearer to the Naga Hills. It became operative on 15

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<sup>238</sup> Interview of Jamir.

<sup>239</sup> Interview of Ayimneken; Interview of Luen.

<sup>240</sup> Interview of Ayimneken; Interview of Luen. Both Ayimneken and Luen joined the NNC.

<sup>241</sup> Luen went to Bombay (Mumbai) for studies, and for two years could not return home. Interview of Luen.

<sup>242</sup> The Naga Hills was then under the Dibrugarh parish centre.

<sup>243</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 57.

February 1958 with 17 young boys. Later in 1965, this school was shifted to Wokha in Nagaland by which time there were already 27 students.<sup>244</sup>

The Naga Baptist inherited the schools of the American Baptist missionaries. The oldest school in Nagaland, the present Clark Memorial Higher Secondary School at Impur, is a continuation of the Impur Mission School established in 1895.<sup>245</sup> However, they did lose some of the schools they were running in collaboration with the British colonial government as the GoI chose to run them on their own. The present Kohima Government Higher Secondary School was one such.<sup>246</sup> These church schools were also closed down during the difficult years of 1955-59. In 1959, with the negotiation for statehood making progress, a certain state of normalcy was restored. Not only were the existing schools reopened, many Baptist churches and associations opened new schools and other educational institutions. The Baptist English School (present Baptist High) is one such institution which was opened during this period by the Angami Baptist Church Association in 1959.<sup>247</sup>

Health care was another area where Christian mission contributed significantly in the Naga society. Pioneering Baptist missionary, Clark, referred to the 'knowledge of medicine' as of 'great advantage' to connect with the natives.<sup>248</sup> His colleague Rivenburg took advantage of a furlough to train himself as a medical doctor.<sup>249</sup> The American Baptist missionaries also started a hospital at their mission centre at Impur in 1912 under the supervision of JR Bailey, a medical missionary.<sup>250</sup> However, when they withdrew from Nagaland, the hospital became the property of CBCNEI (Council of Baptist Churches of

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<sup>244</sup> 'History' [www.donboscowokha.com/?page\\_id=43](http://www.donboscowokha.com/?page_id=43) (Accessed 1 July 2016).

<sup>245</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 61.

<sup>246</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 53.

<sup>247</sup> V Atsi Dolie, 'Angami Baptist Church Council' *NBCC News XII/ 2* (April-June 2013), 14; NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 53.

<sup>248</sup> Clark, *A Corner in India*, 68.

<sup>249</sup> Rivenburg, *The Star of the Naga Hills*, 89.

<sup>250</sup> 'Impur Mission Hospital' [www.abamimpur.org/node/3](http://www.abamimpur.org/node/3) (Accessed on 7 February 2018).

North East India) instead of the Naga Baptist churches.<sup>251</sup> Thus, Naga Baptist churches' involvement in medical work ceased. Pioneering Catholic missionaries were also involved in medical work. The medical work of the Catholic sisters in the Kohima Government Hospital has already been noted, though they came via government invitation. After the departure of the sisters in 1953, there was no organised medical work done by the Catholic mission until the 1970s (discussed section 4.6).<sup>252</sup>

Much of the mission engagement of the Naga churches in the Naga society during this period was basically a continuation of the initiatives made earlier by the missionaries. Education and health care remained the main areas of investment. However, as discussed in section 3.4, a beginning was also made in the area of peace-making as the mission of the church.

Mission emphasis differs among the various Christian denominations: while all of them placed much emphasis on evangelism, the Baptist and the Catholic churches also engaged in education and health care activities. Situational need also necessitated the Baptist churches to engage in the peace effort, which became a key aspect of their mission engagement in the Naga society over the years.

### **3.7. Conclusion**

The year 1947 ushered the Naga society into a whirlwind of transition. The Indian leaders and the Naga nationalists tussled over what should become of the former British colony – an Indian state or an independent nation – the region was thrown into confusion and uncertainty.

The political conflict dominated the history of this period. The activities of the NNC including the plebiscite and their armed conflict with the Indian army facilitated the shaping of Naga nationalism from the imagining of a few to a mass movement. The

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<sup>251</sup> Interview of O Alem, Dimapur, 9 December 2016.

<sup>252</sup> The first group of sisters to begun health minister in Nagaland were the Bethany sisters who opened their first dispensary at Dimapur in 1969.

Christian leadership of the movement means that when Naga nationalism took its popular form, Christianity was seen as an integral part of it. This laid the foundation for the way Naga nationalism came to be Christianized in the subsequent period. Existing literature often overlooked this religious aspect in analysing the factors that led to the rise of Naga nationalism. Chandrika Singh, for instance, attributed it to the fear among the Naga people that with the ‘transfer of power’ from Britain to India, they might not have the ‘autonomies’ and ‘cultural protections’ they had enjoyed.<sup>253</sup> Aosenba attributed it to the Naga realization of their ‘ethnic, linguistic, social and cultural uniqueness.’<sup>254</sup> But as shown in the discussion above, their Christian religion was key to the rise of Naga nationalism against India.

Existing literature also often projects the church in Nagaland as a neutral entity, the custodian of peace and reconciliation.<sup>255</sup> The church as an institution stood for and preached peace as seen in the work of the ‘Naga Church Minister’s Mission for Peace’ (see section 3.4). But the same cannot be said of individual Christians. It was Naga Christians who gave leadership and direction to the nationalist movement. Christian faith thus came to be closely associated with Naga nationalism.

Amidst the uncertainties and conflicts, the Christian message of hope and spiritual experience during the revival was a source of relief for many in the Naga society. Many sought spiritual succour away from the difficulties of their daily life in the Christian faith. Christian people also gave leadership and practical assistance amidst the conflict situation in the wider society. The works of Longri and Longkoi discussed in section 3.3 are examples of such. Furthermore, Naga churches also continued to contribute in the areas of medicine and education. All these contributions bolstered the status of the church in the Naga society.

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<sup>253</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, 44.

<sup>254</sup> Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*, 34.

<sup>255</sup> See Linyu. *Christian Movements in Nagaland*.

The church was the only alternative to the nationalist's NNC that transcended the tribal divide in the Naga society during the period studied in this chapter. Church organizations like NBCC and NCRC provided an umbrella under which Naga Christians could express their views and take collective initiatives. The work of the aforementioned peace initiative by the Naga Baptist leaders was one such example, whereby Naga Baptist leaders from various Naga tribes worked together for the common purpose of promoting peace and reconciliation in the region.

Overall, what had been indicated above is that the cultural environment of the Naga society did play a significant role in the way the Naga churches came to be during this period. As the churches responded to the changes that the society as a whole was undergoing, they also experienced changes themselves. Some of these were enforced, as in the case of the missionary withdrawal. Others were fortuitous, as in the case of the introduction of the Catholic mission. Still others were as a result of the deliberate attempt of the churches to bring solution to the challenges the society was facing, as in the case of the peace initiative of the NBCC. Through all these, the Naga churches underwent changes as they realigned themselves in the light of the changing context in the Naga society.



## Chapter Four

### Naga churches amidst a society in crisis, 1964-1989

Any hope that the inauguration of the state of Nagaland would bring a quick solution disappeared into oblivion. Politically, with both the GoI and the nationalists following a confrontational policy, there was much conflict and bloodshed. It stretched the Naga society to the limit, in many cases, leading to the appearance of cracks in the form of schisms. Moreover, poor leadership and infrastructure also dwarfed the economic growth of the society. This chapter examines the historical development of the Naga churches in the light of this contextual situation in the Naga society during 1964-1989.

The primary sources used in this chapter include ecclesiastical documents such as minutes of meetings, reports and correspondence. They were obtained either from church archives or official websites. Jubilee souvenirs and eyewitness accounts on ecclesiastical events were also utilised. Public documents used in the chapter include government records and bills passed by the parliament. There were also several writings by bureaucrats (Ramuny, 1988), political activists (Keyho, 2000; Shimray, 2005 and Swu, 2006) and peace negotiators (Narayan, 1966 and Scott, 2011). This literature gives insights into the historical events in Nagaland as seen by people who were actively part of it. They were however used with caution keeping in mind that they were interpretations of the events in Nagaland either from Naga nationalists (Swu, Keyho, Shimray and Scott) or Indian administrator's (Ramuny and Narayan) perspective. Interviews of key eyewitnesses to the ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical events were also utilised.

#### **4.1. Context: political, social and economic**

As noted in the previous chapter, the NNC refused to accept the statehood agreement. They accused the state government thus formed of being a puppet of the GoI to divide

and rule the Naga people. Thus, statehood, instead of bringing a permanent solution to the Naga political crisis, only complicated the plot.

In the light of this deteriorating situation, in 1964, the Naga churches intervened by initiating the 'Peace Mission' as an effort to bring the conflicting parties to the negotiating table. The mission consisted of three members, namely, Jaya Prakash Narayan, a Gandhian,<sup>1</sup> BP Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam and Michael Scott, a British Anglican Minister. A fourth individual, Shakar Deo was also approached but declined on health grounds.<sup>2</sup>

The first thing the Peace Mission initiated was to strike a ceasefire agreement between the GoI and the NNC, which came into effect on 6 September 1964.<sup>3</sup> A Peace Observer Team was also set up in February 1965 with the task of 'supervising the observance of the agreed terms of the cessation of hostilities and investigating complaints of violation of these terms by either party.'<sup>4</sup> The team was to consist of six members, with the GoI and the NNC nominating three each. However, due to the 'urgency of the matter', the team consisting of the following four were appointed by the Peace Mission with the approval of both the GoI and NNC representatives: Nabakrushna Choudhury (a Sarvodaya<sup>5</sup> activist), M Aram (educator and peace-advocate), Amalprabha Das (Gandhian social worker) and Marjorie Sykes (British educator and supporter of Indian Independence movement).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A 'Gandhian' refers to an individual who follows the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, which was characterised by commitment to truth and non-violence.

<sup>2</sup> NBCC ANBC-64/122, Wokha, January 31- February 2, 1964; Kari Longchar (ed.), *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope: Understanding the Justifying the Ways of God, vol. 1* (Kohima: NBCC, 2011), 70.

<sup>3</sup> No. 1, 'Peace Mission Proposal, 20 December 1964.'

<sup>4</sup> 'Record of Proceedings, Peace Talk, Khensa, 24 February 1965.'

<sup>5</sup> Sarvodaya refers to the social movement in post-independent India based on the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. The Sanskrit word 'Sarvodaya', meaning, 'universal upliftment' was one of the four pillars of Gandhi's vision for *Hind Swaraj* or Indian Home Rule. Shubhangi Rathi, 'Gandhian Philosophy of Sarvodaya and its principles' [http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi\\_sarvodaya.html](http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi_sarvodaya.html) (Accessed on 8 February 2018).

<sup>6</sup> 'Record of Proceedings, Peace Talk.'



On 20 December 1964 the Peace Mission circulated the document, 'Peace Mission Proposal', which was to act as a framework for discussion. On the one hand, it pointed out that 'all subject peoples have the right to self-determination and that no group of people is competent to rule over one another'; while on the other hand, it urged the Naga people to consider the 'great concepts and ideals underlying the Union Constitution' of India.<sup>7</sup> Thus, recognizing the position of both the GoI and the NNC, the Peace Mission urged them to work constructively towards bringing a lasting solution.

Declaring that 'direct talks' and 'free and frank exchange of views' was the 'most realistic' approach to bring about an 'honourable settlement',<sup>8</sup> the Peace Mission also initiated talks between the representatives of GoI and NNC. The first was held on 23 September 1964 at Chedema.<sup>9</sup> The GoI delegation was led by its Foreign Secretary YD Gundevia,<sup>10</sup> while the NNC delegation was led by its 'Home Minister' Jenrenkokba.<sup>11</sup> Eight more such peace talks followed during October 1964 to May 1965. The dates for the nine rounds of talk were: 23 September 1964, 12-13 October 1964, 10-13 November 1964, 28 November 1964, 29 December 1964, 29 January 1965, 24-25 February 1965, 5-6 April 1965, and 4-5 May 1965.

In the course of the peace talks, it became increasingly clear that for the talks to be effective they had to be conducted at the top level. Therefore in 1966 the peace talks were upgraded to Prime Ministerial level.<sup>12</sup> Thus, from 18-19 February 1966, Indira Gandhi,

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<sup>7</sup> No. 10, 'Peace Mission Proposal, 20 December 1964.'

<sup>8</sup> Scott, Michael, 'Nagaland Peace Mission: Points of Agreements of Present Trends' in Kari Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope, vol. II* (Kohima: NBCC, 2011), 275-277.

<sup>9</sup> 'Peace Mission Proposal, 20 December 1964.'

<sup>10</sup> The other members of the delegation were UN Sharma, DM Sen (Brigadier), NF Suntook and P Shilu Ao. The NNC delegates objected to the presence of P Shilu Ao, the then Chief Minister of Nagaland. However later they accepted him on the assurance that he was there not as the Chief Minister of Nagaland but only as a member of the Indian delegation. Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 164.

<sup>11</sup> The other members of the delegation were Zashei Huire ('Angh/Governor, Japfu state', FGN), Isaac Swu ('Foreign Secretary', FGN) and Thinoselie ('Brigadier', Naga Army).

<sup>12</sup> It was the then Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who agreed to have the Prime Ministerial talk, and the meeting was fixed on 18 January 1966. Unfortunately, he died on 11 January 1966 at Tashkent. Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 172.

the then Prime Minister of India, and Kughato Sukhai, the then 'Prime Minister' of the FGN (of NNC) met at New Delhi.<sup>13</sup> Two members of the Peace Mission, Scott and Chaliha, were also present.<sup>14</sup>

At this juncture, the Peace Mission came to an unceremonious end with the resignation of two of its members and the expulsion of the third. The first to go was Narayan who resigned on 25 February 1966 stating that the NNC no longer enjoyed confidence in him, following a protest against him for purportedly stating, 'if India decided to do so she could "liquidate" the Naga.'<sup>15</sup> Chaliha was the next to go, tendering his resignation on 4 May 1966 following an accusation against the NNC for a bomb that exploded at Lumding, Assam, on 20 April 1966 that killed 53 people. As the Chief Minister of the affected state, he felt obligated to resign from the Peace Mission. In his resignation, Chaliha also recommended the dissolution of the Peace Mission:

In the wake of recent dastardly explosions in trains and acts of sabotage and aggression by the Naga hostiles there is reliable information that such acts of sabotage and violent activities were done under the direction of their (rebel's) armed men. This meeting (Congress Parliamentary Committee) strongly feels that there is no scope for the continuance of the Peace Mission.<sup>16</sup>

The third member of the Peace Mission, Scott, was accused by GoI of patronising the Naga nationalists. The GoI took particular exception to Scott's effort to internationalize the Naga issue. He had, according to Chandrika Singh, written a letter to U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations [1961-71] requesting him to use his good office to put pressure on the Government of India for the inclusion of more foreign observers in the Peace Mission.<sup>17</sup> On 4 May 1966 he was deported to England.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> He was accompanied by Imkongmeren ('Vice President', NNC), Isaac Swu ('Foreign Secretary', FGN), S. Angam and Dalli Namu.

<sup>14</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, 106.

<sup>15</sup> Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 84. Narayan himself spoke of the unfortunate event leading up to his resignation in his speech at Kohima on 12 August 1966, six months after his resignation. The speech was later published with the title *For Peace Settlement* (Kohima: NBCC & Peace Centre, 1966).

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Singh, *Naga Politics*, 110.

<sup>17</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, 109. Yonuo, *The Rising Naga*, 258.

<sup>18</sup> Scott was 'arrested at gunpoint' at Shillong, where he was undergoing medical treatment. All documents with him were also seized. Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 85.

The Negotiation between the GoI and the NNC continued even after the dissolution of the Peace Mission. Several rounds of talks occurred.<sup>19</sup> However, by the end of the sixth round (held from 5-6 October 1967), it was clear that the peace talks had hit a deadlock. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, plainly told the Naga delegation that ‘the Naga solution could be found only within the framework of the Indian Union.’<sup>20</sup> This was not acceptable for the NNC. Thus, no solution came out of these meetings as both sides held on to their positions.

The dissatisfaction and frustration in the aftermath of the failure of the negotiation led to a schism within the NNC. Kughato, who had led the NNC delegation was blamed for the failure of the talks with the GoI.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, he resigned from the Prime Ministership of the FGN and was replaced by Mhiaseui Angami. This development caused tension between the Sumi (Kughato being a Sumi Naga) and Angami (Mhiaseui being an Angami Naga) members of the NNC. Thus, tribalism raised its ugly head. The situation escalated when Kaito Sukhai, the brother of Kughato was assassinated in Kohima on 3 August 1968. Fighting broke out between the two groups.<sup>22</sup> In November 1968, Kughato and his followers formed the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland (RGN) with the following stated agenda:

- (a) Peaceful solution of the Naga political problem.
- (b) Continuance of the Cease-Fire and resuming of talks with the Government of India.
- (c) Unity of Naga people.
- (d) Upholding Principles of democracy.<sup>23</sup>

Like the ‘moderates’ during the formation of the Nagaland state (see section 3.1), the RGN also declared that it was prepared to accept a solution within the Indian Union.<sup>24</sup> On

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<sup>19</sup> The dates of the Prime Ministerial talks: 18-19 February 1966, 9-12 April 1966, 10-11 August 1966, 27-29 October 1966, 2-5 January 1967 and 5-6 October 1967.

<sup>20</sup> A Lanunungsang Ao, *From Phizo to Muivah: The Naga National Question in North East India* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2002), 85; Singh, *Naga Politics*, 111.

<sup>21</sup> Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 48.

<sup>22</sup> Kuroi K Zhimomi, *Politics and Militancy in Nagaland* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 2004), 151; Singh, *Naga Politics*, 133.

<sup>23</sup> K Zuheto Swu, *Sumi Kumlah Pasu* (‘History of Sumi people’s work’) (Zunheboto: Sumi Literature Board, 2006), 96. Zuheto was the commander in chief of the RGN army.

<sup>24</sup> Ramuny, *The World of the Nagas*, 281.

11 August 1973, the members of the RGN, 1500 in strength, surrendered to the GoI. The surrendered cadres were accommodated into the Border Security Force (BSF), an Indian paramilitary force.<sup>25</sup>

The year 1972 marked a paradigm shift in GoI's policy towards the Naga political issue. In June 1972, the GoI transferred the Naga affair from 'External' to 'Home' Ministry. This in effect made the Indo-Naga problem an internal law and order problem rather than a political problem. In protest on 8 August 1972, the NNC made an attempt to assassinate both the Chief Minister (Hokishe Sema) and the Governor (BK Nehru) of Nagaland. Consequently, the Governor banned the NNC through a radio broadcast on 31 August 1972.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the GoI abrogated the ceasefire on 1 September 1972. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 was enforced in Nagaland. This Act was passed by the GoI in 1967 to deal with 'associations' which are deemed to be involved in any 'unlawful activities' intending 'to bring about, on any ground whatsoever, the cession of a part of the territory of India or the secession of a part of the territory of India from the Union.'<sup>27</sup> The NNC, including its government (FGN) and military (The Naga Army) wings, were banned by the GoI as unlawful associations under the Act.<sup>28</sup> A state of emergency was declared over Nagaland. The 'Joint Directive for Counter Insurgency Operations in Nagaland' was issued jointly by the Indian Army and the Government of Nagaland on 2 May 1973.<sup>29</sup> This had two components to the military operation in Nagaland: First, centralization of the military command. The whole 'counter insurgency operation' in the region was to be done under a 'Central Committee' consisting of representatives of army, paramilitary forces and intelligence agencies with the Chief

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<sup>25</sup> Ramuny, *The World of the Nagas*, 310.

<sup>26</sup> 'White Paper issues by the Government of Nagaland, 31 August, 1972' in Sharma and Sharma (eds), *Documents on North-East India*, 325.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.'

<sup>28</sup> 'White Paper issues by the Government of Nagaland...', 325.

<sup>29</sup> NNC, *The Naga National Rights and Movement*, 152-166.

Secretary of the state as the chairman.<sup>30</sup> Second, initiation of psychological warfare. The following directives were circulated:

- (i) Divide, disorganise and induce defections of members of the hostile movement.
- (ii) Reduce and ultimately eliminate civilian support of hostile elements.
- (iii) Dissuade civilians from participating in covert activities on the side of the hostile.
- (iv) Win the active support on non-committed civilians.
- (iv) Win the popular approval of the local presence of the security forces.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, a two pronged attack was launched aimed at isolating the NNC operatives. While a military operation was being conducted on a massive scale, the state government and the civil administration were involved in putting pressure on the relatives of the NNC operatives and the leaders of the community to persuade their relatives and friends to abandon their jungle hideouts and surrender. Ramuny, who was the then Special Secretary to the Governor of Nagaland noted: 'the NNO leaders (the then state government) in close cooperation with the Civil Administration, the Army and the BSF (Border Security Force) had been putting pressure on the GBs, the relations of underground, to meet them in the jungles and pull them out peacefully.'<sup>32</sup> Indian journalist, Harish Chandola (writing in 1974) also reported on the key role played by the Naga cadre of the BSF towards the effectiveness of this operation. These military personnel were the surrendered RGN members, and thus, former members of NNC:

They know almost all the relatives and friends of the underground because until a few years ago the underground men were their fellow soldiers. Now, in the new circumstances, they hunt for their former comrades. An easy way of hunting was to go to the villages and try to secure information from the parents, wives, children and other relatives of the underground men about their whereabouts. This was done generally by arresting the relatives and interrogating them, which did not exclude the use of torture. The Naga villagers were terrorised by these BSF men who spearheaded the operations against the underground conducted by all elements of the security forces.<sup>33</sup>

Devoid of any hide-outs in the jungles, coupled with the pressure put on their relatives and leaders by the civil authorities, the NNC leaders were put under immense pressure.

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<sup>30</sup> 'Secret Joint Directives of Counter Insurgency Operation in Nagaland.' Reproduced in NNC, *The Naga National Rights and Movement*, 152-159.

<sup>31</sup> 'Secret Joint Directives of Counter Insurgency Operation in Nagaland.'

<sup>32</sup> Ramuny, *The World of the Nagas*, 337.

<sup>33</sup> Harish Chandola, 'Why the NNO Lost' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 9, No. 17 (27 April 1974), 670.

This pressure paid off when a section of the NNC leadership signed the Shillong Accord in 1975. Medom Biseto Keyho, who was the then ‘Home Minister’ of the FGN, noted the dire circumstance under which the Accord was signed, and lamented the criticism to which they were subjected (discussed below) as a result of signing the Accord: ‘Without knowing the circumstances under which we were compelled to commit to the Accord, the people started criticising us from all corners.’<sup>34</sup>

The initiative towards signing the Accord again came from the church. After the termination of the Peace Mission, the NBCC had set up the Peace Council under the chairmanship of Longri Ao.<sup>35</sup> It was through the initiative of this Peace Council that a six member representation of the NNC, namely Kevi Yallay, Z Ramyo, M Aasa, Sanyi Darhu, Temjenba and Venyi Rhakho met LP Singh, the then Governor of Nagaland at Shillong from 10-11 November 1975. A three-point agreement was concluded which came to be known as the Shillong Accord. The three points were:

- (i) The representatives of the underground organisation conveyed their decision, of their own volition, to accept, without condition, the Constitution of India.
- (ii) It was agreed that the arms, now underground, would be brought out and deposited at appointed places. Details for giving effect to this agreement would be worked out between the representatives of the government, the security forces and members of the Liaison Committee.
- (iii) It was agreed that the representatives of the underground organisations should have reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussions for the final agreement.<sup>36</sup>

All the NNC representatives, except Venyi Rhakho, signed the Accord.<sup>37</sup> His refusal turned out to be an indication of the divided opinion with which the Accord came to be received. The opposition against the Accord was spearheaded by Thuingaleng Muivah (the then General Secretary of NNC) and Isak Swu (the then ‘Foreign Secretary’ of FGN) who were then in Myanmar on their way back to Nagaland from China (NNC-China

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<sup>34</sup> Keyho Biseto Medom, *My Journey in the Nagaland Freedom Movement* (Kohima: author, 2000), 228. Medom was a signatory of the document ‘Supplementary Agreement to the Shillong Accord, 5 January 1976,’ which gave further details towards the implementation of the Accord.

<sup>35</sup> L Suohie Mhasi and Neilasa were also selected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. The following seven other members were also appointed as the Executive Committee of the Council: HK Lungalang, VK Nuh, Toniho Chishi, Kijung Ao, Kenneth Kerhuo, Aosangba Chang and Yankey Phom. ANBC-74/262, Ngawlwa, March 1-3, 1974.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Shillong Accord, 11 November 1975.’

<sup>37</sup> ‘Shillong Accord, 11 November 1975’; Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 49.

relation discussed in section 4.4). They appealed to Phizo (the then President of NNC) to intervene and abrogate the Accord. With Phizo tarrying to give any statement, they issued one of their own in November 1975 condemning the Accord. The statement read: ‘the sovereign existence of Nagaland and sovereign right of the Naga people over their land are historically unquestionable facts and that the question of negotiation in India’s favour does not arise whatsoever.’ Therefore, ‘No one in whatever name or capacity has the authority to settle the Indo-Naga issue “within the Indian Union”’. Further, it called on the people to ‘resist any covert or overt act of subjugating them and annexing their land’ and pledged to resist ‘invasion of any kind to the end.’<sup>38</sup>

The Accord controversy took a violent turn. The assassination of Charlie Kevichusa, a politician, in 1992, for supporting the Accord, and a similar attempt made on the life of SC Jamir (former Chief Minister of Nagaland) in 1999, were the most notable ones. The controversy dragged on for several years with both the parties trying to woo the general public and each other. Finally, unable to reconcile, the non-Accordists led by Muivah, Isaac and Shangwang Shangyung Khaplang (the then Vice-President of NNC) formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) on 31 January 1980.<sup>39</sup> The NSCN established the Government of the People’s Republic of Nagaland (GPRN) in the mould of the FGN of NNC. Within a few years, a split occurred in the NSCN. A personality clash between Muivah and Khaplang resulted in the division of the NSCN in 1988.<sup>40</sup> The former and Isak’s followers came to be known as NSCN-IM; while the latter’s followers

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Statement of the Naga Goodwill Mission from China, 21 November 1975’ in Medom, *My Journey in the Nagaland Freedom Movement*, 356-57.

<sup>39</sup> AS Atai Shimray, *Let Freedom Ring? Story of Naga Nationalism* (New Delhi: Promilla & Co., 2005), 148.

<sup>40</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, noted, ‘According to Muivah, Khaplong belonged to such a community (the Burmese-Konyak tribe which practiced a monarchical polity) where there was no place for democratic elements ... On the other hand, Khaplong was of the view that Muivah, being a Tangkhul Naga, was very much against the Burmese Naga tribes of which Khaplong belonged ... In the opinion of Khaplong Muivah did not allow others to supersede him’ (178-79).

came to be known as NSCN-K. In 1991, the GoI banned all factions of the NSCN under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.<sup>41</sup>

After the Shillong Accord controversy and the appearance of the NSCN, the voice of the NNC weakened and its strength declined. Meanwhile Phizo died in London on 30 April 1990. His death dealt a severe blow to the NNC. The controversy over his successor split the NNC into two: one faction led by Adino Phizo, the daughter of Phizo and the other led by Khodao Yanthan, the then Vice President of the NNC. Thus, the oldest Naga political organization was bifurcated into two groups, NNC-A and NNC-K, in 1995.

The common people suffered the most because of the conflict situation. In a letter written to the Prime Minister of India (Indira Gandhi), the Peace Council noted the sufferings of the common people:

We regret that while the Nagas have been crying for peace and security, the Government of India have given them army operation instead. We fail to understand whether this measure is called a mere routine of law and order or war, the fact remains that due to armed clashes the innocent people in the villages continue to suffer and die for whose protection you have employed the armed forces.

Just to cite some recent incidents: there was an armed clash between the Underground and the CRP (Central Reserve Police) at Chuphozuma village, Chakhesang tribe, on August 9, 1974 when one CRP was killed. Following the incident, many of the villagers including women were beaten, they were made to stand whole day in the burning sun on an open field while in their absence their houses were searched and they complained that lot of their belongings were lost. Then on August 12 morning, only three days after the incident, a girl of 19 years old was raped by three CRP personnel. The girl said that she could identify the three criminals, but the Post Commander refused to line them up for identification.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, apart from the usual psychological and physical hardship the people had to undergo, living as they were in a conflict situation, military excesses by errant Indian military personnel also caused much harm to the common people. On the other hand, the common people also suffered at the hands of the nationalists. The Peace Council's letter also noted: 'Similarly, the innocent villagers suffer in the hands of the Underground people [as the nationalists are often referred to] who recruit their sons, take away their food and eliminate those who come in their way.'<sup>43</sup> Through the NNC representatives, youth in the

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<sup>41</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, 183; Zhimomi, *Politics and Militancy in Nagaland*, xviii.

<sup>42</sup> 'Letter of Nagaland Peace Council to Prime Minister of India, 12 September 1974.' The letter was written in the light of the extension of the 'Unlawful Activities Prevention Act' by two years in 1974.

<sup>43</sup> 'Letter of Nagaland Peace Council to Prime Minister of India, 12 September 1974.'



villages were identified and enlisted in the ‘Naga Army’. No consensus was taken from the individual; rather, the recruitment team would suddenly appear in the village, collect the listed individuals and take them to the camp for training. Thus, caught in the line of fire, the common people suffered the most.

S Radhakrishnan, President of India (1962-67), in his speech on the inauguration of the state of Nagaland, expressed his hope that it would be the beginning of a ‘prosperous and progressive State.’<sup>44</sup> However, things proved to be just the opposite, as within no time the state succumbed to corruption and underdevelopment. One of the contributing factors was the continuing political crisis which was a hindrance for any developmental work. To compound this was the failure of the democratic process in state politics. State politics in Nagaland during 1964 to 1989 present a shameful reading, filled with instances of horse-trading and defections, motivated by the greedy personal agenda of the politicians. The following table shows the frequent defection and political instability:

Chief Minister	Year of formation of government	Period	Cause of fall of government
P Shilu Ao	1964	3 years	Defection
Hokishe Sema	1967	2 years	Defection
Hokishe Sema	1969	5 years	Full tenure
Vizol Angami	1974	13 months	Defection
JB Jasokie	1975	10 days	Defection
Vizol Angami	1977	16 months	Defection
SC Jamir	1980	49 days	Defection
JB Jasokie	1980	2 years	Election
Hokishe Sema	1982	5 years	Full tenure
Hokishe Sema	1987	8 months	Defection
SC Jamir	1989	15 months	Defection

**Table 5: Frequency of defection in state politics during 1964-90<sup>45</sup>**

Thus, during the first twenty-five years of the existence of Nagaland state only three times was there transition of government in a democratic manner (twice through end of tenure and once through election). The rest were through horse-trading and defection. The topsy-turvy nature of the government in the state meant that development work was neglected.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Speech of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, President of India: On the inauguration of the State of Nagaland, 1 December, 1963’ in Sharma and Sharma (eds), *Documents of North-East India*, 252.

<sup>45</sup> Source: Singh, *Naga Politics*, 156.

Public money in the state had been squandered in such proportions that the Reserve Bank of India was forced to stop all Nagaland Government's payments in April 1990.<sup>46</sup> Two of factories were established: A Paper Mill at Tuli (1971) and a Sugar Mill at Dimapur (1973). However due to poor management both ran into trouble: while the former still exists, albeit in a paralysed state, the latter was closed down in 2001. Nevertheless, together, they provided employment to only about a thousand people. Thus, many remained unemployed due to lack of infrastructure.

Naga society continued to experience difficulties throughout this period. Politically, the situation escalated as not only the Indo-Naga conflicts continued, but also factionalism between the Naga nationalists created further problems. Socially, tribalism and internal conflicts caused much division. Economy-wise, due to the lack of developmental initiative by the state government, the people were left on their own.

#### **4.2. Mission and ecclesiastical changes**

Apart from the four Christian groups from the previous period – Baptist, Catholic, NCRC and TPM – the Assemblies of God (AG) mission also entered Nagaland during this period.

##### **4.2.1. The Naga Baptist churches**

Evangelization of the rest of the Naga people remained the main missional aim of the Naga Baptist churches during the period covered in this chapter. In order to raise funds and mobilise resources for this purpose, the NBCC formed the Home Mission Board (HMB) in 1962. It was formed with the stated objective 'to complete the unfinished task of evangelism after all the foreign missionaries had withdrawn from Nagaland.'<sup>47</sup>

In 1972, the Naga Baptist churches celebrated the centenary of the coming of Christianity to Nagaland. In the build up to this celebration, they were encouraged to be

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<sup>46</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, 161.

<sup>47</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 25.

involved in world evangelization. Consequently, with the vision of expanding its mission engagement beyond the Naga territory, HMB was renamed as the Nagaland Missionary Movement (NMM).<sup>48</sup> The vision with which the NMM was formed was to take the Naga Baptist mission beyond Naga territory into cross-cultural settings. The first step towards this was taken up by the Ao Naga Baptist churches association (ABAM) in 1972 by starting a cross-cultural mission among the Tirap tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>49</sup> Since 1980 the Naga Baptist churches, through the NMM, also started sending missionaries across international borders to countries including Nepal, Cambodia, Thailand, China, Sudan and Kenya.<sup>50</sup> In 2008, NMM again modified its nomenclature to Nagaland Mission (not Missionary) Movement.<sup>51</sup> According to the NBCC Platinum Jubilee memoir, *One New Humanity*, the name change was ‘an acknowledgement of the Mission work being carried out by Churches and Associations and affirmation that the Church should be the base for Mission work’.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the change from missionary to mission.

Another result of the centenary celebration in 1972 was the decision to open a theological seminary. Till then, the Bible School in Impur was the only Christian leadership training institute run by the Naga Baptists. Those seeking higher theological education had to do it outside the state. Thus, sensing that there was a need, the Clark Theological College was established in 1972.<sup>53</sup> As the first theological college among the Naga Baptists, it fittingly bears the name of the pioneer missionary, EW Clark.

In the 1970s a revival occurred among the Naga Baptist churches. It started on 8 May 1976 in the village Baptist church at Anaki, in north-western Nagaland, and spread all over Nagaland not only among the Baptist churches but also among the NCRC

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<sup>48</sup> NBCC AEC-71/87, Kohima, January 31-February 3, 1971; NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 25-26.

<sup>49</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 26.

<sup>50</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 28.

<sup>51</sup> NBCC NBCE-7/2008, Kohima, 21-22 May 2008.

<sup>52</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 27.

<sup>53</sup> Interview of Alem. He is the former Principal of CTC.

(detailed discussion under section 4.5). The enthusiasm created by the revival gave further impetus for global mission among the Naga Baptist churches. An important legacy of the revival was the promise of ‘Ten Thousand missionaries’ from Nagaland. The NBCC resolution made on 15 October 1977 reads:

Voted, that the plan of enlisting 10,000 volunteers for the Great Commission Movement of our Lord Jesus Christ, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel’, presented by the Board of the Nagaland Missionary Movement [NMM], be sponsored by the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, and that we, through all our affiliated bodies: All Baptist Associations, Nagaland Baptist Women’s Union and Nagaland Christian Youth Movement urge all Churches to involve themselves seriously in enlisting the Volunteers within six months from this day, the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 1977, when this Campaign was officially inaugurated.<sup>54</sup>

The promise of the Ten Thousand missionaries became the flagship of Naga Baptist evangelistic initiatives. Nine years later, in 1986, the Executive Committee of the NBCC issued a statement that the ‘10,000 volunteers’ refer to not just those who went outside of Nagaland as missionaries, but also those who ‘support our missionary efforts by praying, [and] by giving.’<sup>55</sup> In 2009, the NBCC issued another ‘clarification’ reiterating that the ‘original minutes’ of 1977 meant ‘going’, ‘giving’ and ‘praying’, and therefore ‘the desire has been fulfilled.’<sup>56</sup> However Alemmeren, under whose leadership as the Director of the NMM, the declaration was made, contrasted the NBCC statement by stating that

In the resolution ‘volunteers’ means those people who will voluntarily come forward to be a missionary, who are willing to surrender their life for God for the rest of their life. There is a cost and price to be paid even up to the extent of losing blood, so you need to voluntarily come to be enlisted among the 10,000, and not because your church/parents want you to go.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, the ‘ten thousand’ are those who ‘volunteered’ to ‘go’ as missionaries. Thus the interpretation of who constitutes the ten thousand has been a controversial issue. Nevertheless, it has inspired and continues to inspire missionary interest among the Naga Baptist.

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<sup>54</sup> NBCC ANBC-77/339, Pfutsero, October 13-16, 1977.

<sup>55</sup> Minutes and Action of NBCC Executive Committee, Kohima, 5-6 June, 1986.

<sup>56</sup> ‘NBCC Executive Meeting’, Athibung, 6 February, 2009, 4.

<sup>57</sup> ‘GO – A movement to pursue the unfinished covenant of 10,000 missionaries’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 5 October 2018).

This period saw the formation of two key Baptist bodies. The first was the Nagaland Baptist Women's Union (NBWU) in 1967. A number of Naga Baptist women's associations were already in existence at the time. But they were all formed in the tribal line: Ao Baptist Women's Association, Angami Baptist Women's Association, and so on. The suggestion for an all Naga Baptist women's association came from a certain Meyatola Longchar, who after attending the Second Indian Women's Conference in Balasore, Orissa in 1965, felt the need for a collective association for Naga Baptist women. Taking her suggestion, the Ao Baptist Women's Association took the initiative and invited two representatives from each of the other tribal Baptist Women's Associations to attend the NBCC annual session at Zunheboto in February 1967. This initiative resulted in the organization of the NBWU on 4 February 1967 with J Savino as its first President.<sup>58</sup> For better coordination with the NBCC, it was renamed as NBCC Women Department (NBCCWD) in 1986.<sup>59</sup>

The second was the formation of the Council of Naga Baptist Churches (CNBC) in 1986.<sup>60</sup> This development was influenced by the political demand for the integration of all Naga inhabited areas. Apart from Nagaland, Naga people live in three other states of India (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur) as well as in western Myanmar (see Appendix two). The integration of these Naga inhabited areas is a key element of the agenda of the Naga nationalist movement. The term 'Nagalim' is used to differentiate the whole Naga inhabited territory from the term Nagaland. It is used to refer to all Naga inhabited land including Nagaland and the various Naga inhibited regions in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Myanmar (see Map 4, Appendix one). The formation of CNBC was in line with this desire for Naga integration: it sought to represent all Naga

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<sup>58</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 32; 'Actions and Minutes of the NBCC Executive Committee', Chumukedima, January 16-17, 1986.

<sup>60</sup> Phuveyi Dozo (ed.), *The Nagas: A Valid Reason to Live Together with a Vision* (Kohima: FNBA, 2012), 201. Dozo was one of the key architects of the formation of FNBA.

churches irrespective of which states or country it belonged to. In 1988, there was a proposal for the NBCC to merge with the CNBC. But the NBCC decided not to.<sup>61</sup> In 2011, CNBC was renamed as Fellowship of Naga Baptist Associations (FNBA).<sup>62</sup>

#### **4.2.2. The Naga Catholic churches**

Until the 1960s, the Catholic mission in Nagaland was limited to only the two western Naga tribes of Angami and Kyong. The subsequent period, however, saw the spread of Catholic mission into most parts of Nagaland. Among the Chakhesang tribe, east of the Angami territory, Catholic mission started as a result of the work of P Bernick, a Salesian priest, who, having been requested by Thoo Thezu and Akha, visited their village on 18 October 1964. It resulted in the conversion of many in the village. By 1970 a church was established with 200 members.<sup>63</sup> Catholic mission started among the Zeliangrong tribe, residing south of Angami area, through the work of the Salesian priest, Joseph Felix, who, having been invited by Namkhaheing Iheilung, the Chairman of the Zeliangrong Tribal Council, started work at Peren in November 1964. Partly sandwiched between the Angami and Kyong area resides the Rengma Naga. Among this tribe, Catholic faith was introduced by a lay Catholic, Paulus Prale who was posted at Tseminyu, a Rengma village, as the Agricultural Instructor under the government of Nagaland. Through his influence, Ngabu Khing accepted the Catholic faith. He was baptised on 31 July 1968. Soon many followed leading to the establishment of a Catholic church at Tseminyu.<sup>64</sup> North of the Rengma territory and east of Kyong area is the Sumi Naga Area. Through

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<sup>61</sup> 'The action of the CNBC No 2/88 requesting NBCC to change its nomenclature from NBCC to CNBC was viewed and discussed seriously by the members. It was the feeling of the members that although CNBC is the product of NBCC directly or indirectly, it may not be quite wise to change its nomenclature and merge with CNBC quickly. Accordingly, the following action has been taken: NBCE-51/88 Voted: That the question of changing the nomenclature of NBCC to CNBC can not be considered at this moment. Therefore, it is further voted to inform CNBC expressing regret for not considering the request.' Minutes and actions of the Executive Committee, NBCC, Kohima, June 7-8, 1988, 5.

<sup>62</sup> 'Minutes and Actions of the NBCC Executive Committee Meeting.' Kohima, 26-27 May 2011, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 76.

<sup>64</sup> 'Catholic church in Nagaland' <http://www.kohimadiocese.org/history.html> (Accessed on 11 January 2017).

contact with Catholics in the neighbouring areas, 150 people of the Sumi Naga village of Lazami joined the Catholic church, thus, establishing the first Sumi Naga Catholic congregation.<sup>65</sup> Thus, among the Naga tribes in southern and south-western Nagaland, Catholic churches were established through evangelistic forays by missionary-priests, catechists and lay Catholics, from existing Catholic churches in the Angami and Kyong territory.

On the northern and eastern part of Nagaland, which were far away from already existing Catholic communities, education was an effective tool. At Tuensang, the headquarters of the easternmost part of Nagaland, Catholic mission started the St John Evangelist's Home on 28 February 1967. It made an instant impact as 208 students were enlisted in the school in 1968.<sup>66</sup> Catholic mission also started schools in the Ao Naga area with schools being opened at Tuli (Don Bosco School) and Mokokchung (Queen Mary's School) in 1978 and 1980 respectively. This was a significant development because the area was considered the bastion of Baptist Christianity owing to being the area where the American Baptist first made their permanent base and also because almost the whole tribe was by then part of the Baptist church. In 1983, at Chungtia, 15 kilometres away from Mokokchung, fourteen families accepted the Catholic faith, and thus established the first Catholic church among the Ao Naga tribe.<sup>67</sup>

With the growth of Catholic churches in Nagaland, it was deemed necessary to establish a separate diocese. Until 1973, the Naga Catholic churches were part of the diocese of Dibrugarh, Assam. In that year, the churches under the states of Nagaland and Manipur were separated and made into the diocese of Kohima-Imphal. Bishop Abraham Alangimattathil, then Vicar General of the diocese of Dibrugarh, was appointed as its first

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<sup>65</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 80.

<sup>66</sup> Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, 69-70.

<sup>67</sup> *Meeting of Religious Superiors in the Diocese of Kohima*, 1-2 March 1984 (Dimapur: Bishop's House, 1984), vii-viii.

Bishop. In a further development, on 29 June 1980 the diocese of Kohima-Imphal was bifurcated and the diocese of Kohima was carved out of it comprising only the state of Nagaland. Bishop Alangimattathil continued to be the Bishop of the diocese of Kohima.<sup>68</sup>

An outstanding issue for the Catholic churches in Nagaland during this period was the lack of local clergy.<sup>69</sup> Local catechists (like Joseph Vitsutha of Jotsoma, Rishumo Patton of Lungsa and Martin Hengen Jamir of Chungtia) and touring catechists (like Yantsao Yanthan and Guovi) were appointed to assist the priests. While the former was confined to a particular local congregation, the latter covered a bigger area and usually accompanied the priest on tour as interpreter.<sup>70</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, these catechists played an active role in the evangelistic activities of the Catholic mission in Nagaland. Nevertheless their work was restrained by their lack of adequate training: their only training being the three months catechist course,<sup>71</sup> which was a far cry from the ten years of training that a Catholic priest undertook after matriculation. According to Karinthayil, in a church where everything was led by set ‘circulations and dogmas’ their influence was limited.<sup>72</sup> In the light of this, concerted efforts were made to develop local clergy. Towards this end, theological seminaries were opened, the first being the Good Shepherd Seminary, Dimapur, which was established in November 1978. Another seminary, St Xavier’s Minor Seminary was started in December 1981.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, as of 1984 the church was still facing difficulty in convincing the native Catholics to embrace the clerical profession. The minutes of the meeting of Religious superiors in 1984 noted the lack of interest for clerical life among native Naga Catholics.<sup>74</sup> Thus, it was suggested that ‘seminaries’ should teach ‘the importance of local vocations.’<sup>75</sup> This

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Catholic church in Nagaland’; *Meeting of Religious Superiors in the Diocese of Kohima*, v.

<sup>69</sup> Interview of Karinthayil.

<sup>70</sup> Interview of Neisalhou.

<sup>71</sup> Interview of Neisalhou.

<sup>72</sup> Interview of Karinthayil.

<sup>73</sup> *Meeting of Religious Superiors in the Diocese of Kohima*, x.

<sup>74</sup> *Meeting of Religious Superiors in the Diocese of Kohima*, 21.

<sup>75</sup> *Meeting of Religious Superiors in the Diocese of Kohima*, 21.



desire and effort to have local clergy paid dividend when on 17 December 1989, two native Naga, Carlos Neisalhou and Abraham Mhonchan, were ordained as the first Naga Catholic priests. Emphasizing the significance of this, Carlos Neisalhou, during the interview noted that what he and Abraham Mhonchan had done showed the Naga people that ‘it was possible for a Naga to live a strict religious life.’<sup>76</sup>

The ordination of these two male Naga priests, however, was superseded by the entrance into religious life of one Naga woman, Aloysia Humtsoe, on 8 December 1974.<sup>77</sup> She joined the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, thus, becoming the first Catholic from Nagaland to enter religious life. According to Lincy Francis, the Superior of St Mary’s Convent, Dimapur, though Humtsoe was the first from the Catholic churches in Nagaland, the first Naga woman to enter religious life was Theresa Shimrah, a Thangkul Naga, from Manipur.<sup>78</sup>

#### **4.2.3. The Nagaland Christian Revival Churches**

A key development in the NCRC during this period was the establishment of ‘Prayer Centres’. Its root can be traced to the ‘Faith Homes’ of TPM, which during the early years had been a mentor for the NCRC. In TPM, the Faith Homes were attached to all local churches where the ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ resided (see discussion on TPM churches in section 5.2.4). It also acted as a place where the believer can spend time in prayer. In the NCRC they were called Prayer Homes. In the course of time, some individuals in pursuit of more detachment from the ‘world’ formed ‘Prayer Centres’ which unlike the Prayer Homes were not attached to a local church; rather they were independent centres much like the monastic community of early Christianity. The first such Prayer Centre was the ‘House of Prayer for all People’, popularly known as ‘Chathe Prayer Centre’ on the banks of river Chathe. It was established in 1965 by one Delievi, who had committed himself

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<sup>76</sup> Interview of Neisalhou.

<sup>77</sup> Interview of Lincy Francis, Dimapur, 14 July 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Interview of Francis.

as a celibate for ‘prayer ministry’.<sup>79</sup> In the subsequent years Prayer Centres were established in many places with full time ‘Prayer Warriors’, who had left their own homes and churches and had dedicated themselves to full time prayer ministry.

In the Prayer Centres, a prescriptive form of spirituality was followed, whereby the Prayer Warriors not only provided the diagnosis to the problem but also provided prescription as to the number of days to fast and pray.<sup>80</sup> These Prayer Centres have become popular destinations for those seeking spiritual guidance. Though initially started by NCRC Prayer Warriors, several Prayer Centres had been established by non-NCRC Prayer Warriors.

The work of the Prayer Warriors reflect the *shamanic* tradition of the traditional Naga religion. In the Naga context, the *shamans* were an alternative to the village priests in dispensing spiritual directions (see section 2.4). For various concerns individuals sought the spiritual direction of the *shamans*, who would then prescribe certain *gena* (abstinences) or sacrifices to be performed to appease the malevolent spirits. In the Naga context, the Prayer Warriors and their Prayer Centres provided an alternative to the official church, where people would come to pray and seek spiritual guidance.

In the course of time the growing popularity of the Prayer Centres caused a problem for NCRC in the form of a conflict between the Prayer Warriors and church organization leaders. The Prayer Warriors were mostly elderly people with less education. They considered the young educated ones as more intellectual but less spiritual, preoccupied with theological and doctrinal issues and denominational and organizational problems. On the other hand, the young educated leaders felt that the Prayer Warriors were in need of biblical guidance. For some time, there was an unexpressed feeling of parallel leadership within NCRC.<sup>81</sup> Fortunately for the NCRC, it did not result in a full-blown

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<sup>79</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 23.

<sup>80</sup> Interview of Beilieu Shuya, Dimapur, 28 June 2017.

<sup>81</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 21; Interview of Inchayanger; Interview of DL Sanchu, Kohima, 28 October 2016.

conflict due to the intervention of pioneers like Imkongtoshi and Neihulie, whose leadership was acknowledged by both groups.<sup>82</sup>

As in the *shamanic* tradition within traditional Naga religion, women played a key role in the Prayer Centres. In the traditional Naga religion, village priests were always male. But many *shamans* were women. Just as *shamanism* provided an avenue for women religious expression in the traditional Naga religion, prayer ministry provided such an avenue in the post-revival context in Nagaland. Many of the Prayer Warriors were women, several of whom also established Prayer Centres. Beilieu Shuya's 'House of Prayer for all Nations' and Alemla Imsong's 'Bethel Prayer Home' are two of the prominent Prayer Centres initiated by Naga women. While the former is a NCRC member, the latter is a Baptist church member, which shows how the Prayer Centre movement have also crossed denominational boundaries.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the NCRC rejected TPM's invitation to join them. So they parted ways in 1962. Almost immediately the NCRC developed a relationship with another Pentecostal body, the Assemblies of God (AG). A lasting legacy of this connection with the AG mission was the importance given to theological training. With the financial support afforded by American AG missionary, David Nunn, the Kohima Bible College was established on 1 August 1970,<sup>83</sup> which happened to be the first theological college in Nagaland. Two more Bible Colleges of NCRC followed: Nagaland Bible College established in 1977 and Christ for the Nations Bible College established in 1980.

As with the case with TPM, the AG mission also wanted to assimilate the NCRC into their fold. In 1968, the NCRC leaders were invited to attend an AG conference in Kolkata to discuss and consider the proposal. But NCRC decided that it would rather go

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<sup>82</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 21.

<sup>83</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 24.

on its own.<sup>84</sup> Thus, in 1972 the NCRC and AG parted ways. Nevertheless, some joined the AG church and established the AG church of Nagaland.<sup>85</sup>

#### **4.2.4. Assemblies of God churches, Nagaland**

The first AG preacher to visit Nagaland was Indian itinerant preacher Solomon Wasker. He was a graduate of the Southern Asia Bible College, Bangalore, a renowned college run by the AG church in India. In 1962, CB Anderson, the then principal of the college, delegated Wasker to promote and recruit for the college in the eastern part of India. Thus, along with two Naga graduates of the college, Deo Vihienuo and Petolu Sahire, he came to Nagaland and visited Angami, Chakhesang and Kyong region.<sup>86</sup> The next year, in 1963, he travelled to different places in north-east India: Manipur (March), Assam (April) and Mizoram (May). In 1964, Anderson travelled to north-east India and conducted what is considered as the First Conference of the AG church in the region from 6-10 March at Lakhipur, Assam.<sup>87</sup> In this conference the Assemblies of God East India (AGEI) was organised with Anderson as the Superintendent and Wasker as the Assistant Superintendent.<sup>88</sup>

About this time, the NCRC was in the process of severing its ties with TPM. Consequently, they could not invite TPM preachers anymore to speak in their conventions. It was in this context that they invited Mark Buntain, the pastor of the AG church in Kolkata, to speak in the NCRC convention held at Mokokchung in 1966.<sup>89</sup> From then on the NCRC and the AGEI developed a partnership. Consequently, NCRC leaders attended the AGEI conference held at Lakhipur from 4-6 October 1966. They were: Neihulie Angami (President), EM Mozhui (Secretary), Thungjamo, Shanpathung,

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<sup>84</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 20.

<sup>85</sup> *Nagaland Christian Revival Otsu, 1952-1977* (Mokokchung: NCRC Mokokchung Centre, 1977), 18.

<sup>86</sup> *Celebrating Golden Jubilee* (Dimapur: AGEI, 2015), 41. Interview of TR Angami, Kohima (27 October 2016).

<sup>87</sup> *Celebrating Golden Jubilee*, 41.

<sup>88</sup> *Celebrating Golden Jubilee*, 41.

<sup>89</sup> 'Greetings by Huldah Buntain', in AGEI, *Celebrating Golden Jubilee*, 4; NCRC, *Revival*, 15.

Yanarao and Tsenjamo. Neihulie and Mozhui were even elected members of the AGEI Executive Committee.<sup>90</sup>

The blossoming relationship led to the 1968 proposal by the AGEI for the NCRC to join them. As noted above, while the majority declined the proposal, a few of them led by Mozhui, the then President of NCRC,<sup>91</sup> joined the AGEI. On 13 February 1972 they convened the First Nagaland District Conference at Mungya Village and elected the first office bearer of the district under the leadership of TN Lotha as the District Superintendent and Mozhui as the District Secretary.<sup>92</sup>

#### **4.2.5. The Pentecostal Mission, Nagaland**

The Pentecostal churches in Nagaland had a difficult time during the early period. They were scattered in small groups amidst other Christian groups who were not always kind to them, calling them ‘fools’ or heretics.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, these churches were sustained by a steady flow of pastors from Tamil Nadu, south India. These arrivals were fully committed to the TPM ideal of leaving everything behind and becoming one with the people they served. Azo Sekhose, a first generation Pentecostal church member noted that the pastors

think that ‘I am from south [India] but... this (the Naga people) is my people, my sister, my brother, my mother, my father.’ So though they suffer also they don’t call their parents, we have to look after them since we are one family also.<sup>94</sup>

The practice of these Tamil pastors embracing the Naga Pentecostal community as their own remains a distinctive of the TPM churches in Nagaland. Some Naga Pentecostals like Ayangba, Dekotou and others were also appointed into the position of pastor. However, their position was usually subordinate to the chief pastor, who throughout this period was an outsider.

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<sup>90</sup> *Celebrating Golden Jubilee*, 48.

<sup>91</sup> Mozhui was appointed as the General Secretary of NCRC in January 1961. He held that position till 1967, on which year he became the President of the NCRC.

<sup>92</sup> *Celebrating Golden Jubilee*, 42.

<sup>93</sup> Interview of Azo Sekhose, Kohima, 27 October, 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Interview of Azo.

#### 4.2.6. Summary

By the end of this period, 1964-1989, some form of Christian faith had been embraced by an overwhelming majority of the Naga people. According to the *Indian Census 1991*, 87.46 per cent of the Naga population was Christian.<sup>95</sup>

This period saw much effort among the Naga churches towards developing native leadership. In this regard, theological colleges were opened, the first being the Kohima Bible College of the NCRC (1970), followed by the Clark Theological College of the Baptists (1972), Eastern Bible College of the AG (1974) and the Good Shepherd Seminary of the Catholics (1978). By this time, the Baptist, NCRC and AG churches were now fully under native leadership. Nevertheless, lack of native leadership remained an issue in certain churches, especially among the Catholics and TPM. The former, however, took a significant step towards indigenization of leadership with the ordination of the first two native priests in 1989. The TPM, however, was still tarrying behind in encouraging native leadership as the natives remained confined to the status of assistant to leaders who had come from outside the state.

As noted in the previous chapter, denominationalism in the Naga context was not simply a residue of missionary Christianity but was also enhanced by local experience of bitter schisms (see section 3.2). Thus, much antagonism existed between the masses of the various Christian denominations in Nagaland. This attitude was characterised by an assertion of denominational distinctiveness and a sense of belongingness to a global Christian tradition that represents 'true' Christianity. Thus, they took pride in maintaining the distinctiveness of that particular Christian tradition.

Much denominational rivalry existed during this period. A Baptist church publication in the 1980s, entitle *Tsungrem Oi Baptist aser Roman Catholic Asadangba*

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<sup>95</sup> 1,057,940 out of the total population of 1,209,546 were Christians. 'Census of India, 1991.'

(Comparing Baptist and Roman Catholic based on the World of God) declared that many people are being led astray from the ‘Word of God’ (*Tsungrem O nungi*) by the lure of education (*shisatsu renlok dang*) provided by the Catholic church.<sup>96</sup> It listed twenty points of comparison, including the Bible, church, salvation, baptism and others, arguing that the Baptist practice is biblical, while the Catholic practice is not. In 1984, Joseph Puthenpurakal, a Catholic priest from Kerala, south India, who had worked in Nagaland attempted to give an ecumenical response to the denominational rivalry in Nagaland. In his *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, he posited that the American Baptist Missionaries who ‘had lived in a climate of intense anti-Catholicism before coming over to the Nagas’ were the progenitor of denominational misunderstanding in the Naga context.<sup>97</sup> Through these ‘past prejudices’, ‘a wall of ignorance’ was created between the Baptist and Catholic Naga churches.<sup>98</sup> The two perspectives show how denominational rivalry in Nagaland continued to be influenced by the historical rivalry between Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as the local conflict to gain membership in to the church. Thus, as Puthenpurakal concluded his study, ‘fear of ecumenism’<sup>99</sup> was prevalent among the Naga churches during the period examined in this chapter.

### **4.3. Peace, reconciliation<sup>100</sup> and church**

The Naga Baptist church leaders were quick to realize that the inauguration of the statehood was not going to bring lasting peace. There was still a large section of the Naga nationalist who were committed to continue their armed struggle. In the light of this, as

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<sup>96</sup> ABAM, *Tsungrem Oi Baptist aser Roman Catholic Asadangba* (Impur: ABAM, [n.d.]), 2. The book does not have the year of publication. But Rikum Ao wrote the *Okila* (Introduction) of the book as the Executive Secretary of ABAM. Rikum was the Executive Secretary of ABAM during 1985-91.

<sup>97</sup> Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 88.

<sup>98</sup> Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 88.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Peace’ here refers to a state devoid of conflicts, which became a missional concern of the Naga churches in the light of the ‘continued disturbances’ caused by the political conflict in the region. ‘Reconciliation’ is the churches’ effort towards the ‘restoration of peace and normalcy’ in the region. NBCC ANBC-64/122, Wokha, January 31- February 2, 1964.

noted above, the NBCC initiated the Peace Mission during its convention at Wokha from 31 January to 2 February 1964.<sup>101</sup> The resolution read:

we are deeply concerned about the continued disturbances in the land, and therefore, this Third Nagaland Baptist Convention attended by more than five thousand representatives from all the tribes of Nagaland unanimously resolved to request the Government of Nagaland, and through it, the Government of India to open further avenues for making available the service of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, Shri Shankar Rao Deo, Shri Bimala Prasad Chaliha and Rev. Michael Scott, with the sole object of exploring ways and means for the speedy restoration of peace and normalcy in Nagaland, and that the Church leaders of Nagaland be requested to give every possible help and co-operation for the success of the Mission.<sup>102</sup>

Thus it was in the context of the ‘continued disturbances in the land’ even after the formation of the state of Nagaland that the church felt the need for a peace initiative. Linyu quoted Kenneth Kerhou, the then Executive Secretary, to have stated: ‘the church leaders felt called upon to take the risk of bringing peace in the strife torn land of ours in conformity with the Christian principle of peace and reconciliation.’<sup>103</sup> Thus it was the conviction that it was a Christian thing to be a catalyst of peace which motivated the NBCC to initiate the Peace Mission. Except Shankar Rao Deo, the other three, Jayaprakash Narayan, Bimala Prasad Chahila and Michael Scott responded positively, thus forming the three member Peace Mission.

The NBCC also constituted a ‘Consultative Body’ to work closely with the Peace Mission throughout the process. It was instituted at the NBCC meeting from 21-22 November 1964 at Kohima. The following were appointed members of the Consultative Body: Longri Ao, Kijungluba, Shihoto, Ahamo, Hezedeing, Kenneth Kerhuo and Ayutemjen.<sup>104</sup> They were to keep the church in touch with the peace process and to liaise with the negotiating parties whenever necessary. They also conducted devotional services during the peace talk. The record of the peace talk on 1 October 1964 reads:

The second session of the Indo-Naga Peace Conference resumed after a solemn devotional service conducted by the Reverends Longri Ao, Ahamo Patton, H.K. Lungalang, Ayutenjen Ao and Kenneth Kerhuo. A devotional hymn was rendered in song and the scripture message was read out from Psalm 91. The benediction was offered by Kenneth Kerhuo. After the short opening service the church leaders

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<sup>101</sup> NBCC ANBC-64/122, Wokha, January 31- February 2, 1964.

<sup>102</sup> NBCC ANBC-64/122, Wokha, January 31- February 2, 1964.

<sup>103</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 210-211.

<sup>104</sup> NBCC ANBC-64/123, Kohima, November 21-22, 1964.



emerged out from the Conference Hall and the session began immediately in a gathering of a perfect harmony.<sup>105</sup>

The contribution of the NBCC and its constituent body was lucidly noted by Narayan, a member of the Peace Mission, in his speech at Kohima in August 1966:

It was the Baptist Church Convention that appointed the Peace Mission; it was with the help of the Church leaders that contact was established with Federal leaders; it was with their help and indefatigable labour that the Ceasefire Agreement was signed; and since then until the end, it was through the Liaison Committee of the Church Council that the Peace Mission remained in contact with the Federal leaders.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, the NBCC proactively supported the work of the Peace Mission. Upon declaration of the ceasefire, the NBCC declared 6 September 1964 as a day of prayer.<sup>107</sup> In May 1965, the NBCC constituted teams of two church leaders in every district to assist the Peace Observation Team.<sup>108</sup> The NBCC also looked after the finances of the Peace Mission. In November 1964, the Peace Mission Fund was instituted to raise funds for the Peace Mission.<sup>109</sup>

The dissolution of the Peace Mission in 1966 threatened to nullify all the efforts made until then. However, the NBCC refused to give up. In an emergency meeting held from 6-10 May 1966, the NBCC resolved that the 'Consultative Body' will continue and that a 'Nagaland Peace Commission' be formed to carry on the peace process. The minutes of the meeting noted:

Voted that in order to strengthen and carry on the Peace work, a Nagaland Peace Commission be appointed consisting of the following five members, Messrs, Mayangnokcha, Nivukhu, Vizol, Nabakrushna Choudhury (Sarvodaya activist) and Mrs Lakshmi Menon (the then Minister of State, Rajya Sabha, GoI) ... further voted that we sincerely appeal to the authorities of both sides and the Naga Public to give their fullest co-operation for the success of the said Commission.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 74.

<sup>106</sup> Narayan, *For Peaceful Settlement*, 2.

<sup>107</sup> 'The Day of Thanksgiving for Ceasefire in Nagaland, 6 September 1964.'

<sup>108</sup> The NBCC meeting minutes of 7-8 May 1965 reads: 'Voted that the following Church leaders be appointed to assist the Observation Team in the areas given against their names as the party moves: Kohima District – Mr K. Kerhou and Rev. H.K. Lungalang; Mokokchung Distrit – Mr Ayu and Rev. Shihoto; Tuensang District – Mr Litsase and Rev. Longri; Manipur State – Mr Mashangthei and Mr A. Ashuli.' NBCC AEC-65/16, Kohima, May 7-8, 1965.

<sup>109</sup> NBCC ANBC-64/125, Kohima, November 21-22, 1964.

<sup>110</sup> NBCC ANBC-66/155, Kohima, May 6-10, 1966.

The Commission however did not materialize since ‘some members declined the responsibility’.<sup>111</sup> Again the NBCC proposed a meeting between all Naga leaders, both ‘over-ground and underground’, to be held on 6 September 1972.<sup>112</sup> The abrogation of the ceasefire a few days earlier on 1 September, however, prevented it from happening. Not deterred by these failures, the NBCC formed the Nagaland Peace Council (NPC<sup>2</sup>) during its annual meeting at Ngwalwa from 1-3 March 1974, with Longri Ao (the then Executive Secretary of NBCC) as the President.<sup>113</sup> In his inaugural speech, Longri stated the basis on which the council was to work:

There is a genuine basis, we believe, for reconciliation and restoration of lasting peace in Nagaland. Against the dark background of what has been happening all these years among us, the people of Nagaland have come to certain great basic moral convictions, that armed conflicts is wrong! ... I vow in the presence of God whom I serve that my colleagues and I have nothing to do with the mean tricks of party politicians, but we have everything to do with the land we love, with its lack of peace and security.<sup>114</sup>

The ‘dark background’ here refers to the reign of terror that had swooped into Nagaland in the light of the abrogation of the ceasefire in 1972. As noted above, it was through the facilitation of the Liaison Committee of the Peace Council that the representatives of GoI and NNC met at Shillong and consequently signed the Shillong Accord on 11 November 1975.<sup>115</sup> With the Accord turning out to be controversial, the NPC<sup>2</sup> was also blamed for its alleged role. A public meeting organized by the NPC<sup>2</sup> in Kohima on 28 October 1981 to garner public support for the Accord was met with protest from Naga students.<sup>116</sup> The NPC<sup>2</sup> issued a clarification of its role in 1990 entitled: ‘A Clarification of the Role of

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<sup>111</sup> Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 88.

<sup>112</sup> Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 90.

<sup>113</sup> NBCC ANBC-74/262, Ngawlwa, March 1-3, 1974. P Dozo, who succeeded Longri as the General Secretary of the NBCC ‘declined’ to hold the post of the President of the NPC<sup>2</sup> ‘for personal reasons’. So, Kenneth Kerhou, a former General Secretary of NBCC, was appointed the president of the NPC<sup>2</sup>. Kenneth Kerhou, *A Brief Report of the Nagaland Peace Council* (Kohima, 6 June 1986).

<sup>114</sup> ‘Speech of Longri Ao, Inaugural Service of the Naga Peace Council, Chedema, 29 May 1974’

<sup>115</sup> Kenneth Kerhou noted: ‘dialogue and communications were carried out especially through the mediation of the Liaison Committee of the NPC as a “go between”’. Kenneth Kerhou, *A Clarification on the Role of Nagaland Peace Council in the Indo-Naga Peace Talks*, Kohima, 30 October 1990.

<sup>116</sup> Medom, *My Journey in the Nagaland Freedom Movement*, 240; NBCC NBCE-81/23, Kohima, July 21-23, 1981.

Nagaland Peace Council in the Indo-Naga Peace Talks'. Here the then President and member of the NPC<sup>2</sup> since its inception, Kenneth Kerhou noted:

While certain people may have some misgivings about the Shillong Accord, it cannot be denied that a second climate of peace (the first being the ceasefire of 1964 through the initiative of the Peace Mission) and normalcy was restored in Nagaland to a certain measure. It is up to the people/Nagas whether they desire to make full use of this climate of peace and normalcy for unity and understanding among ourselves and peace with our neighbours.<sup>117</sup>

However, with the growing unpopularity of the Accord, the credibility of the NPC<sup>2</sup> was questioned. So the NPC<sup>2</sup> kept a low profile.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless it continued until 1994, in which year its last President (VK Nuh) resigned.<sup>119</sup>

The NPC<sup>2</sup> claimed to be a neutral entity. However, in its effort to support the Accord, the NPC<sup>2</sup> became a political instrument. In a letter addressed to Phizo, Kerhou tried to convince the former that with the signing of the Accord 'peace is now a reality after a period of many years of conflicts and sufferings.' He further claimed that 'the Churches and Associations throughout the Baptist field and also the general public all over the Naga territory had wholeheartedly supported the Shillong Accord.' Therefore, he wrote, 'I appeal to you to give your approval to the Shillong Accord and prepare to conduct the negotiations with the Government of India for political settlement.'<sup>120</sup> Thus, despite claims of 'neutrality' the NPC<sup>2</sup> took a political stand within the context that was polarized between favouring and opposing the Accord. The NPC<sup>2</sup> went beyond its role of reconciliation. This action of the NPC<sup>2</sup> crippled the church's involvement in the peace process even in the coming period.

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<sup>117</sup> Kerhou, *A Clarification on the Role of Nagaland Peace Council in the Indo-Naga Peace Talks*.

<sup>118</sup> Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 96. As such, in the executive committee meeting of NBCC some members even questioned the 'silence of the NPC', and demanded 'to hear report of the NPC'. NBCC 86/24, Kohima, April 17-19, 1986. In the same vein the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of January 1989 also observed that 'the mission of the Nagaland Peace Council [was] so inactive and silent.' 'The Actions and Minutes of the Executive Committee, Shamator, January 12-15, 1989, 5.

<sup>119</sup> NBCC NBCE-93/36, Kohima, October 27-28, 1993.

<sup>120</sup> 'Letter of Kenneth Kerhou, Secretary NPC to A.Z. Phizo, President NNC, Kohima 8 February 1977' cited in Medom, *My Journey in the Nagaland Freedom Movement*, 241-43.

As in the previous period, the Baptist churches continued to be the sole participant in the churches' response to the need of peace in the region. The lack of Catholic involvement, according to Karinthayil, was because 'when the nationalists were so open about their Baptist faith, the Catholic leaders could not do much.'<sup>121</sup> It was more difficult, when the priests in the church were all from outside the state; for as noted above, the first local priests were ordained only in 1989. As noted in the previous chapter, the 'spiritual' focus of the charismatic denominations, that is, NCRC, AG and TPM, means that they were not interested to engage in the political matter. Thus, it was left to the Baptist churches to not only initiate peace, but also to engage in ideological discussion (discussed in the next section) as to the direction in which the Naga political future was taking.

#### **4.4. Politics, ideologies and Nagaland for Christ**

Indira Gandhi went to China to see the Mao Zedong;  
Unfortunately she was captured by the Chinese soldiers.<sup>122</sup>

In the 1980s and 90s children growing up in Nagaland sang this song in the tune of the popular rhyme 'Yankee Doodle went to town'. Oblivious to the children was an ideological battle. The origin of the 'Indira Gandhi' version of the song is unclear. But that it was her name rather than any of the other Prime Ministers of India, is no coincidence. It was during her tenure as Prime Minister of India (1966-71)<sup>123</sup> that the Naga nationalists began to travel to China for military training. The NNC established contact with China during the Sino-India war in 1962. Kughato Sukhai, the then 'Prime Minister' of the FGN, wrote to the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai saying that the 'Nagas would give full support, if China attacked India through Nagaland.'<sup>124</sup> However neither did the Chinese attack India through Nagaland (rather they did it through

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<sup>121</sup> Interview of Karinthayil.

<sup>122</sup> The researcher learned the song as a child growing up in Nagaland the 1980s and 90s. Indira Gandhi accompanied her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, on an official visit to China in 1954. Krishan Bhatia, *Indira: A Biography of Prime Minister Gandhi* (NY: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 141. However, she did not visit China during her tenure as India's Prime Minister.

<sup>123</sup> Indira Gandhi became Prime minister for two more terms: 1971-77 and 1980-84.

<sup>124</sup> Horam, *Naga Polity*, 16, 94.

Arunachal Pradesh) nor did the NNC give any support to the Chinese. Instead, Phizo (the then President of NNC) gave a press conference in London on 15 November 1962 offering the GoI 40,000 Naga soldiers to fight the Chinese if India agreed to grant the Naga demand for independence.<sup>125</sup> In both cases the Naga leaders were opportunistic. Nevertheless, the incident opened the eyes of the Naga leaders that they could approach China for help. Thus, after the end of the Sino-India war, in 1962 ‘General’ Kaito Sukhai flew to Peking from London as the envoy of Phizo.<sup>126</sup> Through this visit formal diplomatic relationship was for the first time established between the NNC and China. From then on, the NNC began to send its cadres for training to China. The first batch from the Naga army led by ‘Brigadier’ Thinosellie and ‘Foreign Secretary’ Muivah, who were designated as ‘Ambassador Plenipotentiary’ of FGN, went to China in 1966 with about 300 Naga Army personnel through Myanmar. They stayed there for two years and returned with huge quantities of arms and ammunitions.<sup>127</sup>

To a large extent, the NSCN-China relationship was a marriage of convenience: on the one hand, the Naga nationalists required financial and technical help for their cause, while on the other hand, China had not been shy to score one over its neighbour, India, as seen during the Sino-India war in 1962 and Indo-Pak war in 1971. The role of China in the emergence of the Maoist movement in India, popularly called Naxalite, is also well documented.<sup>128</sup> There is however a difference in the context between the Naga and the Naxalite case. The later emerged in a typical scenario of a peasant uprising against bourgeois dominance. Thus, ‘the establishment of a state’ which would eventually

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<sup>125</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, 343-44.

<sup>126</sup> VK Sarin, *India's North East in Flames* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982), 17.

<sup>127</sup> Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, 1, 346.

<sup>128</sup> The Naxalite Movement started as a peasant uprising in May 1967 at a place called Naxalbari (from where it got its name) in West Bengal. Peking radio hailed this uprising as a ‘Spring Thunder’. Sumantha Banerjee, ‘From Naxalbari to Chhattisgarh: Half-a-century of Maoist Journey in India’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. LII No 21 (27 May 2017), 43. The Intelligence Bureau of India report of 2012 reported of continuing support of the Naxalites by China. ‘Maoist building weapon factory in India with help from China’ *India Today* (26 April 2012) <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/chinese-intelligence-training-and-funding-maoists-in-india/1/186191.html> (Accessed on 14 June 2017).

‘achieve universal social justice’ was the ideal of the movement.<sup>129</sup> The Naga movement had no such bourgeois-proletariat conflict to begin with. Instead, the NNC-Chinese connection was more to do with south-east Asian power struggle.

The connection with ‘communist’ China was not favoured by some sections of the Naga churches. The NBCC was especially very vocal in its disapproval. Meeting minutes of NBCC, Wokha, 2 January 1964 reads:

Recommended: That a series of talks on the great danger posed by Communism and its atheistic elements both to the body and soul of man be conducted in every village under the auspices of the local Church, and that all the Field Supervisors be requested to provide the Churches in their respective areas with the necessary literature on the subject.<sup>130</sup>

Thus, since the 1960s the Naga churches, specifically the Baptists, had been voicing their disapproval against communist ideologies influencing the Naga nationalist movement. This reached new heights in the 70s with NBCC’s NPC<sup>2</sup> finding itself fighting a propaganda battle against the NNC returnees from China who spearheaded the condemnation of the Shillong Accord, which the NPC<sup>2</sup> on the other hand was promoting. In this context, NBCC/NPC<sup>2</sup> used anti-communist rhetoric to try to rally public support against the non-Accordists, who were portrayed as ‘communists’ who were acting at the behest of China. A NSCN statement in 1984 alleged against the church leaders of the time: ‘they called us “criminals” and branded us “Communists” and organized “Christ soldiers” to eliminate the patriots who were indeed for Christ.’<sup>131</sup> The NBCC also circulated ‘materials on Church and Communism’ to all its constituents.<sup>132</sup>

The NSCN, on the other hand, denied being communist, while admitting to adhere to socialist economic principle. Muivah explains:

Socialist economy means - Nagas are a community-oriented people by culture since time immemorial. Their land holding system speaks of socialistic economic pattern. There are individuals’ land, clans’ land and community’s land. By socialistic economy, it means - mineral resources, rivers, lakes, forest

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<sup>129</sup> Bert Suykens, ‘Comparing Rebel Rule Through Revolution and Naturalization: Ideologies of Governance in Naxalite and Naga India’ in Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir and Zachariah Mampilly (eds), *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2015), 119-120.

<sup>130</sup> NBCC ANBC-64/122(3), Wokha, February 2, 1964.

<sup>131</sup> ‘Statement of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, 3 January 1984’ in Sharma and Sharma (eds), *Documents on North-East India*, 376.

<sup>132</sup> NBCC NBCE-81/24, Kohima, July 21-23, 1981.

and some major means of production are to be nationalized for common economic pool. Nevertheless, individuals are at liberty to own other means of production entitled by law. However, NSCN is not for communism.<sup>133</sup>

Thus, for Muivah, the ‘Socialist economy’ was innately part of the Naga culture. Such effort to ground Marxist ideas in the indigenous values of the land recalls similar efforts in both Marxist China and Vietnam, where cultural identification was a key tool to garner the support of the populace.<sup>134</sup>

That Chinese socialism has an influence on the economic policy of the NSCN is undeniably clear, as even its manifesto states: ‘We stand for Socialism. Because it is the only social and economic system that does away with exploitation and ensures fair equality to all the people.’<sup>135</sup> The thorny issue, however, is the influence on the religious policy of the NSCN by communist China, which at the time was following doctrinal atheism. This was what Muivah denied when he said ‘NSCN is not for communism.’ For him it was possible to adopt certain aspects of socialist principles while remaining a committed Christian. Latin American theologian, Jose Miguez Bonino, called similar practice in Latin America as an ‘instrumental understanding of Marxism’ whereby Marxism is considered exclusively ‘as a set of analytic tools concerning economic activity and its political and social significance.’<sup>136</sup> The NSCN follows a similar policy, adopting Marxist economic policy, while rejecting its atheistic element. It adopted a religious policy that strongly affirms its commitment to Christian faith as noted in its *Manifesto*:

We stand for the faith in God and the salvation of mankind in Jesus, the Christ alone, that is, ‘Nagaland for Christ’. However, the individual freedom of religion shall be safeguarded and the imposition of this faith on others is strictly forbidden.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Th Muivah, ‘The line of National Socialist Council of Nagalim.’ Speech of Muivah published in *Nagaland Post*, Dimapur, 23 March 2017.

<sup>134</sup> Sobhanlal Data Gupta, ‘Marxism, Modernity, and Revolution: The Asian Experience’ in Antje Fluchter and Jivanta Schottli (eds), *The Dynamics of Transculturality: Concepts and Institutions in Motion* (New York: Springer, 2014), 31-32.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Manifesto of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland’ [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/documents/papers/manifesto\\_national\\_socialist\\_council\\_nagaland.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/documents/papers/manifesto_national_socialist_council_nagaland.htm) (Accessed on 16 November 2018).

<sup>136</sup> Jose Miguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 122.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Manifesto of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland.’

The rationale for such a religious policy was explained at length in the original manifesto of the NSCN issued during its formation on 31 January 1980, entitled ‘Free Nagaland Manifesto, National Socialist Council of Nagaland.’ It first talked about how alongside the occupation of Naga areas, ‘one started witnessing the process of Indianization of the Naga people on massive scale.’ It lamented that consistent efforts made by India and Myanmar (Burma in the original) was resulting in ‘Nagas assimilated to their cultures and ways of life.’ This posed a great threat to ‘Christian’ Nagaland:

Although as a doctrine Hinduism is not a recruiting force, it is not to be easily dismissed, since it is backed by a Hindu Government. The forces of Hinduism viz, the numberless Indian troops, the retail and wholesale dealers, the teachers and the instructors, the intelligent, the prophets of non-violence, the gamblers and the snake-charmers, Hindi songs and Hindi films, the rosogula makers and the Gita are all arrayed for the mission of supplanting the Christian God, the Eternal God of the universe.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, it depicted a paranoid scene of GoI sponsored ‘forces of Hinduism’ at work towards ‘supplanting the Christian God’ in Nagaland. As such, defending the nationalist cause was portrayed as being synonymous with defending Christianity itself: ‘To join the Indian Union as they insisted is to allow ourselves to be drowned and perish in these waves of dead doctrine. Whereas to defend the Nagaland’s Independent existence as we have been doing with our lives and our all, is to assure ourselves safe from the doom of Hinduism.’<sup>139</sup> Having established that the defence of Christianity is tantamount to the defence of the Naga nation, the manifesto then goes on to accuse the church leaders of failure to understand the situation and thus of giving in to the advances of ‘Hindu’ India:

The failure of Christian leaders to grasp the way evil forces work and their failure to face them in the way they should, has indeed, placed Nagaland on a most serious trial. We are not only confronted with a war of physical force but also with more dangerous insidious war of assimilation. War of such nature does not admit of shallow approach; it demands of us thorough combat. We live in a sophisticated world but our religious leaders take a shallow view of it. They do not apprehend the fact that the hard realities are always beneath the surface. In spite of the long political bloodshed, they have not realized the immense significance politics of defending one’s national freedom has on question of spiritual salvation. They believe in the illusion that constitutional sanction of India would safe-guard the freedom of their faith.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> ‘Free Nagaland Manifesto, National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Oking 31 January 1980, 17-18’ as cited in John Thomas, *Evangelising the Nation: Religion and the Formation of Naga Political Identity* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016), 72.

<sup>139</sup> *Free Nagaland Manifesto*, 18-19.

<sup>140</sup> *Free Nagaland Manifesto*, 18.



Thus, the church leaders were accused of bartering away both the ‘national freedom’ as well as ‘spiritual salvation’. In the light of this, the manifesto called upon Naga Christians to choose to ‘hold firm our ground with Christ and face the carrot and stick policy and persecutions’ of India.<sup>141</sup>

NSCN’s Christian rhetoric reached its crescendo with the declaration of ‘Nagaland for Christ’ as its religious manifesto. The slogan was not new. The origin of the slogan can be traced to its use by the Ao Baptist Church Council (ABAM) in 1958 as an ‘anti-war’ appeal against the bloodshed and killings in Nagaland. It was then adopted by the NBCC in its own appeal against violence in the region. The NBCC meeting minutes of December 1958 stated: ‘Voted that we strongly support the resolution passed by the Ao C.E. (Christian Education) and S.S. (Sunday School) Union in its Changtongia session Oct. 28-30, 1958 to launch a “Nagaland for Christ” Crusade in 1959 and that we call upon all Christian center Directors and all Naga Churches to cooperate in the movement.’<sup>142</sup> In 1976, NBCC defined ‘Nagaland for Christ’ to mean ‘a Land given to us by God in trust for His glory free from violence, bloodshed, intimidations, injustices, corruptions and drunkenness.’<sup>143</sup> This statement was made in the light of corruption in state politics.<sup>144</sup> However, the slogan was adopted by NSCN to give a Christian basis to their movement.

According to Muivah, the term ‘Nagalim [sic] for Christ’ means,

the Nagas trust in the God-ship of Jesus Christ, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and therefore, they have chosen him to be their God. It is the covenant of God with the Nagas, which was declared in the national Hoho (council) by our pioneers with one voice. We believe in the principle of interrelationship of man, land and God. We know nothing exists by itself. Creations and Creator are inseparably interrelated.<sup>145</sup>

The adaptation of the slogan, and the religious policy underlying it, need to be understood in the context of the accusation labelled against the returnees from China as ‘communists’

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<sup>141</sup> *Free Nagaland Manifesto*, 19.

<sup>142</sup> NBCC Meeting Minutes, Impur, 4-7 December 1958.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Statement Issued by the General Session of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council Kohima, 14-17 October 1976.’

<sup>144</sup> NBCC ANBC-76/332, Kohima, October 14-17, 1976.

<sup>145</sup> Muivah, ‘The line of National Socialist Council of Nagalim.’

which was understood as an ideology<sup>146</sup> that was opposed to and irreconcilable with Christian faith. How far were the returnees from China ingrained in the communist ideology? If not for the church's resistance, to what extent would they have implemented the communist ideals? These are questions that can only be speculated. Nevertheless what came out at the end is that the NSCN adopted a form of Christian socialism with a strong commitment to the Christian faith. The church, on the other hand, had proved itself to be a key player in making ideological decisions in the Naga society.

Naga nationalist propaganda spread the idea of a chosen nation, an archetype of Israel. In the jungle camps and grouping villages, the Christian message of hope and endurance was interpreted to mean both temporal and eternal. In eastern Nagaland, which at the time was not only the least evangelized region, but also the bastion of the nationalist movement, much evangelistic work was done by Christian nationalists. Isaac Chishi Swu, the founding President of the NSCN wrote of his evangelistic exploits in the region:

During my stay in Eastern Nagaland I had extensive tour of almost the whole nook and corner of Eastern Nagaland. I had the privilege to preach the gospel to the unreached in these areas which is supposed to be the darkest part in the whole of Asia. Half of the population was half-naked and headhunting was still practice till 1978. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) controlled the whole area and brought under its administration. Thus, Christian faith was propagated for the first time in some of these areas.<sup>147</sup>

In such a context, the Christian faith was presented as the answer for both national and personal salvation. Such evangelistic endeavour resulted in Christian communities for whom Christian faith was seen in close association with the Naga political future. A popular Christmas song, *Arung Lanur Asensor* ('Come our Youth'), composed in the 1960s reflects how the message of Christian nationalism had permeated into the level of popular culture in the Naga churches,

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<sup>146</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary defined 'ideology' as 'the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program.' 'Ideology' *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 616. However, it has also been defined with a negative connotation as that of 'false consciousness', which results from certain social position of the individual. Raymond Boudon, Bourricand and Francois, *A Critical Dictionary of Sociology, second edn* (London: Routledge, 1989), 207. In this study, the term is used in reference to a system of ideas which forms the basis of a socio-political system.

<sup>147</sup> Isaac Chishi Swu, *From Generation to Generation: Stories of Origin and Migration of the Nagas* (Dimapur: Kushe Humanity Foundation, 2003), 4.

Merangkong yim Lanu Asensor (Youth of Merangkong village)  
Linuk asoshi apusoang (raise up for the nation)  
Linuk asoshi temeranger sepoytem (hardened soldiers of the nation)  
Arung lanur asensor, Longjenti ajaki (Come our youth, lets unite)<sup>148</sup>

This song is sung in ‘band party’, a Christmas parade practised in Merangkong-Tuli area of western Nagaland. Takomata and other military men hailing from Merangkong, who were serving in the Assam regiment, while on a holiday, shared their experience of military brass band to two of their village youth, Marlemba and Alemtetba. These two youth were thus inspired to initiate the ‘band party’ in 1938 at Merangkong. They came up with a performance during the Christmas celebration, whereby they sang and marched around holding sticks decorated with colourful cut papers. The songs they sang were Hindi songs, without any religious meanings. The practice continued in the subsequent years. In the 1960s, vernacular lyrics were added to the tune by people like Tiyongnungshi and others.<sup>149</sup> The above cited song was one of them. The patriotic content of the song is representative of the reflection of Christian people on the prevailing nationalist idea being circulated in the society at the time.

The Christianization of the Naga nationalist movement contributed significantly to contextual theological formulation in the Naga context. The adaptation of the slogan, ‘Nagaland for Christ’, by the Naga nationalists as their religious motto became the basis for the justification of the nationalists’ movement as a given by divine will, and the need for the Naga people to claim that right. It laid the foundation for the formulation of political theologies in the Naga context in the subsequent years (discussed in section 5.4).

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<sup>148</sup> The researcher had participated in the band party and learned the song during his childhood. This song was one of the many songs sung every year during the Christmas morning band party performance in the village. From the first week of December, all youths and children gather in their respective colonies and practise these songs. Then on Christmas morning, they performed it in the village ground. The one that presents the best performance is declared the winner.

<sup>149</sup> Interview of Longerkaba, Merangkong, 20 January 2018.

#### 4.5. Revival, culture and spirituality

The 1970s Naga church revival was set in a similar setting as that of the 1950s, and followed a similar trajectory. As noted above, by the turn of the 1970s, a peaceful solution to the Indo-Naga conflict was only a distant dream. Militarization and violent conflicts continued. In such a context, many sought an answer in the religious sphere. An appeal written by T Alemmeren Ao, an evangelist under the Ao Baptist Church Council (ABAM), in 1970 stated:

Nagaland will never become a missionary land by mere talk. Likewise, Holy Spirit Revival will never come by preaching alone. Above all a desirable political settlement for the Nagas can never be attained by anxious longing. If we really want these things we must pay the price. Prayer is one of the prices laid down by God ...

... [God] is looking for a prepared people to manifest His power and Grace to the world today. Oh shall we not invest ourselves to make Nagaland a prepared people and nation for the Lord?<sup>150</sup>

Here we see a combination of both religious and political reasons in his call for revival.

A fresh visitation of God, a revival, was deemed as the answer to their missional, spiritual and political problems. A further impetus towards this yearning for revival came from the Lausanne Movement.

In 1974, the Lausanne Congress of World Evangelism was held at Lausanne, Switzerland through the initiative of the American evangelist Billy Graham.<sup>151</sup> It founded the Lausanne movement which operates with the mission statement: 'The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World.' Approximately 2,700 Christian leaders from over 150 countries gathered for the ten-day programme.<sup>152</sup> Among them were Naga Baptist leaders, VK Nuh<sup>153</sup> and I Ben Wati.<sup>154</sup> As a follow-up to Lausanne the NBCC

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<sup>150</sup> T Alemmeren Ao, 'An appeal to Ao Baptist Churches' (December 1, 1970).

<sup>151</sup> Billy Graham had visited Nagaland in November 1972. His evangelistic service at Kohima was attended by more than 100,000 people. Many are said to have committed their lives for Christian ministry after listening to Graham's message. Dozo, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga Tribe*, 73; Paul Hattaway, *From Head Hunters to Church Planters* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 84; T Alemmeren, *History of Revival Evangelism and Mission* (Dimapur: author, 1987), 34.

<sup>152</sup> 'About the Movement' <https://www.lausanne.org/about-the-movement> (Accessed on 16 June 2017).

<sup>153</sup> Telephonic Interview of Phuveyi Dozo, Dimapur, 19 March 2019.

<sup>154</sup> I Ben Wati presented a paper entitled 'Evangelism in Asia'. <https://www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/0147.pdf> (Accessed on 19 March 2019).

organised the ‘Nagaland Congress on World Evangelization’ at Dimapur from 1-9 March 1975.<sup>155</sup> It came out with what is called ‘The Nagaland Covenant’, which states,

Realizing the greatness of the cause and its challenge that confronts us today for evangelization of the world in our generation, and realizing our powerlessness to fulfil this Great Commission of the Lord, we solemnly dedicate ourselves to launch the following spiritual measures among all Nagaland tribes, beginning from Association centres down to every local church and every home, for the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all believers:

- (i) By organising Prayer Cells and Bible Study groups involving every home and every Christian.
- (ii) By holding intensive evangelistic crusades in every village and town for revival.<sup>156</sup>

In an effort to implement this Covenant, the Mission and Evangelism Department of the Ao Baptist Church Council (ABAM), a constituent of NBCC, declared 1976 as the ‘Year of Revival.’ Consequently the evangelists under ABAM went around churches under its jurisdiction holding ‘revival’ meetings. One of them was MI Luen, who went to Anaki village to hold revival meetings from 6-9 May 1976. It was in the early morning of Saturday, 8 May, when Luen along with thirteen others were having ‘a serious soul-searching prayer’ that they had the first revival experience.<sup>157</sup> Luen wrote:

As we continued with the prayer session, some cried while others laughed aloud as they saw the heavens open up and saw angels rejoicing. We could not stop our prayer. It went on for long hours without a break.<sup>158</sup>

The practice of ‘soul-searching’ prayer of repentance was to remain the key emphasis of the revival. People spent hours in community prayer, as Bendangjungshi, an eyewitness wrote:

every day from 4 am, people flocked together to the church for prayers lasting two to three hours. Again, after returning from the fields the villagers flocked to the church for evening worship. During every prayer, everyone prayed as loud as possible.<sup>159</sup>

The end result people sought through these prayers was *tekumted*, or assurance of salvation.<sup>160</sup> An excerpt of a sermon delivered by evangelist Alemmeren at Mokokchung Town Baptist church during 28-31 October 1976 gives us a glimpse of the message being preached during the revival,

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<sup>155</sup> NBCC ANBC-74/286, Kohima, October 17-20, i.

<sup>156</sup> Dozo, *The Cross Over Nagaland*, 37-38.

<sup>157</sup> MI Luen, *The Fire of Revival* (Hyderabad: Authentic, 2009), 23; Interview of Luen.

<sup>158</sup> Luen, *The Fire of Revival*, 24.

<sup>159</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context*, 97.

<sup>160</sup> Interview of Luen.

Knowledge about God is not more important but the assurance of God's indwelling within us in the person of the Holy Spirit is more important. Our names in the Church Register are not more important but our name written in the Book of life is more important. Believing alone is not sufficient; we must experience unmistakably the assurance of forgiveness and salvation.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, a very distinct evangelical emphasis on the assurance of salvation characterised the 1970s revival.

A key characteristic of the evangelical movement associated with Billy Graham and the Lausanne movement was the inclusive attitude towards Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian tradition. This caused a shift in the dynamics of the composition of evangelical body, as Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe pointed out: 'At the end of the 1920s, the fundamentalists had been at the centre of evangelicalism and Pentecostals were on the fringe; by the 1970s, however, the fundamentalists were heading for the edge of the movement, with the Pentecostals rapidly taking their place.'<sup>162</sup> The shift was not only in terms of the general acceptance of the Pentecostals and Charismatics as evangelicals, but it also led to greater acceptance of charismatic elements in the mainline churches. It is in this religious context that the acceptance of charismatic practices in the Naga Baptist churches during and after the 1970s revival needs to be understood. As discussed above, the Baptist leadership opposed the 1950s revival because of its charismatic nature. But in the case of the 1970s revival, Naga evangelical theologians were instrumental in diffusing any possibility of schism. Prominent among them was Ben Wati, the founding president of Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI). In the light of the emergence of two groups, 'pro-revival' and 'anti-revival', he was invited by the Ao Baptist Church Council to speak on the topic of 'Revival', which he did explaining from both the 'Bible and church history.'<sup>163</sup> Such interventions facilitated the acceptance of the charismatic elements of the 1970s revival without causing any division as in the earlier period. Therefore, the

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<sup>161</sup> T Alemmeren, *An Eyewitness of Revival* (Dimapur: author, [nd]), 24.

<sup>162</sup> Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 185.

<sup>163</sup> I Ben Wati, 'Forward' in Luen, *The Fire of Revival*, 10.

acceptance of charismatic practices in the Baptist churches in Nagaland can be seen as part of the global ‘pentecostalization’ of historic mission churches since the emergence of charismatic movement in the mid twentieth century.

Many charismatic practices were observed in the Naga churches during and after the 1970s revival. Ben Wati, who on invitation by Luen, attended the revival meetings at Changtongya Town from 19-25 July 1976 wrote:

The whole congregation appeared electrified with singing enthusiastically and gloriously, such choruses as ‘In the Name of Jesus we have the victory.’ Someone saw the hand of Jesus above my head as I was preaching one Sunday morning. It was reported to me later. Of course I was not aware of it except that I tried to uplift Jesus. There were loud cries, loud prayers, loud singing and much holy confusion as some had fainted and had to be taken out to the ‘healing room’.<sup>164</sup>

These charismatic elements were to become an integral part of the worship services of the majority of the Naga churches, that is, the Baptist and NCRC, among whom the revival occurred. Contemporary Naga Baptist churches have ‘revival services’ or ‘revival programmes’, where charismatic practices are performed.

There were many reports of healings, visions, spiritual sightings, prophecies and glossolalia during the revival.<sup>165</sup> During the interview, Yanglu Imsong, who participated in the revival as a pastor-preacher, also reported a case of a girl being raised from dead. The girl’s father, a school teacher, had prayed for a miracle to convince him of the Christian faith. The following morning, his daughter did not wake up from her sleep. On hearing the news of the death, Yanglu went and prayed for the girl to be risen. ‘On the third time of prayer,’ reports Yanglu, ‘the girl woke up, alive.’<sup>166</sup> Luen’s book, *The Fire of Revival*, also records a large number of eyewitness accounts of miracles being performed.<sup>167</sup> There was also much emphasis on the spiritual realm and spiritual warfare during the 1970s revival. Luen, during the interview, spoke of ‘disturbances’ like stoning

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<sup>164</sup> I Ben Wati wrote in the ‘Foreword’ to Luen, *The Fire of Revival*, 10; cf. I Ben Wati, *Revival Indang* (About Revival) (Aolijen: CTC, 1990), 31.

<sup>165</sup> See Luen, *The Fire of Revival*, 31-32.

<sup>166</sup> Interview of I. Yanglu Imsong, Dimapur, 20 January, 2018.

<sup>167</sup> See Luen, *The Fire of Revival*, 33-64.

the church buildings and possession of people by ‘evil spirit’, and how they were involved in exorcism by shouting ‘in the name of Jesus’ over a person or place on which the devil is believed to be residing.<sup>168</sup> Some even ran around with hands pointed like a gun shouting ‘Tat tat tat ...’, which they called the shooting of spiritual gun,<sup>169</sup> a definite reflection of the conflict situation in the society. Wilma Davis in her study of Argentine Pentecostalism also speaks of similar practices of exorcism which she called ‘offensive’ prayer against ‘Satan’s hold on people’s lives’.<sup>170</sup> Of the African context, Asamoah-Gyadu speaks of ‘interventionist’ spiritual warfare against the supernatural evil among Pentecostals in Ghana.<sup>171</sup>

Critique of the Revival movement had accused the 1970s revival for its use of fear psychosis to effect conversion. Naga theologian and an eyewitness of the 1970s revival, Takatemjen noted:

Coupled with message of fear and threat there is always an over-emphasis on conversion. Many people are converted but it is doubtful whether the conversions were always genuine ... the kind of preaching or message that motivated the conversions provided wrong incentives. The people are converted not because they love God but because they were afraid of hell-fire.<sup>172</sup>

Thus fear of misfortune and of ‘burning in Hell’ served as a major sustaining factor of the revival movement in Nagaland. Though the concept of fear was not alien to Christian faith, that it became the central driving force of conversion during the revival can be attributed to the conducive framework provided by the Naga culture. First, in the light of the socio-political difficulties, Naga people of the time were living in much fear. Thus, as in the case of the 1950s revival, fear of both temporal and eternal future was a legitimate concern for the people of the time. Second, fear was a key component of traditional Naga

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<sup>168</sup> Interview of Luen.

<sup>169</sup> The researcher was an eyewitness to this practice while attending ‘revival’ meetings in the church in his home town, Tuli, in Nagaland.

<sup>170</sup> Wilma Wells Davies, *The Embattled and Empowered Community: Comparing Understanding of Spiritual Power in Argentine Popular and Pentecostal Cosmologies* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 150.

<sup>171</sup> J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 42.

<sup>172</sup> Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology and Naga Culture*, 119.



spirituality. The fear of the creator god, who judges every individual in the after-life and the fear of the malevolent spirits who, if provoked, bring misfortune in the present life, bracketed the spiritual life of the traditional Naga (see section 2.4). In this particular religious context of the Naga society, where fear was a legitimate motivation for appeasing the divine, the message of the possible deliverance from the fear of final judgment or Hell, drew many either to seek for reform or embrace the Christian faith.

The spiritual charisma during the revival moved people to do what they perceived to be an act of utmost devotion to God. Thus, people began to jump and dance, like the way Naga people traditionally do when they sing to their deity. Traditional drums (called *asem* in Ao Naga) were added as accompaniment. The result was a worship practice characterised by singing and praying, accompanied by clapping of hands, playing traditional drums and dancing and jumping. Of similar occurrences, C Lalmuankima, in his study of Mizo spirituality spoke of the integration of ‘drums, dancing and singing of songs with Traditional tune’ in Christian worship during and after the Mizo revival in north-east India (1906-37), as adaptation of traditional culture into Christian spirituality.<sup>173</sup> This kind of worship practice was a far cry from the solemn-hymn-singing worship introduced by the foreign missionaries. These songs were of indigenous origin. They were not in the form of traditional folk songs, but rather in rhythmic tunes for community singing accompanied by drums and dances. Of similar occurrence during the Mizo revival, Lalsangkima Pachuau noted: ‘By calling the tune indigenous, it is not meant that it followed an established traditional musical form, but rather that the tune emerged from the community’s heart and expressed its deepest feelings.’<sup>174</sup>

Thus, singing was an important part of worship during the revival. The songs composed during this period are valuable sources to unearth the theological fervour of

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<sup>173</sup> C Lalmuankima, *Impact of Westernization on Mizo Spirituality* (Bangalore: SFS Publications, 2013), 279.

<sup>174</sup> Lalsangkima Pachuau, *Ethnic Identity and Christianity* (Bangalore: CFCC, 2012), 133.

the movement. A recurring theological theme in all these songs is the imminent second coming of Christ. A cursory look on the titles of the ‘Revival’ songs attests to this: *Kodang Yisu Khrista Arudir* (When Jesus Christ will Come); *Kibur Arudar* (The Lord is Coming); *Yisu Khrista Tanaben Arudar* (Jesus Christ is coming again); *Kibur Arur Mepet Nung* (The Lord is coming in the cloud), to mention a few. Thus, one can discern a heavy eschatological emphasis on the theological paradigm of the time. Such message of a messianic hope found much fertile ground in the Naga context, living as they were amidst conflicts and violence.

In the light of the heavy eschatological emphasis, some critics of the revival movement opined that it has a negative impact on the church. Bendangjungshi saw the revival as ‘an unfolding drama’ in which the church followed ‘an otherworldly spirituality with no grip on the concrete worldly responsibility of the church’s witness within its own secular milieu.’<sup>175</sup> Thus the churches, he opined, lost touch with the realities of the world and became irrelevant. On the other hand, others saw that the revival had a revitalizing influence on the Naga churches, to get involved in the world. Akho Dazo, in his study of the impact of revival among the Chakhesang Naga churches, mentioned ‘regeneration of moral life’, ‘social change’ and ‘increase of Christian activities,’ among others, as the impacts of the revival.<sup>176</sup>

The presence of both critics and romanticists of the revival perhaps is an indication of the challenge of balancing the present-eschatological emphasis that Naga Christians and churches had to wrestle with in the post-revival period. In the light of this, Naga theologians began to advocate the need of a balanced attitude towards the future-present responsibilities of the churches. Writing in 1989, Wati Aier, noted that the Naga

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<sup>175</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context*, 234; cf A Wati Longchar, ‘Christianity Among the Nagas’ in F Hrangkhuma (ed), *Christianity in India: Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi: CMS/ISPCK, 1998), 257.

<sup>176</sup> Akho Dazo, ‘The Impact of Revival Movement Among the Chakhesang (Nagas)’ *Journal of Tribal Studies* Vol. 14, No. 1 (January-June) (2009), 74.

Christians of his time were ‘Saints’ rather than citizens. He therefore urged the ‘Saints ... to prove themselves in Christian service in the community.’<sup>177</sup> He was the first Naga theologian to clearly expound the need for socio-political engagement of the church in the society. In his theological treatise, *A Cry from the Rice field* (1989), he wrote:

The Church must witness with more than words. Through the life, service and sacrifice of their members they must make their contribution to justice and peace, to the improvements of human conditions and to the care of the needy and of the homeless. They must serve humbly the needs of the less developed peoples. In persecution and oppression they can still witness to the spiritual freedom which their members enjoy.<sup>178</sup>

Thus, for Aier, churches need to deal with social concerns or else they will end up being ‘something irrelevant to humanity’s struggle for freedom and meaning in life.’<sup>179</sup> While not negating the need to witness with ‘words’, he called for the need to strike a balance between the churches’ mission involvement in evangelism and social concern.

Thus, the 1970s revival played a decisive role in the formative development of churches in Nagaland. They contributed to the development of an indigenous form of worship as vernacular songs, dance and playing of drums were inculcated into the worship practice of the Naga churches during the revival. The revivals were also very significant towards the development of Christian theology among the Naga churches. The theological development during this period was not so much in terms of formal systematic articulation, rather, it was in the form of songs and sermons. They were inspired by reflections on Christian message from a Naga cultural lens. All these led to a closer identification of the Christian faith with the Naga culture.

#### **4.6. Socio-economic challenges and the mission of the church**

As in the earlier period, Naga churches continued to engage in evangelistic work among the Naga people. Furthermore, in a significant development, this period saw the beginning of cross-cultural mission by Naga churches. For the first time Naga missionaries crossed

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<sup>177</sup> Wati Aier, *A Cry from the Rice Fields: A Call of Freedom for the Nagas* (Dimapur: Universal Press, 1989), 56.

<sup>178</sup> Aier, *A Cry from the Rice Fields*, 12.

<sup>179</sup> Aier, *A Cry from the Rice Fields*, 56.

the border of Nagaland and started mission work in the neighbouring state of Arunachal Pradesh in 1972. This was to be followed by more such mission initiatives worldwide. The emerging global vision in the mission understanding of the Naga churches was also reflected in the promise of ‘Ten Thousand Missionaries’ from Nagaland in the aftermath of the 1970s revival.

As discussed in the previous chapter, education and health care had been the key areas of mission involvement of the Naga churches in the society (see section 3.6). The same remained even during the period discussed in this chapter. Nevertheless, as discussed below, the Naga churches also ventured into the area of developmental work in the light the poor economic condition in the region.

High rate of illiteracy was a major concern in the Naga society at the beginning of this period. The following table indicates the literacy rate of Nagaland during 1961-91:

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Total Population	369,200	516, 000	775, 000	1,210,000
Literacy rate	17.91	27.40	42.57	61.65

**Table 6: Literacy Rate in Nagaland, 1961-1991<sup>180</sup>**

As can be seen in the table above, in the 1960s, the literacy rate was low with only 17.91 in 1961. Naga churches responded to this by opening many new schools. This attitude of the Naga churches was reflected in the NBCC’s declaration of 1969 as ‘Literacy year’.<sup>181</sup> Local Baptist churches were ‘strongly urged to open and develop Baptist English Standard Schools in their respective areas.’<sup>182</sup> The result was that as of 2012, there were 115 schools run by Baptist church associations, churches and individuals.<sup>183</sup> NBCC itself opened a school of its own in 1967 (the present Christian Higher Secondary School, Dimapur).<sup>184</sup> In the same year it instituted an education department, ‘Board of Education’

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<sup>180</sup> ‘State of Literacy’ <https://www.educationforallindia.com/chapter6-state-of-literacy-2011-census.pdf> (accessed on 24 January 2017).

<sup>181</sup> NBCC ANBC-69/214, Tseminyu, January 28-30, 1069,

<sup>182</sup> NBCC JM-66/10, Kohima, February 28, 1966.

<sup>183</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 43.

<sup>184</sup> The school was then under the care of private entrepreneurs, Zakiesato Pesseye and Mhalie Pesseye. The NBCC acquired it in 1967. NBCC JM/33, Kohima, March 28-30, 1967. The school website noted:

(present Education and Communication Department, NBCC).<sup>185</sup> In collaboration with the Manipur Baptist Convention, it also started the Patkai Christian College, Dimapur, in 1974.<sup>186</sup>

The Naga Catholic churches also contributed significantly in this area. In 1984, S Coelho, the then Secretary of the Nagaland Catholic Board of Education noted that ‘Nearly 75% of our financial resources are poured into our schools and they have a very good name in the state. 16 religious priests out of 36, and 6 brothers and 87 religious sisters out of 123 are engaged in this apostolate.’<sup>187</sup> Coelho, while labelling ‘Education is not to be used as a means to evangelisation’ as a myth, noted ‘Education for development is as important as education of evangelisation.’<sup>188</sup> College level education was also introduced with the opening of the Salesian college of Higher Education, Dimapur, in May 1982. Another college, St Joseph’s College, Jakhama, was established in 1985.

Health care was another area where the churches continued to invest in the Naga society. The 1966 report of the ‘Study Team on Tribal Development Programmes’<sup>189</sup> on Nagaland showed the lack of an ‘adequate number of specialists for providing specialised treatment’ in the district hospitals. It also proposed the need to educate the people on ‘basic principles of health and nutrition’.<sup>190</sup> Fast forward, in 1980, the report on the Public Health Centres (PHC) of the Government of Nagaland, showed that nothing much had changed. The report noted that the centres were ill-maintained with poorly equipped staff,

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‘The school was founded in 1957 and was managed by both public and private enterprises till 1966. Since January 1967 the school has been running under the auspices of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), the highest Baptist Church organization in Nagaland.’ ‘Introduction’, <https://www.chssdimapur.org/institution> (accessed 24 January 2017).

<sup>185</sup> NBCC ANBC-67/201, Dimapur, October 4-6, 1967.

<sup>186</sup> *A Dream Come True: A History of Patkai Christian College, 1974-1999*. Chumekedima-Seithekema: PCC, 1999.

<sup>187</sup> *Meeting of Religious Superiors in the Diocese of Kohima*, 12.

<sup>188</sup> *Meeting of Religious Superiors in the Diocese of Kohima*, 12-13.

<sup>189</sup> The Team was commissioned with P Shilu Ao as the chairman to study issues on development in tribal areas all over India.

<sup>190</sup> ‘Study Team on Tribal Development Programmes, 1966 – Report on Nagaland’, in Sharma and Sharma (eds), *Documents on North-East India*, 278.

shortage of medicine and negligence of public health education. The apathetic condition of the PHC was such that the report observed: ‘Any impartial observer ... will come to the conclusion that the present P.H.Cs in Nagaland are existing merely in name.’<sup>191</sup> Thus there was an acute lack of good medical facilities in the state.

Early Christian missionaries, both Baptists and Catholics, were involved in medical work. But medical work was almost an afterthought to their other mission activities. The Mission Hospital at Impur which the CBCNEI inherited from the American Baptists was the only church-run medical facility. However, from the 1970s Naga churches showed renewed interest in healthcare activities. In a significant development, the Catholic religious order, The Society of Medical Mission Sisters (MMS) arrived in Nagaland in 1970.<sup>192</sup> Though other religious orders like Bethany Sisters, who had arrived a year earlier,<sup>193</sup> had also engaged themselves in medical work, the MMS was the first dedicated medical society to arrive in Nagaland. They began their work by looking over the PHC (the Government Maternity and Child Welfare Centre) at Kohima village from 1971.<sup>194</sup> With the government continuing to neglect the medical need in the state, in the 1980s Naga churches, both Baptists and Catholics, were calling for establishing church-run hospitals. While the former’s attempt to open one in 1984 did not materialize due to financial constraints,<sup>195</sup> the Naga Catholic church established its first hospital in 1980

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<sup>191</sup> *Evaluation Report on Primary Health Centres in Nagaland* (Kohima: Planning and Co-ordination Department, GoN, 1980).

<sup>192</sup> Interview of Philo Mylady, Dimapur, 5 July 2017. Philo is the superior of the Medical Mission Sisters (MMS) in Dimapur.

<sup>193</sup> The Bethany Sisters arrived at Kohima in 1969. According to Rocus Chasie, ‘Initially, they were engaged in teaching, medical and pastoral work, but later on, they were totally engaged in educating the young minds and also imparting pastoral ethics.’ Chasie, *The Angami Catholic Church*, 47.

<sup>194</sup> The team of sisters consisted of Agnes Mayladyil, Vincentia Peedikamalayil and Asha Maria Tobin. Chasie, *The Angami Catholic Church*, 48.

<sup>195</sup> The proposal was made in 1984 by the Angami Baptist Church Council (ABCC) for a Hospital at Kohima with the hope of appealing for financial assistance from the Baptist World Alliance. NBCC NBCE-84/221, Kohima, June 5-6, 1984.

with the opening of the Holy Redeemer Health Centre at Chumukedima by the Sisters of Charity.<sup>196</sup>

As noted above, economic development in the state was neglected due to the volatile political situation as well as corrupt leadership. In the light of this, from the 1970s, Naga churches began to explore means to contribute towards economic development in the society. In 1975, the NBCC formed the ‘Christian Social Service Committee’ ‘to explore the possible areas of Christian Social Service in cooperation with the Government.’<sup>197</sup> A special concern of the Committee was to explore ‘projects for economic improvement of the people.’<sup>198</sup> The same year, the Catholic churches also formed the Diocesan Social Service Society. It was renamed as Development Association of Nagaland (DAN) and registered as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in 1985.<sup>199</sup> DAN was the first Christian NGO in Nagaland with a specific focus on socio-economic development.<sup>200</sup> Since its formation it had been involved in initiating various projects like Self-Help Group, Animal husbandry and child sponsorship programme.

As noted above, rampant corruption crippled the progressive development in the region. The churches were the first to raise their voice against corruption in the Naga society. Since the 1970s the church has been speaking against corrupt practices like the use of unfair means during election, political intrigue and others. In 1972 the NBCC condemned the ‘use of Rum, or Bribes, or any other favours shown, that are likely to influence the Voters’ during elections.’<sup>201</sup> Since then they have vouched for clean and fair practice in every election. The church also raised its voice against the practice of

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<sup>196</sup> Interview of Rita Miasalhol, Dimapur, 5 July 2017. Miasalhol, a Naga, is the superior of the Sisters of Charity of Saints Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincensa Gerosa (SCCG, in short, Sisters of Charity), which manages the Holy Redeemer Health Centre at Chumukedima.

<sup>197</sup> NBCC ANBC-75/308, Tuensang, November 14-16, 1975.

<sup>198</sup> NBCC ANBC-75/308, Tuensang, November 14-16, 1975.

<sup>199</sup> ‘About DAN’ <http://developmentassociationofnagaland.org/About.aspx> (Accessed on 13 April 2017).

<sup>200</sup> Its mission statement states: ‘Enhancing the dignity of the poor and marginalized in partnership with stakeholders such as, civil societies, FBOs, CBOs, NGOs, Corporate bodies and government sectors through advocacy, networking, and promoting the rights of the people.’ ‘About DAN.’

<sup>201</sup> NBCC ANBC-71/248, Kohima, November 15-16, 1972.

backstabbing and toppling of government for personal gain in the Nagaland state politics. A NBCC statement in 1976 in the light of the toppling of JB Jasokie's government in 1975 lamented: 'Alas! Our so called leaders have today deliberately, in their greed for riches and power and position have flooded our Land with all kinds of evils.'<sup>202</sup> Sensing the need for spiritual guidance among the state legislators, the NBCC proposed to the State Government the need of a State Chaplain for 'pastoral and spiritual ministry to Nagaland State legislators and top officials'.<sup>203</sup> In 1988 Yankey Phom was appointed as the first state chaplain.<sup>204</sup> Thus, from the 1970s Naga churches began to show serious concern towards bringing reforms in the light of the presence of rampant corruption in the society. This laid the foundation for the reform movements that took concrete shape from the late 1980s (discussed in section 5.6).

The above discussion shows that the mission involvement of the Naga churches in the society continued to widen. As in the earlier period, they continued to contribute in the areas of education, health care and peace initiative. Moreover, in the light of presence of widespread corruption and underdevelopment, churches also began to speak against such corruption and initiate practical steps for social and economic reforms in the society.

As in the previous period, mission emphasis differs among the various Christian denominations. Evangelism remained a key focus for all of them. While they all continued to focus on evangelism of the rest of the Naga people, the Baptist and the NCRC also began to expand their evangelistic interest into regions beyond their own cultural setting. With the exception of TPM, all the churches were also involved in providing education, both secular and theological. In the field of health care, Catholic churches began to take the lion's share, with the Baptist churches' inability to meet the financial and

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<sup>202</sup> 'Statement Issued by the General Session of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, Kohima, 14-17 October 1976.'

<sup>203</sup> NBCC NBCE-12/88, Kohima, January 29-31, 1988.

<sup>204</sup> NBCC NBCE-87/88, Pfutsero, October 25-27, 1988.



infrastructural requirements for such mission. The Baptists, however, continued to spearhead the peace initiative of the churches. Both the Catholic and Baptist churches also made effort towards responding to the poor economic condition in the region.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

Naga society went through a difficult time during the period examined in this chapter. With both GoI and Naga nationalists following a confrontational policy, the political crises escalated. Poor leadership and corruption also caused inequality and discontentment in the society. Thus, the Naga society was stretched to its limit causing much divisiveness and bloodshed.

British historian, Adrian Hastings noted: ‘Whenever a people feels threatened in its distinct existence by the advance of a power committed to another religion, the political conflict is likely to have superimposed upon it a sense of religious conflict, almost crusade, so that national identity becomes fused with religious identity.’<sup>205</sup> In the Naga context, the nationalists constructed an idea of Christian-Naga versus Hindu-India conflict. Their propaganda portrayed their cause as synonymous with defending Christian faith itself.<sup>206</sup> This Christianization of the Naga nationalism reached its climax with the NSCN’s declaration of ‘Nagaland for Christ’ as the religious motto of the proposed Naga nation. The idea that Naga people should be a Christian nation was not just the opinion of a few nationalist leaders. Even the Baptist church leaders’ resistance to NSCN’s association with Communist China was rooted in the understanding that Christian faith should be the ideological foundation of Naga nationalism. The patriotic content of the ‘band party’ songs reflect how the nationalist idea of Christian nationalism has also permeated into the popular beliefs of Christian people in Nagaland.

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<sup>205</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 190.

<sup>206</sup> *Free Nagaland Manifesto*, 18.

As noted in the previous chapter (section 3.7), existing literature often projects the church in Nagaland as a neutral entity.<sup>207</sup> However, this chapter has shown that it is not always the case. In the Shillong Accord controversy the Baptist church leaders took a political stand that vouched for a solution within the Indian constitution. The anti-Communist stand of the church was part of this struggle between the church leaders and the non-Accordists. Another politically motivated initiative of the Naga churches was the formation of the FNBA in 1986 to represent Naga Baptist churches in all Naga-inhabited areas. It was motivated by the nationalist agenda of integration of all Naga inhabited area. Furthermore, political inclinations of individual leaders (like Longri and Kerhou) often dictated the direction taken by the official churches.

Amidst the continued conflict situation in the region, the Christian message of hope and assurance preached during the 1970s revival found fertile ground in the Naga society. The introduction of culturally appropriated worship practices in the form of songs (like songs, *Kodang Yisu Khrista Arudir*, *Kibur Arudar* and others), dances and musical instruments (like playing of *Asem* or traditional drums) during the revival also facilitated the identification of the Christian faith as not just a foreign import, but a faith that expresses the spiritual vigour of the Christian people in the Naga context. Besides, Naga churches also continued to engage with various social concerns in the Naga society. Apart from education and medical work, in the light of the state of socio-economic depravity in the region, Naga churches began to engage in economic developmental work. Naga churches also took initiatives towards peace and reconciliation in the region. All these contributions continue to bolster the status of the church in the Naga society.

Political factionalism and inter-tribal conflicts caused much division and violence. In such a context, the shared Christian faith was often the one thing that bound the Naga

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<sup>207</sup> See Linyu. *Christian Movements in Nagaland*.  
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people together. With the breaking up of the NNC into various nationalist factions, church organizations like NBCC, NCRC and others remained the only entities that transcended the tribal divide in the Naga society. The Prayer Centre movement further contributed to this by helping Naga Christians to transcend denominational, tribal and gender divides.

Overall, what had been observed is that Naga churches underwent changes as they interacted with their cultural environment in the society. Some of these resulted from conscious attempts towards Christian appropriation of events in the society, as in the case of the Christianization of Naga nationalism by the nationalists. Others resulted from missional concern of the Christian people to address problems in the society, as in the case of the peace initiative of the Naga Baptist churches. Through all these, Naga churches experienced changes as they realigned themselves to the changing context in the Naga society.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Naga churches in a deeply divided society, 1990-2017**

The inability to make a collective decision had been the undoing of the Naga political aspiration. Statehood, the RGN and the Shillong Accord, all failed to bring the Naga people into agreement. Instead, they created fault lines of division within the Naga society. The political question, ‘are the Naga people Indian?’ continues to invoke divided opinion both from within the region as well as beyond. Socially, just who (or which tribe) constitute the Naga people had become a critical issue from the 1980s, often manifesting in tribal and factional conflicts. Inequalities, caused by the patriarchal system as well as a flawed economy system also caused much divide within the society. Though these issues were not new to the post-1990s period, the dividedness reached a point of critical concern by this period, necessitating the need for stakeholders in the society to take serious corrective efforts in response. This chapter examines the historical development of the Naga churches in the light of this context.

The ecclesiastical primary sources used in this chapter include minutes of meetings, reports, brochures and souvenirs, which were obtained either from church archives or official websites. Theological treatises by Naga theologians were also useful sources to understand the theological climate of the Naga churches. Public documents used in the chapter include official press releases, communiques and survey reports. Local newspapers were utilised as they were generously used in the Naga context by the church, lay people, government and political activists as a means of communication. Interviews of key eye-witnesses to the ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical events were also utilised.

### 5.1. Context: political, social and economic

The GoI and the NSCN entered the 1990s in a war footing. In 1991, the GoI banned both the NSCN factions (I-M and K) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.<sup>1</sup> The NSCN, on the other hand, resorted to ambushing army patrols. In the cross-fire, the common people suffered a lot. For instance, on 20 December 1994, NSCN operatives ambushed and killed fourteen army personnel including a colonel near Mokokchung in western Nagaland.<sup>2</sup> In the ensuing ‘counter insurgency operation’ by the army (16 Maratha Light Infantry), hundreds of people were rifle butted, seven shot dead, five burnt alive and eight women raped, all in the vicinity of the town centre. In addition, 31 buildings were burned, 38 shops ransacked and 18 vehicles burned.<sup>3</sup> In a study carried out about nine months later it was found that

70.43 per cent of the people were still suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders. Of this, 95.06 per cent were having recurrent recollection of events; 96.60 per cent were having difficulty in concentration; 66.66 per cent had lost self-confidence and developed a sense of a foreshortened future; and 91.36 per cent were still having even physiological reactivity.<sup>4</sup>

Commenting on this incident and on the general condition of the Naga society, Indian sociologists, Sajal Nag and Tajimala Nag (1995) wrote: “‘Fear’ has become their (Naga people) constant companion.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in the early 1990s, one could be forgiven to think that the war-like situation in Nagaland would continue unperturbed. But in a drastic change of events, in August 1997, the GoI and the NSCN-IM signed a ceasefire agreement and entered into peace negotiations. The initiative came from the GoI. PV Narasimha Rao, the then Prime Minister of India, took the first step by initiating a meeting with the NSCN-IM leaders,

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<sup>1</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, 183; Zhimomi, *Politics and Militancy in Nagaland*, xviii.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Continuing Violence’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No 3 (15 January 1994), 68.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Mokokchung remembers Dec 27, 1994’ *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 28 December 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Ngully, P, et al. ‘Post Traumatic State of Mental Health; a medical study on the effects of trauma on mental health of the victims of the 27th December, 1994, Incident at Mokokchung, Nagaland’ (1995) as cited in Charles Chasie, ‘Nagaland in Transition’ *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2/3 (Monsoon-Winter 2005), 263.

<sup>5</sup> Sajal Nag and Tejimala Nag, ‘Human Right Violation in Naga Hills’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 14 (8 April 1995), 738.

Isak Swu and Th Muivah, in Paris on 15 June 1995. During this meeting he underlined the GoI's desire to 'solve the problem through political talks and dialogue'.<sup>6</sup> Two years of periodical contact<sup>7</sup> followed between the GoI and the NSCN-IM culminating in the ceasefire agreement signed on 1 August 1997.<sup>8</sup> The terms of ceasefire were as follows:

- (i) The talks shall be unconditional from both sides;
- (ii) The talks shall be at the highest level, that is, at the Prime Minister level; and
- (iii) The venue of the talks shall be anywhere in the world outside India.<sup>9</sup>

That the 'talks shall be unconditional' was a big change of stance from the GoI, which had been insisting that discussion was possible only on condition of the acceptance of the Constitution of India by the Naga nationalists. One reason for this softening of stance was the realisation that the resolve of the Naga nationalists could not be broken through military means. It was only proving to be counter-productive as it resulted in more generations of Naga, who had suffered military excesses, joining the nationalist movement. Ayimneken, a veteran nationalist, for instance shared during the interview that he joined the nationalist movement after experiencing the killing of his friend by the military during which the rent house in which he was staying was also burned down.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Luen, a former nationalist, shared that he joined the movement after experiencing military excesses including hard labour.<sup>11</sup> Thus, militarization was only proving to be counter-productive for the GoI.

Another reason for GoI's change of attitude was the success made by the NSCN-IM to create awareness of the Naga cause among the international community. Since the

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<sup>6</sup> 'Good Beginning doubtful Ending' *The North-East Sun* (Guwahati, 15-31 October 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Rao's successor Atal Bihari Vajpayee lasted only for thirteen days. The next Prime Minister, Deve Gowda followed the same policy as Rao. He appointed Rajesh Pilot, a prominent Congress leader, as a special emissary and he met the Naga nationalist leaders in Bangkok on 17 November 1996. Later Gowda also met the NSCN (IM) leaders in Zurich (Switzerland) on 3 February 1997, during which an agreement was made to hold 'unconditional talk' at the Prime Minister level to be held in a third country. Gowda's successor, IK Gujral, took further initiative by sending Satish Chandra, the Principal Secretary to the PMO, to meet the Naga leaders in Geneva. Singh, *Naga Politics*, 184-185.

<sup>8</sup> 'Long road to Peace in Nagaland' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No 31 (2-8 August 1997), 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Singh, *Naga Politics*, 185-186.

<sup>10</sup> Interview of Ayimneken.

<sup>11</sup> Interview of Luen.

1950s the Naga nationalists had been trying to internationalize their cause. On 12 June 1960 Phizo, the first President of NNC, travelled to London with the desire to raise awareness of the Naga cause in the United Nations through western lobbies.<sup>12</sup> He received sympathy from individuals like Kevin Young (The Observer, London),<sup>13</sup> Neville Maxwell (Minority Right Groups, London),<sup>14</sup> Patrick Montgomery (Anti-Slavery Society, London)<sup>15</sup> and Michael Scott (Anglican ordained Minister).<sup>16</sup> But he was unable to get any assurance from the United Nations. A breakthrough in this effort was made in 1993 when on 23 January, the NSCN-IM was admitted into the membership of the Unrepresentative Nations Peoples Organization (UNPO).<sup>17</sup> This provided a platform for the Naga nationalists to address their case in international forums. It was in the backdrop of this development that the softening of India's policy towards Naga nationalism since the 1990s should be understood.

In 1997, in order to include the other sections of the Naga nationalists in the peace process, the GoI unilaterally announced ceasefire with NSCN-K and NNC for a month beginning from August 1997. While the NNC accepted the offer, the NSCN-K declined it. However on 9 April 2001 NSCN-K also agreed to a ceasefire agreement. The group

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<sup>12</sup> NNC, *The Naga National Rights and Movement*, 54; Shimray, *Let Freedom Ring*, 74.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Young made a trip to Nagaland and wrote in *The Observer* about the Naga cause. He later edited these writings into a book entitled *The Nagas: An unknown war*. London: The Naga National Council, 1962.

<sup>14</sup> Neville Maxwell wrote a book entitled *India and Nagas*, in which he accused India for atrocities committed against the Naga people. Maxwell, Neville. *India, the Nagas and the North-East*. London: Minority Rights Group, 1980.

<sup>15</sup> Patrick Montgomery wrote in *The Times, London* (14 November 1973) comparing India's atrocities in Nagaland to Mozambique, and urged the British people to speak up for the Naga people as the latter supported the British allied forces during the Second World War.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Scott was the most proactive supporter of the Naga cause. In 1963 he made two visits to India to talk with Nehru on behalf of Phizo (21 February and 4 April). In the three member 'Peace Mission' team he was considered as the Naga representative. He also tried to raise the Naga issue in the United Nations. In November 1965 he wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations asking him to take up the Naga case. Again in October 1966, he raised the Naga issue before the United Nations in the meeting of the Fourth Committee on Colonialism.

<sup>17</sup> The UNPO website defined its constituent as follows: 'The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) is an international, nonviolent, and democratic membership organisation. Its members are indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognised or occupied territories who have joined together to protect and promote their human and cultural rights, to preserve their environments, and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts which affect them.' 'About UNPO' <http://unpo.org/section/2> (Accessed on 02 June 2017).



however pulled out of the ceasefire agreement in March 2015.<sup>18</sup> A decisive factor for this development was the preferential treatment given to its rival, the NSCN-IM, by the GoI in the political dialogue. The GoI had repeatedly refused the demand of the group to be included in the Naga peace talks that were taking place between the GoI and the NSCN-IM.<sup>19</sup>

Over the years, the talks between the GoI and NSCN-IM have produced certain positive results. At the talks held in Bangkok from 13-14 June 2001, the GoI agreed to extend the territorial jurisdiction of the ceasefire to all Naga-inhabited areas.<sup>20</sup> This was a significant development as integration of the Naga-inhabited area (*Nagalim*) had been a controversial demand. Following the talks in Amsterdam from 9-11 July 2002, a joint communiqué was signed in which the GoI recognized the ‘unique history and situation of the Nagas’.<sup>21</sup> Following the talks held in Bangkok from 21-23 September 2002, the GoI lifted the ban on the NSCN-IM and withdrew the arrest warrants against its leaders.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the NSCN-IM leaders who were until that time living in exile were able to enter India. Since then talks were being held within India. The talks have been ongoing over the years without making any breakthrough towards a conclusive agreement. However, on 3 August 2015, Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India (2014-present), in a televised message informed the nation that the GoI has signed a ‘Framework Agreement’ with the NSCN-IM. Thus far the content of the agreement has been kept a secret, a government press release stating that ‘it would be premature to make public the

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<sup>18</sup> ‘NSCN (K) abrogates cease-fire with GoI’ *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 27 March 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Namrata Goswami, ‘Indo-Naga peace process: Why a blanket ban on the NSCN (K) is not the way forward’ *idsa News* (23 September 2015) <http://www.idsa.in/idsanews/NamrataGoswamisArticleonIndoNagaPeaceProcess> (Accessed on 2 June 2017).

<sup>20</sup> ‘A Cease Fire and Protest’, *The Frontline*, Volume 18, Issue 13 (23 June - 06 July 06 2001), <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1813/18130300.htm> (Accessed on 12 April 2017).

<sup>21</sup> ‘NSCN-IM – Union Government Joint Communique, Amsterdam, 11 July 2002.’

<sup>22</sup> ‘NSCN-IM – Union Government Joint Statement, Bangkok, 23 September 2002.’

Framework Agreement’.<sup>23</sup> Thus, though no lasting agreement has yet to be agreed to, the talks have been progressive.

With the ceasefire and resumption of talks, hostility between the Indian army and the Naga nationalist almost ceased. However, intensified conflicts between the various nationalist factions caused much violence and killings.<sup>24</sup> High profile casualties included the assassination of Tubu Kevichusa, the then General Secretary of NNC, in 1996 and Dally Mungro, the then General Secretary of NSCN-K, in 1999. A number of tragic stories of ‘factional killings’ among the Naga people have already been noted in this research: the assassination of Imkongliba Ao (President of NPC<sup>1</sup>) in 1961 for supporting the statehood of Nagaland (see section 3.1); the assassination of Kaito Sema (one time chief of the ‘Naga Army’) in 1968 in the build up to the formation of the RGN (see section 5.1); the assassination of Chasie Kevichusa (a politician and brother of Tubu Kevichusa) in 1992 for supporting the Shillong Accord (see section 5.1).

To compound the existing complications, many new factions were formed. The first was the ‘Unification’ group, NSCN-U, formed in 2007 as a result of a ‘truce agreement’ signed by senior functionaries of both IM and K factions of NSCN on 23 November 2007. The NSCN-IM leadership dismissed those involved along with its leader Azheto Chophy, who in partnership with NSCN-K began waging factional war against the IM group. Another faction, ‘Khole-Kitovi’ group, the NSCN-KK, was formed in June 2011 by a break-away group from NSCN-K accusing Khaplang of dictatorial leadership.<sup>25</sup> Another faction, NSCN-Reformation (NSCN-R), was formed on 6 April 2015 as a result of another split in the NSCN-K in the aftermath of the end of ceasefire between the GoI and NSCN-K. Its leaders Wangtin Konyak and T Tithak, had been expelled by the parent

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Framework Agreement between GoI and NSCN-IM: Press Information, Government of India Ministry of Home Affairs, 15 March 2017.’

<sup>24</sup> Longchar, *Walking the Path of Despair and Hope*, vol. 1, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Deepak Dewan, ‘An Interview with Kitovi Zhimomi’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 29 September 2015).

group for their desire to continue with the ceasefire with GoI against the directive of its top leadership.<sup>26</sup> On 27 April, they signed a ceasefire agreement with the GoI.<sup>27</sup>

Factionalism thrives on the deep tribal divide between the Naga tribes. For outsiders, the Naga society is one; but within, there is much division. Each Naga tribe has its own proud tradition, which coupled with linguistic differences create a feeling of ‘otherness’ among themselves. In recent years much bloodshed has been experienced during inter-tribal feuds in Nagaland like that of Konyak-Chang, Yimchunger-Tikhir and Kuki-Zeme conflicts. The involvement of tribal rivalry in factionalism has already been noted in the formation of RGN in 1964, whereby tribal enmity between the Sumi and Angami cadre of the NNC led to the conflict (see section 4.1). The same trend can be observed in the event of the split in the NSCN, with Tangkhul and Sumi Naga dominating the NSCN-IM and Konyak and Eastern Naga tribes dominating the NSCN-K. The ‘quit’ notice served to the Tangkhul Naga to leave Nagaland (since the traditional land of the Thangkuls lay only in the state of Manipur) by the NSCN-K was in line with the tribal alignment of the factions.<sup>28</sup>

Turf wars between these factions caused a lot of bloodshed in the region.<sup>29</sup> The document ‘Insurgency in North East’ issued by the Union Home Ministry, GoI, gave the following data for 2012-2016:

Years	Incidents	Extremists killed	Security Forces killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2012	151	66	-	08	93
2013	145	33	-	11	100
2014	77	12	-	01	65
2015	102	29	09	09	78
2016	58	05	-	-	51

**Table 7: Insurgency-related incidents and death in Nagaland, 2012 to 2016<sup>30</sup>**

<sup>26</sup> ‘Wangtin, Tikhak form NSCN (Reformation)’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 6 April 2015).

<sup>27</sup> ‘Another year of CF extension with GPRN/NSCN’ *Eastern Mirror* (Dimapur, 27 April 2015).

<sup>28</sup> ‘Continuing violence,’ 68.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Chasie noted: ‘Factional fights became a regular feature and many, including non-factional and innocent Nagas, have died at the hands of fellow-Nagas who claim to be Naga nationalists!’ Charles Chasie, *The Naga Imbroglia: A Personal Perspective* (Kohima: Standard Printers & Publishers, 1999), 43.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Insurgency in North East’ Ministry of Home Affairs, GoI [https://mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/5\\_InsurgencyNE\\_21022018.PDF](https://mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/5_InsurgencyNE_21022018.PDF) (Accessed on 6 June 2017).

The above data shows that during 2012-2016, 145 ‘extremists’ had been killed mainly in factional feuds (ref. Column ‘Extremists killed’). This is actually an improvement when compared with the data of 2004-2008: the data given by the Union Home Ministry, GoI on ‘Insurgents killed’ during 2004-2008 (as of 31 August 2008) was 461, that is, an average of 92.20 annually. The yearly figure was 55 (2004), 70 (2005), 116 (2006), 109 (2007) and 111 (by August 2008).<sup>31</sup> Factional killings have had a significant negative impact on the Naga nationalist movement. A survey undertaken by a local daily, *The Morung Express*, on 19 April 2015 resulted in 90 per cent of the respondents saying that factionalism has weakened Naga nationalism.<sup>32</sup>

The last two columns of the table above shows the number of civilian casualties and the number of people abducted for ransom. Every faction resorts to imposing ‘tax’ on the general public. Every house and financial enterprise (like shops, farms, factories and others) is taxed. Politicians, businessmen and contractors receive further ‘notices’ from the various factions, the refusal of which usually leads to abduction, and on occasion, killing. Even the various departments of the State Government are taxed. A retired bureaucrat, Khekiye Sema, explains the modus operandi of the extraction of ‘tax’ from public funds:

The groups function very systematically, and collect tax from the government funds through their respective ‘finance departments’. There are more than 80 departments in the government, and a tax of 5 per cent is levied on each of their budgets.<sup>33</sup>

With a number of factions in operation, multiple taxation occurs, which leads to even up to 20-30 per cent being levied as tax. This causes much hindrance to development initiatives of the government. Naga theologian, Bendangjungshi, remarked: ‘Today, Naga

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<sup>31</sup> Cited in ‘Nagaland’s Non Performing Police’ *Eastern Panorama* (Dimapur, January 2009).

<sup>32</sup> ‘Is Factionalism weakening the spirit of nationalism in the Naga context?’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 19 April 2015).

<sup>33</sup> ‘In India’s Nagaland, a tale of taxes and corruption’ *Al Jazeera* (14 April 2016) <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/04/india-nagaland-drowning-taxes-corruption-160411062725238.html> (Accessed on 6 June 2017).

Nationalism has more or less turned into a kind of organised extortionist group, taking from all sources of government and public fund.’<sup>34</sup>

Another source of financial difficulty in the state is the widespread corruption within the state government machinery. The ‘Financial Report’ of Nagaland by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), 2015 reveals the extent of the prevailing misappropriation of public funds by government officials. According to the report:

At the end of March 2014, 163 UCs (Utilization Certificates) involving an aggregate amount of Rs 262.99 crore were pending for submission even after a lapse of one to five years from various departments ... 30 cases of misappropriation, defalcation etc. involving Rs 105.97 crore pertaining to 13 Departments were pending finalisation.<sup>35</sup>

Such statistics reflect years of blatant misappropriation of public funds, which unfortunately often goes unchecked. The CAG report of the following year (2016) also reported 104 UCs amounting to Rs 217 crore pending and 34 cases of misappropriation amounting to Rs 616 crores in 15 departments pending for finalization by 31 March 2015.<sup>36</sup> Reporting this, the local daily, *Morung Express*, noted that while tabling it in the State Legislative Assembly, it was ‘given a silent burial.’<sup>37</sup> Thus, no changes result from such yearly auditor’s reports as the reports are quickly swept under the carpet. Consequently, politicians and bureaucrats amassed wealth without suffering persecution from the law. According to the *National Election Watch*, during the Assembly Election in 2013, 84 out of 186 contesting candidates, that is 45 per cent, were ‘corepatis’ (or ‘millionaire’<sup>38</sup>).<sup>39</sup> This was while, according to the National Planning Committee report, 2009-10, 20.9 per cent (4.1 lakh) of the population in Nagaland live below the poverty

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<sup>34</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in Naga Context*, 70.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Report of 2015 – Compliance, Financial and Performance Audit on State Finances of Government of Nagaland’ (17 March 2015), 59.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Why corruption thrives in Nagaland?’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 13 April 2016).

<sup>37</sup> ‘Why corruption thrives in Nagaland?’

<sup>38</sup> 1 crore = 10 million

<sup>39</sup> ‘Analysis of Financial, Criminal, Education, Gender and other details of Candidates Contesting in Nagaland Assembly Elections 2013’ (13 February 2013) <http://adrindia.org/content/candidate-criminal-financial-and-other-background-report> (Accessed on 7 June 2017).

line.<sup>40</sup> This financial inequality has created a social distinction between the elite and the poor. As early as 1992, MM Thomas, the former Governor of Nagaland (1990-1992), observed:

A new elite class of rich people consisting of the politicians, bureaucrats, contractors and commercial people are now busy amassing fortunes and displaying their wealth in a most vulgar fashion. Such vulgarity based on easy money has already created considerable ill-feeling and jealousy among the more deprived sections of the population and also does violence to traditional tribal conscience.<sup>41</sup>

The 'ill-feeling and jealousy' that Thomas referred to was sometimes out of envy. But in many instances it was because of the monopoly that these elites held over the government establishment through bribery and nepotism so that there was no possibility of upward mobility for the rest of the people in the society. In recent years the ACAUT (Actions Against Unabated Taxation), a social action movement, through the use of Right to Information (RTI), has unearthed rampant 'backdoor' appointments in the government service in Nagaland. In the education department, for instance, between 2005 and 2015, out of 121 appointments, 39 (32 %) were backdoor appointments. In the Public Work Department (PWD), out of 1,316 appointments, a massive 1,153 (88 %) comprised backdoor appointments.<sup>42</sup> Such malpractices meant that the rich and the elite through bribery and nepotism held monopoly over the bureaucratic setup in the state.

The unstable political situation, multiple taxation and corruption discouraged private sector investment in the region.<sup>43</sup> As such, a government job was the only prospect for upward mobility in the society. But every year, the government can offer only a limited number of jobs, a percentage of which was eaten up through corrupt means. Thus, many educated people ended up unemployed. According to 2016 data, there were 70,422

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<sup>40</sup> 'Nagaland highest rise in poverty level in India: Planning Commission of India (PCI)' *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 26 March 2012). In India, the poverty line has been worked out to Rs 672.8 (8.09 GBP) per month per person for rural India and Rs 859.6 (10.33 GBP) per month per person for urban areas. 'Report of the expert group to review the methodology for estimation of poverty' Government of India, Planning Commission, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> MM Thomas, *The Nagas Towards A.D. 2000* (Madras: CReNIEO, 1992), 22.

<sup>42</sup> 'Corruption' ACAUT <http://acaut.org/corruption.html> (Accessed on 7 June 2017).

<sup>43</sup> There are a few investors dealing in lumbering and wholesale businesses. Other than these, private investors are unwilling to put their money on the line.

‘unemployed youth’ in Nagaland.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, many migrated to other parts of India and abroad in search of education and jobs. According to the 2001 census, 51,857 migrated from Nagaland to other states of India during the year.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, as discussed above, the Naga society since 1990 has undergone a complex experience. Politically, though a certain degree of stability was achieved with the signing of the ceasefire between the GoI and the Naga nationalist groups, divided opinion among the latter caused much conflict. Much division was created in the society in line with factional affiliation, tribalism and economic status. Furthermore, taxation and corruption chronically crippled the economy of the region.

## **5.2. Mission and ecclesiastical changes**

By the 1990s Christian groups like the Baptist, Catholic, NCRC, TPM and AG had formed a niche of their own in Nagaland. Apart from them, this period saw the establishment of independent churches in Nagaland.

### **5.2.1. The Naga Baptist Churches**

The Naga Baptist continued to be the largest of the Christian group in Nagaland. As of 2012, NBCC had 20 full-fledged Associations, 4 Associate members, and 15,553 churches.<sup>46</sup>

Jubilee celebrations often act as a marker of changing attitude and practice. The 125<sup>th</sup> Jubilee celebration of the coming of Christianity in 1997 was a significant milestone for Naga Baptist churches. During this celebration they adopted the following resolution regarding the mission of the church:

To proclaim effectively the message of love and salvation in Jesus Christ, and to participate intelligently in human development and social transformations, we resolve to actively pursue a holistic approach to

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<sup>44</sup> The figure was revealed by Mmhonlumo Kikon, Parliamentary Secretary for Labour, Employment, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Border Affairs, and reported in local daily. ‘Nagaland state has 70422 educated unemployed youth’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 3 October 2016).

<sup>45</sup> At the same time, 33,594 migrated to the state from outside. ‘Migration Table’ ‘Census of India 2001.’

<sup>46</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 23.

Ministry and seek a new paradigm for the Churches' involvement in total development of a person in Christ.<sup>47</sup>

This statement reflects the Naga Baptist's understanding of Christian mission as inclusive of both evangelism and social concern. The Naga Baptist had shown desire to engage with social concerns in the past. But the priority was on evangelism. This was the instance in which the church officially adopted a 'holistic approach to Ministry.'<sup>48</sup> To implement this new approach, the Nagaland Development Outreach (NDO) was formed in 1999. It was established to 'adopt a holistic development approach and set visions and objectives in a proper perspective. It seeks to empower the under-privileged and marginalized through awareness program, capacity building, assimilation of information, advocacy, lobbying and networking.'<sup>49</sup> Since its inception, the NDO has become the main agent of the NBCC in socio-economic activities in the society.

Another key mission issue that the Naga Baptist churches faced and dealt with during this period was migration, both in and out of the state. In response to the streaming out of Naga youths to the metropolitan cities in India, the NBCC encouraged the formation of fellowships for Naga Christians in those places. The result was the formation of the Naga Christian Fellowship (NCF), which functions under the NMM. The first NCF was set up at Shillong, Meghalaya.<sup>50</sup> Since 1968, there was a Christian fellowship initiated by the Naga Student Union at Shillong. In 2003, this fellowship appealed to the NMM for a Chaplain. In response Yanren Humtsoe was sent by NMM as the chaplain (now called pastor). Furthermore NCF Shillong became part of the NMM ministry.<sup>51</sup> Since then many more NCFs have been formed. As of 2012, there were NCFs in sixteen major cities in India: Ahmednagar, Aizawl, Bangalore, Chennai, Dehradun, Guwahati,

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<sup>47</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 46.

<sup>49</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 45.

<sup>50</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Telephonic interview of Yanren Humtsoe, Shillong, 11 July 2017.



Shillong, Hyderabad, Itanagar, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Mysore, Pune, Shillong and Vellore.<sup>52</sup>

Naga Baptists have also initiated mission among those non-Naga people, who migrated from other parts of India to the region. According to the 2001 Indian census, 33,594 migrated to the state from outside during the year.<sup>53</sup> Most of the initiatives to evangelize these immigrants were taken by individual Christians which were then supported by the local churches. For example, in the small town of Tuli, in north-western Nagaland, the farmers evangelized the migrant workers whom they had employed to work in their fields. Subsequently, the local church helped the new converts to build a church of their own where they could worship in their own language.<sup>54</sup> In Kohima, according to Menuoselie, the Assistant pastor of Koinonia Baptist Church, the church has seen about 80 immigrant converts joining the church over the last few years.<sup>55</sup>

Naga Baptists have always been protective of their denominational dominion in the region. Much antagonism exists among the Naga Baptists against the other Christian groups. While it can be argued that they inherited it from the negative attitude of the American Baptist missionaries towards other Christian denominations, it should also be noted that much of it comes out of their own local experience. Since the 1940s, the Baptist churches in Nagaland have seen breakaway members from their own ranks forming the Catholic, NCRC, Pentecostal and independent churches. As such much antagonism still exists among the Naga Baptist members against the other Christian denominations. Nevertheless, in recent years, at least at the official level, some ecumenical initiatives have been initiated. Two factors could be attributed to this: First, exposure to ecumenical principles and practices. Many Naga Baptists studying in various theological colleges in

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<sup>52</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 28.

<sup>53</sup> 'Migration Table' 'Census of India 2001.'

<sup>54</sup> Interview of Jamir.

<sup>55</sup> Interview of Menuoselie, Bangalore, 12 February 2018.

India and abroad have come to appreciate ecumenism through learning and experiences. In addition, association of the NBCC with larger Christian fellowship like the North East India Christian Council, National Christian Council of India, Evangelical Fellowship of India, and the like further fostered an ecumenical spirit.<sup>56</sup> Second, the need for partnership in mission. While engaging in mission work, the Naga Baptists entered into partnership with other churches (like the Church of Christ Thailand<sup>57</sup>) and interdenominational organizations (like Evangelical Fellowship of India, Cherish International, Great Commission and Sudan Interior Mission NEI).<sup>58</sup> All these nurtured a spirit of ecumenism among the Naga Baptist churches, a tangible evidence of which was the initiative of the NBCC to form the Nagaland Christian Forum in 2000.<sup>59</sup> This provided a platform for Naga churches for ecumenical partnership. On 5 October 2017, the forum was rechristened as Nagaland Joint Christian Forum (NJCF).

### **5.2.2. The Naga Catholic Churches**

As of 2011, the Catholic Community in Nagaland consisted of 38 parishes and 9 mission centres. The Parishes are those in which there is a community of believers adhering to the Catholic faith. The Centres, on the other hand, are those in which there are no such communities, but there are Catholic mission activities like educational, healthcare or development institutes. The ecclesiastical hierarchy consisted of the bishop, 87 diocesan priests and 72 religious priests, 7 religious brothers and 324 women belonging to 17 congregations.<sup>60</sup>

The diocese of Kohima is yet to get a Naga bishop as its head.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the church has given much effort to promote local clergy. During the interviews of current

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<sup>56</sup> NBCC NBCE-4/92, Kohima, 27-28 May 1992.

<sup>57</sup> 'NBCC Executive Meeting Minutes and Actions,' Nikhukhu, 21 October 2008, 6.

<sup>58</sup> NBCC NBCE-07/2010, Yangli, 28-29 January 2010.

<sup>59</sup> NBCC NBCE-30/2000, Kohima, 26-27, 2000.

<sup>60</sup> Chasie, *The Angami Catholic Church*, 6.

<sup>61</sup> The present bishop is Most Rev. Dr James Thoppil, a native of Neezhoor, Kerala.

leaders, both local (Carlos) and non-local (Chacko), the need of local clergy was much stressed. In this regard they have stopped inviting priests from outside Nagaland.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, vocation camps for recruitment to religious profession are held annually. In these camps interested candidates, 'boys and girls from class eight to nine', from each parish are invited to a central location.<sup>63</sup> Each candidate comes with the recommendation of the parish priest who examines their family background and character before forwarding them to the camp. In the camp, they are introduced to the different congregations with each giving a talk about their life and activity. The candidate then decides which congregation to join. Accordingly they are sent for further training.<sup>64</sup> The Naga Catholic Church has produced 29 local Naga priests (diocesan and religious) and over 80 religious nuns.<sup>65</sup>

Catholic churches in every part of the world generally follow a universal pattern of structure and worship. The same is basically true of the Naga Catholic churches. Nevertheless, certain inculturation in line with Naga cultural practices has been encouraged in the church. Carlos Neisalhou, the Vicar General of Kohima diocese, noted during the interview that in the liturgy of the worship, Naga priests like him brings a 'certain amount of [Naga] culture, maybe the songs may be a bible song, but then [it is] convert[ed] into folk tune.'<sup>66</sup> A monumental symbol of the Catholic Church's attitude towards inculturation is the Cathedral at Kohima which was inaugurated in 1991.<sup>67</sup> Its façade is shaped in line with the traditional Naga House, especially that of a village chief. The painting and furniture have also been modelled in Naga traditional heritage.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Interview of Neisalhou.

<sup>63</sup> In 2016 due to the difficulties of bringing everyone to one place, the Vocation camps were organised at two places, Kiphire and Dimapur. Interview of Neisalhou.

<sup>64</sup> Interview of Neisalhou.

<sup>65</sup> Chasie, *The Angami Catholic Church*, 6.

<sup>66</sup> Interview of Neisalhou.

<sup>67</sup> The work for the construction of the Cathedral began in 1986 and the dedication and consecration of the church was done in 1991.

<sup>68</sup> 'Kohima Cathedral (Mary Help of Christians Church)' <http://www.kohimadiocese.org/cathedral.html> (Accessed on 24 May 2017)

### 5.2.3. The Nagaland Christian Revival Churches

As of 2012, there were 261 NCRC churches within the state of Nagaland.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, NCRC has also spread its presence beyond Nagaland to various parts of India and abroad.

From 11-13 December 1987, the NCRC celebrated its silver Jubilee. In the build up to the celebration, it was realized that the NCRC should be involved more in evangelization. Thus, in 1985, a department of mission was created with Imchayanger as the Mission Secretary.<sup>70</sup> It inaugurated a period of expansion of the NCRC churches beyond the boundaries of Nagaland. Mission fields were established, first in the neighbouring Indian states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya. In 1995, NCRC crossed international borders by starting mission work in Nepal.<sup>71</sup>

Along with evangelism, ‘prayer ministry’ is considered as the most important ministry in NCRC. The Prayer Centres of NCRC not only minister to its church members but also to members of other church groups. Influenced by the NCRC practice, a number of Prayer Centres have been established by Baptist church members. The NCRC therefore has played a key role in popularising prayer as a ministry vocation among the Naga Christians.

While evangelism and prayer were considered as priorities in the ministry of the church, NCRC tends to keep social concerns on the back burner. The reason for this was a decision made by its leaders in the early 1990s. The immediate context for this was the temperance movement of Nagaland (against the problem of alcoholism) during the 1980s and 90s (discussed in section 5.6). Though the Baptist church spearheaded the movement, many NCRC members participated in the movement. Imchayanger, a noted NCRC leader, noted during the interview, the key role he played in the temperance movement as follows: ‘By that time, I was out and out [for the temperance movement]. And I was the

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<sup>69</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 39.

<sup>70</sup> Interview of Imchayanger; NCRC, *Revival*, 25.

<sup>71</sup> NCRC, *Revival*, 39.

one who writes, I was the one who initiates, and Kari Longchar [a Baptist church leader] and other church leaders were shouting, but I was the person behind.’<sup>72</sup> But as the movement became confrontational, even involving church leaders conducting raids of wine depots along with the police, the NCRC leaders felt ‘uncomfortable’.<sup>73</sup> In the light of this the ‘church pioneers [and] church elders’ of NCRC ‘decided not to participate in social confrontation [and] political confrontation’.<sup>74</sup> Of the church’s present attitude, Imchayanger noted:

So NCRC, politically, socially, and these things we are concerned. We say that don’t drink, but we will not say don’t sell wine. . . . outside the church is the world, worldly ways, why should we go beyond our jurisdiction. Our jurisdiction is the church. If God has given someone to do that do it, but not the church.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, in NCRC, engagement with social concerns is an act of individuals who feel the call of God for that purpose, but not of the collective act of the church. Furthermore, the scope of the church’s moral jurisdiction is also understood to be confined to the ecclesiastical domain.

#### **5.2.4. The Pentecostal Mission, Nagaland**

From a few scattered congregations, the TPM churches have spread not only within Nagaland, but also to neighbouring states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Organizationally, they fall under two centres: (i) Kohima centre, which covers TPM churches in Kohima and Wokha district of Nagaland as well as the state of Manipur. (ii) Dimapur centre, which covers Dimapur, Mokokchung and Zunheboto district of Nagaland as well as Arunachal and Assam.<sup>76</sup>

The mission of the TPM churches is defined by what Azo Sekhose called ‘working only for the spirit.’ It means that they focus only on preaching and praying, and not on

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<sup>72</sup> Interview of Imchayanger; *Cf.* Interview of Sanchu.

<sup>73</sup> Interview of Sanchu.

<sup>74</sup> Interview of Sanchu. Of the meeting Imchayanger noted: ‘NCRC had a meeting, and we decide that church, as a church we cannot involve, and individuals you can.’ Interview of Imchayanger.

<sup>75</sup> Interview of Imchayanger.

<sup>76</sup> Interview of Azo; Interview of Ashoka, Dimapur, 21 October 2016.

‘physical’ initiatives like schools, hospitals and the like.<sup>77</sup> They are also the most extreme spiritualists of all the Naga churches with practices like refusing to take medicines, clerical celibacy, apocalyptic retreat, and the like.<sup>78</sup> Thus, involvement in social concern activity is not even on the agenda of the church.

The TPM members are also easily distinguishable for their dress code – white Saree for women and white kurta for men. Some efforts were being made to indigenize in the Naga context by allowing women to wear traditional white skirt or wrap-around with white blouse (full sleeved) and a white light cloth to drape the upper body.<sup>79</sup>

The ministry of the TPM churches is centred on the clergy. Azo remarked during the interview: ‘Christ is the head of the church, that way the pastor is the head.’ The pastor is supported by ‘workers’, either ‘brothers or sisters,’ whose roles include conducting meetings and visiting homes for prayer. In the absence of the pastor, these workers can take up the preaching responsibility with brothers given the priority over the sisters.<sup>80</sup> In the light of the pastor-centred nature of the function of the church, the dominance of non-Naga pastors in the TPM churches in Nagaland calls for serious attention. Most of the TPM churches are pastored by non-Naga. Production of indigenous leadership is therefore one area where the TPM churches have lagged behind.

#### **5.2.5. Assemblies of God Churches, Nagaland**

The AG church in Nagaland consists of 65 recognised churches and 18 House Churches. Organizationally, it comes under Assemblies of God East India (AGEI) as the ‘Nagaland District’. The district is divided into five sectors: Kohima, Dimapur, Wokha, Phek and Tseminyu.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Interview of Azo.

<sup>78</sup> Interview of Azo.

<sup>79</sup> Chase-Roy, *Women in Transition*, 162.

<sup>80</sup> Interview of Azo.

<sup>81</sup> Interview of Moses Murry, Dimapur, 5 July 2017. Moses is the present General Superintendent of AGEI.

The charisma of the leaders is key to the organization and function of the AG churches in Nagaland. This was because as practised in AG churches elsewhere, but unlike any other churches in Nagaland, leadership is chosen by election.<sup>82</sup> Until recently, there was also no centralised office, so when someone was elected to a leadership position in the sector, district or regional level, his residence or local church office became the office for that post. However, since 2007 there has been a drive by the AGEI for all sectors and districts to maintain centralised offices. To this effect, on 4 July 2017 a decision was made to establish the district office for Nagaland in Dimapur.<sup>83</sup>

The AG church Nagaland has offered active leadership in the AGEI. Of the five General Superintendents after the pioneers of AG mission in the region, Anderson (American missionary) and Wasker (Indian evangelist), four were Naga: TN Lotha, J Khuma, T Phesao, T Nyekha and Moses Murry, the exception being Khuma.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the AG church in Nagaland has been a leader for the AG mission in the whole of east India.

Unlike their other Pentecostal counterpart, the TPM, the Naga AG churches give much importance to engagement in the society especially through education.<sup>85</sup> In spite of being a comparatively small community, it has five church-run schools.<sup>86</sup> Many of their church leaders also run private schools.<sup>87</sup> These schools, according to Moses Murry, the present General Superintendent of AGEI, are run with three objectives:

- (i) To provide general education with Christian discipline.
- (ii) To uplift the downtrodden.
- (iii) To propagate the gospel.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Assemblies of God of East India: The Constitution and By-laws, rev. and amended* (1969, 2013), 13.

<sup>83</sup> Interview of Moses Murry.

<sup>84</sup> *Celebrating Golden Jubilee*, 49-53.

<sup>85</sup> No 6 of the 'Main Objective' of the church in the AGEI constitution states: 'To help with welfare, education, and other charitable activities in a Christian atmosphere of love and kindness.' *Assemblies of God of East India: The Constitution and By-laws*, 11.

<sup>86</sup> Interview of Moses Murry.

<sup>87</sup> Moses Murry for instance runs the Bethesda School in Dimapur.

<sup>88</sup> Interview of Moses Murry.

Murry further noted during the interview that ‘the church seeks to open schools in areas where poor people live’ so as to provide education to those who cannot. He also pointed out that this was done with the hope that ultimately it would provide an ‘avenue for evangelism.’<sup>89</sup>

### **5.2.6. Independent churches**

A significant ecclesiastical development in Nagaland in recent years is the emergence of independent churches. Two reasons can be attributed for this:

First, ecclesiastical. Many of the independent churches were started by individuals who were not satisfied with the traditional or existing churches. This comes about in the context of exposure to various trends in global Christianity like the practice of ‘praise and worship’ and non-denominational churches.

Second, linguistic. Each Naga tribe speaks a different dialect, each very different from the others. Thus, either English or Nagamese are used for communication among the various tribes. The latter is a lingua franca derived from Assamese, the language of the neighbouring people of Assam, developed through years of commercial interaction. In urban areas like Dimapur and Kohima there are many, especially of mixed marriages, who are deterred from attending the traditional tribal churches due to language barriers. Thus, the establishment of English and Nagamese churches became necessary.

One of the first independent church to be established in Nagaland was the Spirit of Faith Church at Dimapur started in 1994 by an American John Roughton and his Naga wife Zhepitoli.<sup>90</sup> It was a charismatic church. The church services were held in a building that was originally built as a cinema hall. Thus, it broke the stereotypical image of a traditional church building in Nagaland: a simple long house with a steeple. Since then, innovative church buildings have begun to appear in Nagaland, the latest being the

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<sup>89</sup> Interview of Moses Murry.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Spirit of Faith International’ <http://www.spirit-faith.org/> (Accessed on 9 June 2017).



Zunheboto Baptist church, which is currently the second largest church building in Asia.<sup>91</sup> Apart from its size, its architectural innovation includes imported bells, chandelier and other such fancy elements.

Many independent churches has also been started by native Christians. Several of these churches are charismatic. One such church is the Faith Church at Dimapur started by a certain Barminas, which is a charismatic church conducted in Nagamese dialect. However, not all independent churches in Nagaland are charismatic. The worship service at the Dimapur Christian Fellowship started by Supong Jamir resembles a typical Naga Baptist church service. Nevertheless, it envisions itself as a ‘worshiping community’ without any denominational affiliation.<sup>92</sup>

### **5.2.7. Summary**

According to the *Census of India 2011*, 87.93 per cent of the total population in Nagaland are Christians.<sup>93</sup> As of the previous two *Census of India*, 1991 and 2001, the percentages of the Christian population in the state were 87.46 per cent and 90 per cent respectively.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the Christian percentage in 2001 was higher than 2011. It was not only the Christian population, but the total population in the state was recorded to have decreased from 1,990,036 in 2001 to 1,978,502 in 2011. This anomaly, according to Neiphiu Rio, the Chief Minister of Nagaland (2003-2014, 2018-present), was due to the manipulation of the census data during the 2001 census in the light of the fear that the delimitation of the constituencies was to come into effect during the 2003 Assembly election.<sup>95</sup> The *Delimitation Act 2002* passed by the Parliament of India on 3 June 2002 provided the adjustment of allocated seats in the parliament based on the *Census of India 2001* data.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> ‘The church in Zunheboto set to be one of Asia’s largest’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 5 May 2016) <http://morungexpress.com/church-in-zunheboto-set-to-be-one-of-asias-largest/> (Accessed on 9 June 2017).

<sup>92</sup> ‘Vision Statement’ *Dimapur Christian Fellowship* (Brochure).

<sup>93</sup> 1,739,651 out of the total population of 1,978,502 were Christians. ‘Census of India 2011.’

<sup>94</sup> In 1991, 1,057,940 out of the total population of the state of 1,209,546 were Christians. While in 2001, 1,790,349 out of 1,990,036 were Christians. *Census of India 1991, 2001*.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Number games in Nagaland’ *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 13 July 2012).

<sup>96</sup> Section 4 (2), ‘Delimitation Act, 2002.’

This means that certain rural areas were to lose their allocated seats to urban areas.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the census collection was manipulated politically, leading to inflated census data. Thus, even the Christian percentage of the state according to the 2001 census can be deemed as faulty. Taking the 1991 and 2011 data, it can be stated that the percentage of Christian population remained static at around 87 per cent.

Unlike in the earlier period where there was much hostility among the various Christian groups (see section 3.2 and 4.2), this period saw the development of a certain degree of collegiality among them. Churches were now conscious of ecumenical ideas and the need for cooperation for larger Christian engagement in the society. The formation of the Nagaland Joint Christian Forum (NJCF) in 2000 was a result of this changing attitude. The Forum has provided a platform for Naga Christians of different traditions to cooperate in reform activities in the society.<sup>98</sup>

### **5.3. A deeply divided society and the church**

Adrian Guelke defined ‘a deeply divided society’ as one in which ‘conflict exists along a well-entrenched fault line.’<sup>99</sup> Such societies are characterised by ‘a lack of consensus on the framework for making decisions and a contested process in which the legitimacy of outcomes is commonly challenged by political representatives of one of the segments.’<sup>100</sup> One might see the conflict in Nagaland in a similar light. Udayon Mishra in his ‘The Naga Conflict’ and Kethoser Kevichusa in his doctoral thesis, ‘Forgiveness and politics: a critical appraisal with a study of two political conflict cases,’ have considered the Naga case in this light.<sup>101</sup> The fault line is the question of the self-determination of the Naga

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<sup>97</sup> Rio pointed out that the rural hill districts feared a loss of five seats to Dimapur, the industrial and transport hub of Nagaland. See, ‘Number games in Nagaland.’

<sup>98</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 21.

<sup>99</sup> Adrian Guelke, *A deeply Divided Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 31.

<sup>100</sup> Guelke, *A deeply Divided Society*, 32. As examples, Guelke noted the cases of the Unionists-Nationalists divide in Northern Ireland and the Greek-Turkish divide in Cyprus. In both the cases, a deep-rooted ethnic and nationalistic divide prevents the adaptation of a framework towards a positive outcome. Guelke, *A deeply Divided Society*, 31.

<sup>101</sup> Mishra, Udayon. ‘The Naga Conflict’ in Radha Kumar (ed.), *Negotiating Peace in Deeply Divided Societies* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), 148-246; Kevichusa, Kethoser. *Forgiveness and politics: a critical* 192

people which has resulted in violently divided opinions over the last seventy years. At present the stakeholders include not only the nationalists groups and the GoI, but also Naga civil societies like the Naga Hoho, the Naga Mothers' Association, the Naga Students' Federation and others. The church also has been a stakeholder in lieu of the role it played towards negotiating a peaceful solution.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the Naga church (specifically the Baptist) attempted to present itself as an agent of peace and reconciliation. The action of NBCC's NPC<sup>2</sup> during the Shillong Accord controversy however tarnished the image of the church as a neutral entity. Consequently, the NPC<sup>2</sup> underwent a slow demise. Its last President, VK Nuh<sup>102</sup> resigned in October 1994, after years of the NPC<sup>2</sup> existing only in name.<sup>103</sup> That the church no longer commands the full confidence of all the stakeholders in the Naga political process was evident in the event of the Atlanta Conclave in 1997. It was initiated by the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, in collaboration with the NBCC. It invited representatives from all the Naga civil societies and the nationalist groups for a meeting at Atlanta, USA from 28 July to 4 August 1997. The meeting was attended by representatives of the NSCN-K, the NNC, Church leaders and members of the Naga Hoho. However the NSCN-IM boycotted it.<sup>104</sup>

With the GoI establishing direct dialogue with the NSCN-IM since August 1997, the need for a mediator between them, as in the earlier period, was no longer necessary. At the same time with factional conflict requiring urgent intervention, the church's focus was directed towards mediating peace between the various factions. In 1998, the NBCC formed a 'Peace Committee' with the 'objective' of bringing 'mutual understanding and

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*appraisal with a study of two political conflict cases.* Oxford: OCMS, 2012 (unpublished); Kevichusa, Kethoser Aniu. *Forgiveness and Politics: A Critical Appraisal.* Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2017.

<sup>102</sup> VK Nuh was appointed as President of the Peace Council in 1991. 'The Minutes and Actions of the NBCC Executive Meeting' Kohima, 26-29 May 1991, 11.

<sup>103</sup> NBCC NBCE-70/94, Bade, 26-27 October 1994.

<sup>104</sup> Zhimomi, *Politics and Militancy in Nagaland*, 160.

reconciliation to the different groups of the Naga national workers.<sup>105</sup> Thus unlike the Peace Mission and the NPC<sup>2</sup> which were tasked with working towards negotiating a solution for the Indo-Naga conflict, the Peace Committee was now assigned with the task of finding a solution to the factional conflicts among the Naga nationalist groups.

The 1990s saw the beginning of active involvement of civil societies in the political process in Nagaland. The apex Naga tribal organization, the Naga Hoho, was formed in 1994 with its main objective to foster ‘peace and unity’ among the Naga people.<sup>106</sup> The Naga Mothers’ Association formed in 1984 threw its weight against factional killings through initiatives like the ‘Shed No More Blood’ campaign, putting black shrouds over victims of factional killings.<sup>107</sup> The Naga Students’ Federation, formed in 1947,<sup>108</sup> has been proactive in speaking against violence, corruption and the taxation of educational institutions. Thus, since the 1990s, the church was no more the only player in advocating peace in the Naga society.

With so many stakeholders to the peace process, including the church, there was a need for an initiative that would facilitate cooperation and collaboration between them. This need was provided for by the formation of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) in 2008. The proposal for its formation was made during the three-day Naga Peace Convention organised by Naga Shisha Hoho, a Naga Christian prayer group, at Dimapur in February 2008. Consequently, FNR was organised on 25 March 2008 under the leadership of Wati Aier, a theologian and ordained Baptist clergyman. Its objective was ‘to facilitate reconciliation among the Naga political groups on the basis of the historical and political rights of the Nagas.’<sup>109</sup> Analysing the FNR’s basis for reconciliation, Kevichusa pointed out that it seems ‘incongruous’ that the acknowledgment of Naga

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<sup>105</sup> NBCC NBCE-26/98, Kohima, 15-16 April 1998.

<sup>106</sup> ‘A recapitulation of the formation of Naga Hoho and its activities.’

<sup>107</sup> Choudhury, *Women and Conflict in India*, 126.

<sup>108</sup> Humtsoe, ‘Naga Student’s Federation.’

<sup>109</sup> ‘The FNR Journey with Naga Reconciliation’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 4 September 2011).

‘historical and political rights’ could be the basis of both conflict and reconciliation; yet, he continued, ‘apart from this clear basis, it is very unlikely that the different political groups would have agreed.’<sup>110</sup> Thus, unlike the NPC<sup>2</sup> in the aftermath of the Shillong Accord, which tried to enforce a solution that undermined the basis of the nationalist movement, the FNR recognised the rationale for the existence of the movement. As Kevichusa noted: ‘The basis serves as a sort of guarantee that the Naga nationalist struggle will not be sacrificed on the altar of reconciliation.’<sup>111</sup>

The FNR has achieved unprecedented success in bringing together all the civil societies and churches to work for peace and reconciliation in the Naga society. It consists of representatives of all the key Naga organisations: Naga Hoho, Naga Students’ Federation, United Naga Council, Manipur, Naga Mothers’ Association, Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights, Eastern Naga Peoples’ Organisation, Eastern Naga Students Federation, All Naga Students’ Association, Manipur, and Naga Women’s Union, Manipur. It also includes church leaders representing the NBCC, FNBA, the Catholic Church and the NJCF. The FNR therefore provides a unified platform for peace initiative: represented by all Naga civil societies, including the churches, it managed to galvanise the peace lovers among the Naga people.

One of the major achievements of FNR was the signing of the ‘Covenant of Reconciliation’ by the leaders of three major factions – NSCN-IM, NSCN-K and NNC/FGN – on 13 June 2009.<sup>112</sup> Part of the Covenant reads:

Having been deeply convicted by God’s call in Christ, and the voice of the Naga people, we hereby solemnly commit before God to offer ourselves to Naga Reconciliation and Forgiveness based on the Historical and Political Rights of the Nagas. We resolve to continue to work together in this spirit of love, non-violence, peace and respect to resolve outstanding issues amongst us.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Kethusar (Aniu) Kevichusa, ‘Tribal Conflicts in India: The Case of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation’ in Robert Schreiter and Knud Jorgensen (eds), *Mission as Reconciliation* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 307-308. Cf. Kethuser Aniu Kevichusa, *Forgiveness and Politics*, 213.

<sup>111</sup> Kevichusa, ‘Tribal Conflicts in India...’, 308.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Let us remain true to our words: FGN’ *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 31 August 2015).

<sup>113</sup> ‘Covenant of Reconciliation, 13 June 2009.’

The Christian basis of the Covenant is very clear in the rhetoric used. In fact the FNR has been explicit of its Christian basis invoking Christian devotion in all its meetings.

According to Neingulo Krome, a member of FNR,

One of the significant things about the Chiang Mai processes<sup>114</sup> has been that every meeting would start with a morning devotion and every meeting would end with another devotion in the evening... All the factions come and take part in these devotions. This has been one of the guiding principles of the Chiang Mai processes. I think this has helped the reconciliation process in more than one way.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, though the FNR is not an official church initiative, as in the earlier cases, it is very much a Naga Christian initiative with Christian basis and rhetoric. Moreover, through representation Naga churches actively participated in the FNR initiative.

The participation of the Catholic churches in the FNR initiative is worth noting. Earlier, the Baptist churches were the only ones involved in the peace initiative in Nagaland (see sections 3.4 and 4.3). But in recent years, Naga Catholic churches have shown an increasing desire to engage in the peace process. Bishop James Thoppil's circular of 18 June 2012 captures this change very well:

The Catholic Church has been very silently supporting the efforts of all by its silent and yet very effective means such as prayer and quiet involvement wherever possible both as a community and as individuals. In our last Priests' Council and Consulters meeting it was suggested that it is time that the Catholic Church come out more openly and overtly and make our stand and suggestions known to the public and in our one to one relationship. It is agreed that we shall continue and intensify our support for peace and prosperity in Nagaland by intensifying our prayer both at the personal and community level.<sup>116</sup>

This call for change, to 'come out more openly and overtly', can be seen as a result of the emergence of local clergy in the Catholic church leadership in Nagaland since 1989. Being Naga they were naturally more inclined and in a better position to engage in political matters. During the interview, Carlos Neisalhou shared how native priests like him share 'a strong concern for the volatile political situation in the state' and the need for the church to be a 'herald of peace'.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Most of the FNR-facilitated meetings were held in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Kevichusa, 'Tribal Conflicts in India...', 307.

<sup>116</sup> Bishop's circular, *BPKOH/CIR/05/12* (June 18, 2012), 2.

<sup>117</sup> Interview of Neisalhou.

The involvement of Naga churches in the peace process in Nagaland has evolved over time. The establishment of a concrete talk process and the emergence of conscientious civil societies means that they are no longer the sole initiator of peace in the region. Nevertheless, the church remains a major stakeholder in the Naga peace process.

#### **5.4. Identity, alienation and theological thought**

As noted in the previous chapter (section 4.5), the theological discussion in the Naga churches till the 1990s was centred on the discussion of the spiritual and mundane responsibilities of Christians. The aftermath of the 1970s revival saw efforts by Naga theologians to strike a balance between the future and present responsibilities of Christians (see section 4.5). However, the main theological discussion after the 1990s took a totally different direction. At the centre of the theological articulation of the period lay the question of identity. The context for such theological discourse was the perceived experience of alienation in India by the tribal people, including the Naga people.

In 1950, the GoI listed the Naga people, along with hundreds of other people groups in India as Scheduled Tribes. This classification has its root in the practice of the colonial era, whereby the term ‘tribe’ was used to refer to ‘primitive’ dwellers in the various hills in India. Writing in 1884, British colonial administrator A Mackenzie wrote in reference to the tribal people: ‘In many a jungle solitude, where fever lurks in every brake, and uncouth savage races dispute with wild beasts possession of the clearings ...’<sup>118</sup> Thus, the general colonial attitude towards the so called ‘tribes’ was that of primitivism.

After Independence, the GoI continued the prevailing practice by incorporating provisions for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe in the Constitution of India, articles 341 and 342 respectively. The complete lists of castes and tribes were made via two

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<sup>118</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 583.

orders: *The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950* and *The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950*, respectively. According to the *Census of India 2011*, 8.6 per cent of India's population, belonged to the Scheduled Tribe category.<sup>119</sup>

The Constitution neither provided any clear definition for the term 'tribe' nor did it clarify the eligibility criteria for a community to be categorized as a 'Scheduled Tribe'. However, a report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe released in 1952 provided a glimpse of what the Indian administrators meant by the term. This report listed animism, primitive occupations like hunting and gathering, 'carnivorous in food habits', 'naked or semi-naked', and 'fond of drinking and dancing' as the main characteristics that qualified a particular group to be categorised as 'Scheduled Tribe.'<sup>120</sup> In a questionnaire prepared by the Kalelkar Commission (1955), the first Backward Classes Commission of GoI, Schedule Tribes were 'clarified' as those who 'lead a separate exclusive existence and are not fully assimilated in the main body of people ... They are listed as Scheduled Tribes because of the kind of life led by them'<sup>121</sup> Just who constitutes 'the main body of people' was not given. Nevertheless, common discourse in India indicates a reference to Aryan-Dravidian lineage, as Soihiamlung Dangmei noted: 'the Indian state perception as nation state sees everything in relation to the perceived Indo-Aryan-Dravidian heritage and consequently takes the Nagas as "others" [who] have an existence only in relation to India.'<sup>122</sup> Indian Historian BG Gokhale's description of the tribal people in 1961, while writing on the proposed inauguration of the state of Nagaland, echoes this perception:

These tribes are, in many cases, distinct ethnic-cultural groups whose way of life is markedly different from that of their non-tribal neighbours. Most of them inhabit densely forested mountain areas and find their subsistence by hunting and food-gathering, although some also practise cultivation of the slash-

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<sup>119</sup> According to the *Census of India 2011*, the population of Schedule Tribes in India is 104,545,716.

<sup>120</sup> *Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe* (New Delhi: GoI, 1952), 77.

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Pachuau, *Ethnic Identity and Christianity*, 39.

<sup>122</sup> Dangmei, *Christianity and De-politicization of Naga Movement*, 95.



and-burn variety. A few tribes have adopted settled agriculture and are rapidly becoming assimilated to the general Indian cultural pattern.<sup>123</sup>

He continued that the tribal people, because of their ‘relative backwardness’ (to the general Indians) are in need of ‘special protection from the state and Union government,’ which he believed would be achieved through the statehood of Nagaland.<sup>124</sup> Thus, in the context of the construction of the modern India, for many Indian leaders, the tribal people were the primitive ‘others’.

Geographical separation and ethnic composition further separated the tribal people of north-east India from the rest of the nation. In ‘Sunshine Before Sunrise, Darkness Before Sunset’ Sonagram Basumatary pointed out several ‘distance(s)’ that divide the region from mainland India: geographical, racial, political, historical, socio-economic, cultural and religious.<sup>125</sup> Added to these natural ‘distances’ is the government requirement of Inner Line Permit (ILP), a visa-like permit, to enter some of the north-east states like Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. The ILP system was introduced in north-east India by the British. It was first introduced to regulate the activities of British subjects in the frontier areas. As the tea gardens in Assam and in the surrounding areas spread rapidly, more and more entrepreneurs ventured towards the hills in search of new land for plantation. The government had to be on the lookout for the security and wellbeing of these British subjects. Consequently, this involved the government in many difficult questions with the frontier tribes. Thus, it was decided that there was a need of a special rule to regulate the ‘commercial relations’ of the British subject with the hill tribes.<sup>126</sup> Thus, on 27 August 1873, the Inner Line Regulation for the frontier district was drawn.<sup>127</sup> According to this, no European planters were allowed to accept any grant beyond the

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<sup>123</sup> BG Gokhale, ‘Nagaland: India’s Sixteenth State’ *Asian Survey*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (May, 1961), 36.

<sup>124</sup> Gokhale, ‘Nagaland: India’s Sixteenth State,’ 36.

<sup>125</sup> Sonagram Basumatary, ‘Sunshine before Sunrise, Darkness before Sunset: India’s North-East and North-East’s India’ *Gurukul Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 2012), 65-83.

<sup>126</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 55.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation...’, 175.

line.<sup>128</sup> Rules were also laid down regarding trade, the possession of the land beyond the line, and other matters which gave the executive government an effective control.<sup>129</sup> Thus, originally, the Inner Line Regulation was established for maintaining government control over trade and security in the frontier region.<sup>130</sup> This initial purpose became obsolete with the annexation and active administration of the Naga Hills. With this, a new purpose was formulated. This time it was deemed as an initiative to protect the tribes from the ‘exploitation at the hands of outsiders’ and helping the tribes preserve their ‘land and identity’.<sup>131</sup> Even after India’s independence, the practice continued, thus, today all non-Naga require an Inner Line Permit (ILP) to enter Nagaland.

Overcoming these barriers, many tribal people from north-east India have made their way into various Indian cities. Unfortunately, they are often subjected to racial discrimination. According to surveys undertaken by the North-East Support Centre and Helpline, 86 per cent and 78 per cent of north-easterners in Delhi have faced ‘racial discrimination’ in various forms during 2009 and 2011 respectively.<sup>132</sup> In such a scenario, tribal people felt unwelcome to incorporate themselves into ‘mainstream’ Indian society.

Thus, in India, the tribal people felt alienated from the dominant ‘Indian’ culture. It was in this cultural milieu that Tribal Theology emerged. Tribal theology, as defined by Naga theologian, Bendangjungshi, refers to a theological school that developed among the tribal people in Indian ‘as a reaction against the existing Indian theologies because of their failure to adequately address issues that concern the tribal people.’<sup>133</sup> Naga theologians, Renty Keitzar and Wati Longchar (along with theologians of other tribal communities in India like K Thanzauwa and Nirmal Minz) were prominent contributors

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<sup>128</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 90.

<sup>129</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 55-56.

<sup>130</sup> Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, 90.

<sup>131</sup> Downs, *History of Christianity in India*, 23.

<sup>132</sup> Madhu Chandra, ‘Silent Racial Attack on Own Contrymen’ *Countercurrents.org* (15 April 2011) <http://www.countercurrents.org/chandra150411.htm> (Accessed on 2 June 2017). Madhul Chandra was the then Spokesperson of NESCH.

<sup>133</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in Naga Context*, 5.

toward the development of this theology. Its beginning in north-east India can be traced back to the ‘Theological Consultation on Primal Vision and Hermeneutics in North East India’ held in 1981 at Shillong, Meghalaya. The purpose of this consultation was to ‘see whether there was a specific approach which Christians in north-east India with a tribal heritage could take in their task of interpreting scriptures and in understanding and communicating the Word of God in history.’<sup>134</sup> The consultation observed that the tribal people in north-east India were in a ‘state of cultural uncertainty and insecurity of identity.’ This was caused by their exposure to ‘totally new cultural, political and economic influences’ during the British rule and the ‘influx of non-indigenous peoples and forces into their territory’ following India’s independence. In this context, it was deemed necessary to affirm their ‘tribal identity’ while at the same time to ‘feel no conflict between [their] Christian identity and [their] tribal identity.’<sup>135</sup> The consultation also affirmed ‘strongly our national identity as Indians.’ However, it asserted that within that Indian nation, ‘we want very definitely to conserve our own tribal identity.’<sup>136</sup> The consultation therefore set the tone for the subsequent development of Tribal Theology: the search for tribal identity became the rallying point of Tribal Theology.

Tribal Theology has its inspiration from the Liberation Theology of Latin America. Liberation Theology is a theological movement that ‘attempted to unite theology with the socio/economic concerns of the poor and oppressed people.’<sup>137</sup> Emerged out of Latin American experience of poverty and underdevelopment in the twentieth century, it is an attempt to interpret ‘Christian faith out of the experience of the poor.’<sup>138</sup> However, Tribal

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<sup>134</sup> ‘Findings of Primal Vision and Hermeneutics in North East India’, in Renty Keitzar (ed.), *Good News for North East India: A Theological Reader* (Guwahati: CLC, 1995), 180.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Findings of Primal Vision and Hermeneutics in North East India’, 182-183.

<sup>136</sup> ‘Findings of Primal Vision and Hermeneutics in North East India’, 183.

<sup>137</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology, rev. and exp.* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 630.

<sup>138</sup> Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 4.

Theology is not a carbon-copy of Liberation Theology. Keitzar noted the essentiality of local innovation that makes Tribal Theology distinct from Liberation Theology:

In fact, all regional theologies are related to some form of liberation theology. It may thus take various forms. What is valid in Latin American political theology and its ramification may not be relevant to Naga situation, and so the Latin American political theology and its ramification may not be overstressed in our theologization.<sup>139</sup>

Keitzar was especially apprehensive of Liberation Theology because of its ‘Marxistic [sic] origin or leaning and political implications.’<sup>140</sup> Keitzar’s younger contemporary, Wati Longchar, while acknowledging the influence of Liberation Theology, also asserted the distinctiveness of the Tribal Theology:

Initially, indigenous theology was influenced and shaped by the Latin American liberation methodology. The indigenous communities ... however widened the horizon of liberation theology from its Latin American impetus. Along with economic and political issues, the cultural and religious dimensions of discrimination are taken seriously in liberation theologies.<sup>141</sup>

Thus the distinctiveness of the Tribal Theology is its reaction to ‘cultural and religious’ discrimination. Unlike the Latin American experience, deliverance from socio-economic exploitation (Marx) was not the paramount concern of the Tribal Theologians; rather overcoming the experience of alienation through affirmation of their rich tribal distinctiveness interested them. Tribal Theology therefore expounded the traditional culture of the tribal, arguing that they were not as bad as it was considered to be by both the British colonizers as well as the ‘other’ Indians, and subsequently attempts to explain Christian truth using tribal cultural elements. This ranges from adaptation of culturally derived terms like *Antipong* (Ao Naga word for cock, the traditional animal for sacrifice) and *pasaltha* (Mizo word for admirable person) in theological discourses to theological interpretation of cultural values like *sobaliba* (discussed in section 2.1) and cosmic communion with nature, especially land. Thus, Tribal Theologians looked back to the

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<sup>139</sup> Renty Keitzar, ‘Theology Today’ in V.K. Nuh (ed.), *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2003), 27.

<sup>140</sup> Renty Keitzar, ‘The Indigenization of Naga Christian Theology’ in V.K. Nuh (ed.), *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2003), 51.

<sup>141</sup> Wati Longchar, ‘Liberation Theology and Indigenous People’ in Lalramliana Pachuau, O. Mohan Larbeer and Wati Longchar (eds), *Contours of Tribal Theology: Issues and Perspective* (Bangalore: BTESSC, 2015), 68.

‘primal vision’ of their pre-Christian ancestors, both practices and concepts, to explore its meaning and close identification with Christianity, and consequently to arrive at an understanding of what Christian faith meant for the tribal people.<sup>142</sup>

Tribal Theology is part of a larger movement for tribal advocacy in India. A major thrust in this is the assertion of tribal people as the ‘indigenous people’ of India. Interestingly, the term used to refer to the tribal people in India (except in north-east India) is *Adivasi*, a Sanskrit derivative, which means ‘original inhabitants’. This concept however has been contested in India, the debate which came to a head in the 1980s in the light of the draft declaration by the International Labour Organization of the United Nations on the ‘Rights of the Indigenous and Tribal People’ in 1989.<sup>143</sup> Tiplut Nongbri noted that the response of the Indian government to the declaration was of ‘unusual swiftness’ rejecting the claim that the tribal people are the indigenous people of India.<sup>144</sup> Indian sociologist Andre Beteille also argued that in the light of the blurred nature of the distinction between caste and tribe in India, ‘it would be absurd to designate as indigenous only the tribal population.’<sup>145</sup> On the other hand, Virginius Xaxa posited that indigeneity could be ascribed to a certain group (in this matter the tribes) when a distinction is made between settlement in the context of the country as a whole and settlement within it in parts.<sup>146</sup>

Tribal Theologians like Nirmal Minz (from Jharkhand, central India) and the aforementioned Wati Longchar have worked on the framework of the understanding of the tribal people as the indigenous people of India. Minz was critical of the experience of

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<sup>142</sup> ‘Findings of Primal Vision and Hermeneutics in North East India’, 181-182.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Indigenous and Tribal People’s Convention, 1989’ [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312314](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314) (Accessed on 5 January 2018).

<sup>144</sup> Tiplut Nongbri, ‘Tribe, Caste and the Indigenous Challenge in India’ in Bengt G Karlsson and TB Subha (eds), *Indigeneity in India* (London: Routledge, 2006), 86.

<sup>145</sup> Andre Beteille, ‘Construction of a Tribe: Ideology and Demographic Reality’ *The Times of India* (Delhi, 19 June 1995).

<sup>146</sup> Xaxa, Virginius. ‘Tribes as Indigenous People of India’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.34 No. 51 (18-24 December 1999). 3589-3595.

exploitation that the tribal people in central India faced as their ancestral lands were being taken away by government and corporates under the pretext of ‘the greater interest of the nation.’<sup>147</sup> In a similar vein, Naga Tribal Theologian, Longchar, while discussing the methodology for Tribal Theology, argued that the term ‘tribal’ is a reference to the ‘indigenous people of India’, who ‘after successive defeat and subjugation and modernization’ are able to ‘still retain their distinctive primal traditions, value system and culture.’<sup>148</sup>

Tribal Theology has its critics. Its validity has been much questioned in the ecclesiastical domain it sought to represent. A prominent Naga Baptist clergy, Y Nuklu Phom stated: ‘It is the opinion of many church leaders and ministers that trying to apply Tribal Theology in our Christian Ministry might only be a fragile exercise.’<sup>149</sup> Similarly, during the interview, I Yanglu Imsong, an elderly Naga Baptist clergy, was of the view that ‘Tribal Theology does not really matter much in the local churches.’<sup>150</sup> In what can be taken as a self-critique, Tribal Theologian, Daniel Tikhir wrote:

Tribal theology needs therefore to root itself in the Church. Because, the Church is the basis upon which a critical reflection of a theologian is determined. For, any theology independent from the Church would be an academic fad. If tribal theology remains content in the academic debate without equally addressing pastoral concerns, its indefatigable efforts would bear no fruit.<sup>151</sup>

The question of whether Tribal Theology really represents the theological fervour of the Naga churches is therefore debatable.

A key criticism against Tribal Theology is that it theologizes with the past rather than the present; and thus, failing to answer the everyday questions people were asking, living as they were in a context of political uncertainty and socio-economic struggle.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Minz, *Rise up, My people, and Claim the Promise*, 12.

<sup>148</sup> A Wati Longchar, ‘Tribal Theology: Issues, Method and Perspective’ in A Wati Longchar (ed.), *In Search of Identity and Tribal Theology: A Tribute to Dr Renthly Keitzar* (Jorhat: Tribal Study Centre, 2001), 46-47.

<sup>149</sup> Daniel Tikhir, ‘Tribal Theology now and then: A Methodic Appraisal’ in Lalramliana Pachuau, O. Mohan Larbeer and Wati Longchar (eds), *Contours of Tribal Theology: Issues and Perspective* (Bangalore: BTESSC, 2015), 9.

<sup>150</sup> Interview of Imsong.

<sup>151</sup> Tikhir, ‘Tribal Theology now and then...’, 10.

<sup>152</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Witnessing Christ in Naga Context*, 195.

Given the tumultuous socio-political condition of the society, this is a serious criticism. Some Naga theologians, who do not belong to the school of Tribal Theology, have produced theological treatises addressing the socio-political condition in the society. Wati Aier's call for social engagement by the churches in the society has already been mentioned in the previous chapter (see section 4.5). Naga theologian, VK Nuh proposed a 'praxis theology' calling for churches to engage in the transformation of the society. Unlike the Tribal Theologians, he was ardently convinced of the relevance of the Latin American Liberation Theology in the Naga context. He considered it as 'the best weapon to address the contemporary oppressive society.'<sup>153</sup> In what could be seen as a clear indication of his affiliation to the school of Liberation Theology, Nuh spoke of a 'Praxis Theology', which he said 'must speak for the suffering and the oppressed people.'<sup>154</sup> This echoes Gustavo Gutierrez's definition of Liberation Theology as 'critical reflection of Christian Praxis in the light of the word.'<sup>155</sup> Gutierrez was concerned with a 'lived faith' that addresses 'questions that arise out of that context.'<sup>156</sup> In the same vein Nuh noted: 'If our church cannot engage in transformation of our society, we are not participating in the task of ushering the kingdom of God.'<sup>157</sup>

Another Naga theologian, Bendangjungshi, also spoke of the need for contextual theologization. In his *Confessing Christ in Naga Context* (2011), he argued that 'Nagas should let Jesus' mission flow in their cultural setting so that an authentic Christian faith confession can be synthesized with and keep pace with the rhythm of the people's cultural life.'<sup>158</sup> For this he posited the need to escape the captivity under 'Western theology' so

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<sup>153</sup> VK Nuh (ed.), *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2003), v.

<sup>154</sup> VK Nuh, *Struggle for identity in North-east India: A Theological Response* (Kohima: Spectrum Publications, 2001), 51.

<sup>155</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1988), xxix.

<sup>156</sup> Philip Gibbs, *The Word in the Third World* (Roma: EPIG, 1996), 245.

<sup>157</sup> Nuh, *Struggle for identity in North-east India*, 62.

<sup>158</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in Naga Context*, 269.

as to reconceptualise ‘the liberating traditions of the tribal culture’ in the light of the ‘community’s contemporary socio-cultural realities.’<sup>159</sup> He identified freedom, prosperity and identity as the three elements that constitute the Naga struggle for self-determination, which he called ‘a bold venture towards fuller humanity’. But this, he said, ‘if guided by sound contextual theology, the struggle for Naga self-determination can be understood as a way of ushering in a glimpse of salvation in the midst of Nagas’ immediate crises.’<sup>160</sup> The role of the church, therefore, is to show ‘solidarity with the people struggling for liberation from unjust and oppressive systems of any sort.’<sup>161</sup>

Some Naga theologians have also worked on theological reflection on the political crises in Nagaland. The Christianization of Naga nationalism, encapsulated in the slogan ‘Nagaland for Christ’, has already been noted in the previous chapter (see section 4.4). Some Naga theologians built on this foundation in articulating a political theology in the Naga context. On the other hand, it has also been noted in the previous chapters that the Naga churches have been proactive in initiating peace in the region. Naga theologians, in their attempt to analyse the role of the church in such endeavour and its biblical legitimacy, have also produced theological treatises on the mission engagement of churches in peace and reconciliation. Thus, political theologies in the Naga context can be classed under two categories:

First, theologising the validity of the nationalist movement. The tendency is to equate the Naga people with Israel, the chosen nation. Phuveyi Dozo argued that there is much similarity between the Jews and the Naga people, including the expectation of liberation ‘from the suppression and clutches of their enemies.’<sup>162</sup> Noulezhalie Ricky

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<sup>159</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in Naga Context*, 269.

<sup>160</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in Naga Context*, 271.

<sup>161</sup> Bendangjungshi, *Confessing Christ in Naga Context*, 271.

<sup>162</sup> P Dozo, ‘Jewish-Naga Similarities’ in Phuveyi Dozo (ed.), *The Nagas: A Valid Reason to Live Together with a Vision* (Dimapur: FNBA, 2012), 106-107.



Medom saw the Naga political struggle as a prototype of the exilic event for Israel: that like the Jews in exile the Naga people ‘dream of a unified homeland free of foreign dominance and control.’<sup>163</sup> Drawing implication from the exilic motif of the Israelites, the struggle and liberation of an oppressed people, he argued for the validity of the Naga national movement: ‘the exilic motif provides the awareness of the uniqueness of the Naga people and also their responsibility to the world around them. It legitimates the Nagas’ struggle for identity and brings back continuity to their lives.’<sup>164</sup>

Second, theologising to formulate a basis for reconciliation. Wati Aier is again in the forefront. He was convinced that if the church fails to engage in political matters it would create a gap between the church and the everyday life of the people.<sup>165</sup> He was however against the church siding with any political parties, but rather for the church to be an inspiration ‘of forgiveness, of love and of service’.<sup>166</sup> It was on the basis of this conviction that under his leadership the FNR was formed, which is at present spearheading the effort towards reconciliation in Nagaland.

Thus, since the 1980s, Naga churches have made conscientious efforts towards native theological articulation. The socio-political condition of the society played a vital role in this process. Tribal Theologians addressed the experience of alienation by tribal people, like the Naga, in India. They saw the Naga people as indigenous people of India who, empowered by the Christian faith, have found a voice to advocate their rights. In declaring the tribal/Naga as an indigenous people of India, it therefore provided a bridge to connect Naga and Indian identity. In the Naga context, therefore, Tribal Theology was counter-cultural to the concept of ‘otherness’ on the basis of which Naga nationalism was

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<sup>163</sup> Noulezhalie Ricky Medom, *The Relevance of the Theological Motif to the Naga’s Struggle for Sovereignty as a People* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), ix.

<sup>164</sup> Medom, *The Relevance of the Theological Motif to the Naga’s Struggle for Sovereignty as a People*, 104.

<sup>165</sup> Aier, *A Cry from the Rice Fields*, 16.

<sup>166</sup> Aier, *A Cry from the Rice Fields*, 57.

founded. On the other hand, Naga theologians like Dozo and Medom argued for the validity of the Naga nationalist movement. They built on the idea of Christian nation that was already in circulation among the nationalists and attempted to give a biblical basis to it. A third group of theologians were those who advocated the need of the churches to engage in the welfare of the society. Theologians like Aier, Nuh and Bendangjungshi called for churches to show solidarity with the people in oppressed situation and to be agents of peace.

### **5.5. Women, equality and leadership in the Naga churches**

On 10 August 2016, the Nagaland State Cabinet, in a momentous decision, incorporated a 33 per cent women's reservation into the Nagaland Municipal Act (2001), which in effect reserves 33 per cent of the seats in the municipal council election for female candidates. This was done in an effort to encourage female participation in the legislative process in the region. The election process in Nagaland has a very poor record in terms of female participation and success. In more than sixty years of statehood of Nagaland, no Naga women had yet been elected to the State Assembly. It was in the 1969 State Assembly election that Naga women for the first time participated in the state election: Ravole from western Angami Constituency and RL Kinghen from Bhandari Constituency. Both lost the election. Since then twelve more women have contested intermittently, the highest being four women in the 2008 election. None of them was elected.<sup>167</sup> The only success story of Naga women in election was that of Rano M Shaiza, who won the general election of 1977 for the lone seat from Nagaland in the Lower House of the Indian Parliament (the Lok Sabha).<sup>168</sup> But how far her success was due to her

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<sup>167</sup> Moa Jamir, 'Women reservation in Nagaland: A right step in right direction' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 14 August 2016).

<sup>168</sup> Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 91.

political connection, being the niece of Phizo, the supreme nationalist leader of the time is debatable.<sup>169</sup> In any case, her story is an exception rather than the norm.

The passing of the bill by the State Government Cabinet was with the hope to rectify this poor record. However, led by the Naga Hoho, the apex Naga civil society, it was aggressively opposed, forcing the state government to withhold its implementation.<sup>170</sup> The opponents of the bill contended that granting the reservation for women would infringe on Naga customary laws and tradition, the protection of which was stated in the Indian Constitution Article 371 (A), on the basis of which the state of Nagaland was formed. The constitutional provision states:

[N]o Act of Parliament in respect of (i) religious or social practices of the Nagas, (ii) Naga customary law and procedure, (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, (iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides.<sup>171</sup>

The argument was that since, according to the Naga customary law, women were not part of the decision making process, introducing women's reservation to facilitate women to enter the legislative process infringes the Naga customary law. On the other hand, the Naga Mother's Association, which had been lobbying for the bill was of the view that letting women have a say in decision-making was 'an irrefutable part of Naga Customary Law.'<sup>172</sup> This debate represents a heated discussion on the status of women in the Naga society since the early 1990s.

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<sup>169</sup> Rano M Shaiza was the first president of the Federation of Naga Women of the NNC, which was formed in 1950. She continued to be its president until 1958. She came to limelight when she was imprisoned for 19 months during the early period of the Naga movement in 1960. Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 91.

<sup>170</sup> Following vehement opposition by tribal associations, a Select Committee under the chairmanship of TR Zeliang was formed. Based on the recommendation of the Committee, on 22 September 2012, the State Assembly resolved to nullify the earlier decision on 33% reservation. However, on 10 August 2016, with the aforementioned Zeliang as the Chief Minister, the State Cabinet took a decision to hold the municipal election with 33% women reservation. K Angami, 'Can 33% Women Reservation be enforced in Nagaland?' *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 5 November 2016).

<sup>171</sup> 'The Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962.'

<sup>172</sup> Cited in 'Opposed to 33% reservation for Women, Naga bodies called for boycott of civil poll,' *Indian Express* (5 January 2017).

The discussion first originated within the Naga churches. As shown in the previous chapters, Naga women had been active contributors in the mission of the Naga churches. However, thus far, no mention had been made in this research regarding the leadership role played by Naga Christian women in the churches. The reason is that in spite of the key role they played, till the 1990s, women were not given sufficient opportunities to hold leadership positions in the Naga churches. Two reasons could be attributed as the root causes for this. First, cultural influence of a patriarchal society. Though women were generally treated with respect in the traditional Naga society, they were not given leadership of any sort in the society (see section 2.4). Even in the traditional religion, the village priests were always male, in spite of the presence of women *shamans* (see section 2.4). Second, the male leadership structure of the mission agencies that had worked in Nagaland. Whether it was the Baptist, Catholics, TPM or AG, the mission work was done always under male leadership. In all of them, women played a subordinate role, mainly confined to areas of evangelism, education, health care and prayer, and not at all in any administrative or pastoral leadership. Thus, it follows that until the 1990s, there was a general absence of women in leadership in the Naga churches. Their position, at the most, was that of a subordinate to their male counterpart. Narola Imchen, a Naga woman theologian<sup>173</sup> noted: ‘The role of women in the Church has always been defined in large measure by the traditional role of women in Ao (Naga) society. The subordinate role they played in traditional society was reflected in the role allowed them by the men who control the Church.’<sup>174</sup> Thus, there was a glass ceiling beyond which women could not go up the leadership ladder.

Winds of change began to blow from the early 1990s. In this regard, theological education played a significant role. The first Naga woman theological graduate was

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<sup>173</sup> Narola Imchen is presently the Vice Principal of Eastern Theological College, Jorhat.

<sup>174</sup> Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 71.

Khreileno Terhujah who did her Bachelor of Theology (BTh) from Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, in 1960 and Bachelor of Divinity (BD) from United Theological College, Bangalore, in 1966.<sup>175</sup> Since then many Naga women have entered theological seminaries. It was in the seminary that Naga theologians, both men and women, came in contact with the global women's liberation and feminist movement. In her *Women in Church Ministry* (2003), Khrieleno, was appreciative of the positive contribution of the Feminist Movement in spreading awareness of the 'humanity of women', while at the same time warning of 'the exploitation and commercialism of feminism.'<sup>176</sup> The caution she expressed should be understood in the context of the dismissive attitude of the prominent Naga theologians of the time. For instance Keitzar insisted that the Naga women are already 'free and independent,' and therefore, there is no need to copy 'the women liberation movement of the West.'<sup>177</sup> However, Naga woman theologian, Lovely Awomi James refuted this, stating that there is a difference between 'free mingling', which is prevalent in the Naga society, and 'equal status', which is not prevalent in the Naga society.<sup>178</sup> The aforementioned Narola saw the experience of women in the Naga churches comparable to the experience of 'sexual discrimination' in the global churches as described in the Brussel's Colloquium on Women in the Church and Society. The document, as cited by Narola, stated:

In its own practice the Church helps to perpetuate sexual discrimination, for all decision-making and leadership structures are controlled exclusively by male clergy. Even when women are involved in an advisory capacity on commissions and so forth, they do not participate fully in the proceedings and final decisions. A small group of male clergy regard it as their task to define what it means to be virtuous Christian women for all socio cultural contexts. In this mentality women are perceived primarily in terms of their sexual role as mother, spouse, virgin. Crucial moral decisions concerning women's sexuality are made for them, which they are expected to follow even when these decisions have painful and drastic repercussions on their lives.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 223-24. The first Naga theological graduate was I Ben Wati who graduated BD from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, USA, in 1948. NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 236; 'Rev. Dr. I Ben Wati no more' *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 14 June 2012).

<sup>176</sup> Khrieleno Terhujah, 'Women in Church Ministry' in V.K. Nuh (ed.), *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2003), 133.

<sup>177</sup> Keitzar, 'Theology Today', 28.

<sup>178</sup> Lovely Awomi James as quoted in Soto, *Tribal Theology of Integral Humanhood*, 317.

<sup>179</sup> Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 93.

Narola argued that in the Naga context, this statement has been manifested in the form of a ‘conflict between traditionalism and modernism.’ On the one hand, influenced by traditional cultural attitudes, women had been excluded from leadership and decision-making roles. On the other hand, influenced by modernity, of which, according to Narola, Christianity was the first such influence, ‘women became aware of the inadequacy of the role traditionally assigned them.’<sup>180</sup> In the light of this, she urged the Naga churches to embrace the ‘modern trends that stress the equality of both sexes before God’: ‘If both women and men are created in God’s image, and if women and men are one in Christ spiritually, then it became more difficult for women to accept a subordinate role in the Church.’<sup>181</sup>

Apart from the critique of subordination of women in the leadership of the church, Naga women theologians have also begun to critique the male-oriented history of the churches and mission. Chase-Roy, in her *American Women Missionaries in Northeast India* (2011), sheds light on the missionary work of women in north-east India ‘whose stories seldom get told.’<sup>182</sup> Atola Longkumer in her *Tetsur Tesayula: Christian Mission and Gender among the Ao Naga of Northeast India* critiques the patriarchal dominance in the Naga churches, which assigned women only ‘a limited space and a restraint voice’.<sup>183</sup> Narola Imchen in her *Reading the Bible with a New Perspective* pointed out the ‘one sided’, that is male-oriented, nature of the ‘history of human interpretation of the Bible.’<sup>184</sup> All these works have promoted ideas of female perspectives in the Naga church and society.

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<sup>180</sup> Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 94.

<sup>181</sup> Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 94.

<sup>182</sup> Chase-Roy, Aphuno. *American Baptist Women Missionaries in Northeast India (1836-1950)*. Guwahati: CLC, 2011.

<sup>183</sup> Longkumer, Atola. ‘Tetsur Tesayula: Christian Mission and Gender among the Ao Naga of Northeast India’ in Christine Lienemann-Perrin, Atola Longkumer and Afrie Songco Joye (eds). *Putting Names with Faces: Women’s Impact in Mission History*. Delhi: ISPCK, 2014. 187-206.

<sup>184</sup> Imchen, Narola. *Reading the Bible with a New Perspective: Bible Studies on Women of the New Testament*. Jorhat: ETC, 2000.

Women's solidarity in the Naga society and the church was further bolstered by the formation of women's associations like the Nagaland Baptist Women's Union in 1967, Nagaland Catholic Women's Association in 1985 and the Naga Mothers' Association in 1984. These organizations 'have provided Naga women with opportunities of leadership and public involvement that they never had traditionally.'<sup>185</sup> These organizations also became the platform to promote the cause of women. One such instance was the event that led to the ordination of Noksangchila, the first woman to be ordained by Naga churches. It was the Ao Baptist Women's Association (Ao Baptist Tentsur Mungdang, ABTM), which proposed her candidature for ordination in 1990.<sup>186</sup> After much discussion, amidst strong opposition from certain quarters,<sup>187</sup> she was ordained on 31 May 1992.<sup>188</sup> She is however not the first Naga woman to be ordained (though she was the first woman to be ordained by Naga churches). The first Naga woman to be ordained was Beilieu Shuya who was ordained during the Worldwide Mission Conference on 5 November 1978 at Chennai.<sup>189</sup> On returning to Nagaland the NCRC churches recognised the ordination.<sup>190</sup>

The debate on women's ordination among the Naga churches is not a foregone conclusion. Only among the Baptist churches, women have been ordained. Its apex body, the NBCC, 'encourage[s] women ordination'.<sup>191</sup> However, in the light of opposition from some of its constituent units, it does not consider its view as 'binding upon all

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<sup>185</sup> Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 87.

<sup>186</sup> The initial proposal was made to the Ao Baptist Church Council (ABAM) through the Yaongyimsen Baptist in 1975. But the move was rejected.

<sup>187</sup> The decision to ordain her was made on 7 November 1990. Nevertheless, even after the decision, in 1991, 'a group of men' continued to oppose the principle of women ordination and submitted a written objection to ABAM. Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 123.

<sup>188</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 211.

<sup>189</sup> Interview of Shuya.

<sup>190</sup> Interview of Shuya; Interview of Sanchu.

<sup>191</sup> NBCC NBCE-8/99, Kohima, 21-24 January 1999.

Associations'.<sup>192</sup> Thus only among the Ao, Chang and Chakhesang Baptist churches have women been ordained thus far.

NCRC is yet to ordain any women, though as mentioned above, Beilieu's ordination was accepted as valid. There is a proposal for the ordination of Wapangla Ao, which is yet to be finalised.<sup>193</sup> The position of a pastor also eludes NCRC women. Though they are widely acknowledged for their role in prayer and prophetic ministry, top leadership in the local churches (pastor) and association have not been afforded to them.

In the Naga Catholic churches women far precede their male counterparts with regard to entering religious life. As noted earlier (see section 4.2), the first Naga Catholic to enter religious life was Aloysia Humtsoe, a woman, who joined the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians 1974. The first Naga men to enter religious life were Carlos Neisalhou and Abraham Mhonchan, who were ordained in 1989 as priests. So far no Naga woman has been appointed/ordained either as catechist or Priest. Rita Miasalhol, Superior of the Sisters of Charity, Dimapur, said during the interview that the lack of appointment to the position of catechist, in spite of the encouragement by the church, was because of the negative 'mentality' of the people: 'My own brother will oppose it,' she said.<sup>194</sup> On the other hand, women are not ordained as Priest in the Naga Catholic churches following the Papal directive against women's ordination.<sup>195</sup>

In the AG churches in Nagaland a special credential called 'Bible Women's Certificate' is given to recognized women who besides others 'have proven themselves in actual Gospel service.'<sup>196</sup> This however does not mean ordination. Women's

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<sup>192</sup> Minutes of NBCC Executive Committee Meeting', Kohima, 23-24 October 2001, 7.

<sup>193</sup> Interview of Sanchu.

<sup>194</sup> Interview of Miasalhol.

<sup>195</sup> In the ecclesiastical letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (Priestly Ordination), issued on 22 May 1994, Pope John Paul II declared 'that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.' John Paul II, 'Ordinatio Sacerdotalis' [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1994/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_19940522\\_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html) (Accessed on 7 August 2018).

<sup>196</sup> *Assemblies of God of East India: The Constitution and By-Laws*, 38.



involvement in the church is encouraged, including in preaching,<sup>197</sup> but certain leadership positions, like pastor or Superintendent, have not been afforded to them. In the other Pentecostal church in Nagaland, the TPM, the ‘sisters’ do not go beyond their position of assisting the pastor, unlike their male counterparts, who go on to become pastors.

Thus, since the 1990s, certain recognitions were being given to women in the Naga churches. Given the key role they played in the mission of the church and the emergence of well-qualified theological graduates among Naga women it was inevitable. However, there are still resistance and reservation in this matter: among the Baptists, the debate still divides opinions; the NCRC is yet to ordain any (though it recognised Beilieu’s ordination); among the Catholics certain positions are out of reach for women in its universal format; for the TPM and AG churches giving women certain leadership positions in the church is not even taken into consideration. Thus, in the Naga context, the glass ceiling still remains for upward mobility of women on the leadership ladder. Though limited success has been achieved with the ordination of some Naga women, the cultural attitude of not giving leadership position to *tetsur tanur* remained a hindrance in the effort towards encouraging women leadership in the Naga churches and society.

The debate on women leadership in the Naga churches is illustrative of the difficulty of bringing about a consensus in the cultural milieu of a segmentary society. Churches even within a single denomination could not agree on a solution. The customs and traditions of the various tribes often have a stronger influence over the churches than the direction of the state level leadership like the NBCC or the NCRC.

### **5.6. Social concerns, morality<sup>198</sup> and the mission of the church**

Evangelistic efforts were made both within the state as well as beyond. Within the state, it was during this period that Naga churches started reaching out to the migrant

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<sup>197</sup> Interview of Moses Murry.

<sup>198</sup> Morality can be defined as certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group such as a religion. ‘Morality’ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/morality-definition/>

community for evangelistic purposes (see section 5.2). Many cross-cultural mission initiatives were also initiated especially by the mission agencies and churches of the Baptist and NCRC (see section 5.2). As in the previous period, Naga churches continued to engage in peace talks, education, health care and economic development. In addition, they also began to play a proactive role in social reformation, working together with other civil societies to fight social evils like alcoholism, addiction and corruption.

Nagaland had maintained a higher literacy rate than the national literacy rate of India during 1991 to 2011:

	1991	2001	2011
Nagaland	61.7	66.6	79.6
India	52.2	64.8	74.0

**Table 8: Literacy rate of Nagaland and India, 1991-2011<sup>199</sup>**

A key contributor to this was the church schools. As of 2017, out of the 716 schools in Nagaland, 422 were private schools.<sup>200</sup> Of this, at least 286 were run by churches.<sup>201</sup> Even in college level education, church run colleges like St Joseph’s college, Jakhama, Salesian College, Dimapur and Patkai Christian College, Dimapur are some of the preferred educational institutions in the state. Since 2010, the NBCC with other Baptist churches in north-east India is also in the process of developing a University, North East Christian University, to be established at Dimapur.<sup>202</sup> Individual Christians also run educational institutions, which were often considered by the proprietor as Christian ‘ministry’. R

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(Accessed on 13 April 2019). In this section, the word is used in relation to the effort of the churches in Nagaland to advocate certain codes of conduct towards effecting reformatory changes in the society.

<sup>199</sup> ‘State of Literacy’ <https://www.educationforallinindia.com/chapter6-state-of-literacy-2011-census.pdf> (accessed on 24 January 2017).

<sup>200</sup> As of 2010, the number of Government schools in Nagaland was 294; and the number of Private schools was 422. ‘Schools 2017’ [http://www.nbsenagaland.com/documents/List%20of%20schools\\_2010/SCHOOL2017.pdf](http://www.nbsenagaland.com/documents/List%20of%20schools_2010/SCHOOL2017.pdf) (Accessed on 12 June 2017).

<sup>201</sup> The Kohima Diocese website listed 171 Catholic schools (22 Higher Secondary schools, 86 Higher Schools and Primary Schools and 63 Elementary Schools). ‘Institutions’ <http://www.kohimadiocese.org/about.html#> (Accessed on 12 June 2017). The NBCC Jubilee Souvenir (2012) noted that there were 115 schools ran by Baptist Associations and churches. NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 43.

<sup>202</sup> NBCC got the approval for NECU from the Nagaland state Government in 2011. ‘NBCC Executive Committee Meeting,’ Kohima, 27-28 October 2011, 4.

Longri Jamir, who runs the Little Garden School at Tuli in north-western Nagaland, considers the school as a Christian mission endeavour. Thus, in the school, daily devotional service is conducted, whereby the Bible is read and exposition of it is given. Occasionally, evangelistic camps are organised for the students. Financial concessions are also given to children of pastors and missionaries.

The failure to give quality education in the government schools further adds to the importance of church and private run schools in the state. Corrupt practices in the form of backdoor and bogus appointment of teachers were practised rampantly, resulting in poor quality of education in the government schools. As noted above, during 2005-2015, 32 per cent of appointments in the education department of the state government were backdoor appointees. Absenteeism of teachers in schools is another issue. Frequently, government teachers posted in rural areas appoint 'proxy' teachers to teach in the schools on their behalf.<sup>203</sup> These substitutes mostly do not have the required qualifications to teach. All these mean that the government schools remain poorly maintained. In the 2017 High School Leaving Certificate examination in Nagaland, 30 government schools produced a nil result. The percentage pass of 42.6 per cent for the government schools was less than half of that of private schools with 86.74 per cent.<sup>204</sup> In the light of this, private schools, including the church-run schools, provide the best quality education in Nagaland.

The involvement of the Naga churches in the field of health care has been hindered by the directive given by the state Government of Nagaland through 'The Nagaland

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<sup>203</sup> For instance, as of 2016, the Government Primary School at Keviphe Village under Kohima district was running with a single substitute teacher. In Kijumetouma village, the villagers were still waiting for the replacement of a teacher who was transferred from the village Government Middle School about twenty years ago. 'Nagaland: Quality education in govt schools remain elusive' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 31 August 2016).

<sup>204</sup> 'Nagaland Govt School results: Outcome of Apathy' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 10 May 2017).

Health Care Establishment Act, 1997' that 'voluntary organizations' will not be allowed to run 'nursing homes' and 'clinics' if,

(c) such Nursing Homes, Clinics are not or will not be under the charge of a Medical practitioner resident there in round the clock;

(d) such Nursing Homes, Clinics do not employ registered nursing personnel to receive, admit and provide nursing care to such patients admitted to render health care.<sup>205</sup>

The result was that many health care centres, especially run by medical mission sisters, had to be closed down. The government initiative was to standardize the quality of medical facility in the state. Nevertheless, it deprived the society of an eager work force of 'sisters' whose services were crucial especially in rural areas where there was no proper medical facility. In what could be considered as an innovative response, the Sisters of Charity based in the Holy Redeemer Hospital, Chumukedima, are running short-term training programmes to train girls from rural areas in basic medical knowledge. Rita Miasalhol, the Mother Superior of the centre, expressed her hope that these girls would 'fill the gap' created by the government directive.<sup>206</sup>

While the running of conventional dispensaries and hospitals had been hindered, Naga churches have made a significant contribution towards the rehabilitation of individuals from addiction, prostitution and HIV-AIDS problems.

According to a survey conducted in 2009, there were an estimated 40,000 drug addicts in Nagaland.<sup>207</sup> The Kripa Foundation established the first drug rehabilitation centre in Nagaland when it established a centre at Kohima in 1989.<sup>208</sup> Though founded by a Catholic Priest, Joe H Pereira, in Mumbai in 1981,<sup>209</sup> the foundation is an independent NGO and does not fall under the official diocesan jurisdiction. The official

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<sup>205</sup> No. 8, (ii), (c) and (d). 'The Nagaland Health Care Establishment Act, 1997.'

<sup>206</sup> Interview of Miasalhol.

<sup>207</sup> The survey was conducted by Bethesda Youth Welfare Centre, Dimapur. 'Nagaland tops drugs abuse in India' *Sinlung News* <http://www.sinlung.com/2011/06/nagaland-tops-drugs-abuse-in-india.html> (Accessed on 3 July 2017).

<sup>208</sup> Interview of Karinthayil.

<sup>209</sup> 'About us' <http://www.kripafoundation.org/> (Accessed on 06 July 2017).

church, however, was not far behind. The aforementioned DAN established the Shalom Rehabilitation Centre at Chumukedima in 1993.<sup>210</sup>

According to a local newspaper report in 2013, there were an estimated 4,000 sex-workers in Dimapur alone.<sup>211</sup> In the area of rehabilitation of prostitutes, the *Miqlat* project of the NBCCWD was a pioneering venture. It was started on 30 August 2004 at Dimapur.<sup>212</sup> It works as a 'rescue ministry' for women involved in 'sex trade', 'domestic/sexual abuse' and 'advocates strongly on issues related to Trafficking'. Its program includes counselling, medical care and teaching handicraft skills to help the 'rescued' women towards 'quality holistic healing, community reintegration and social entrepreneurship.'<sup>213</sup>

A related issue is HIV and AIDS, which is quite prevalent among drug users and sex workers. According to the Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS) data of 2014-15, Nagaland has the highest HIV and AIDS general prevalent rate in India with 1.20 per cent.<sup>214</sup> The Naga churches have collaborated closely with government agencies like NSACS to create awareness through seminars and distribution of educative literature.<sup>215</sup> The NBCC (through the NDO) has also established a Positive Living Centre at Dimapur to give medical and psychological help to people living with HIV and AIDS.<sup>216</sup>

The church's involvement in developmental work had also grown over the years. A key development in this area was the formation of the Nagaland Development Outreach

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<sup>210</sup> Interview of Karinthayil. Karinthayil is the Founder Director of the Shalom Rehabilitation Centre.

<sup>211</sup> 'Rising number of sex workers in Dimapur' *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur, 29 July 2013).

<sup>212</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 33; 'Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting', Kohima, 29-30 October 2003, 3.

<sup>213</sup> 'NBCCWD Miglat Ministry' (Brochure).

<sup>214</sup> 'About NSACS' <http://nsacs.nagaland.gov.in/> (Accessed on 19 June 2017); 'Nagaland HIV status: Prevalence highest among 25-34 year olds' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 28 October 2016).

<sup>215</sup> In 2007, the NDO published a document 'NBCC's Declaration of Commitment to Life for a Church Living with HIV and AIDS.' 'Meeting Minutes of NBCC AGM', Yanthamo Village, 2-4 February 2007, 2. It was translated into twelve of the Naga dialects. 'NBCC Minutes and Actions of the Executive Committee', Kiusor Village, 1 February 2008, 2.

<sup>216</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 47.

(NDO) by the NBCC in 1999.<sup>217</sup> This was a similar venture to that of DAN of the Naga Catholic church (see section 4.6). These development agencies initiated financial sustainability programs like micro-credit financing and Self Help Group. They work in collaboration with other government agents like the State Bank of India and NGOs like the Danish Mission Council Development Department, Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA),<sup>218</sup> North East India Committee on Relief and Development (NEICORD),<sup>219</sup> World Vision of India and Indo German Social Service (IGSS).<sup>220</sup>

An area where the Naga churches began to assert themselves in the society during this period was in the area of moral reform. In this area, the first and the most prominent initiative of the Naga churches thus far was the temperance movement against alcoholism, which had its beginning much earlier, but culminated in 1990. By the 1980s, alcoholism was a chronic issue in Naga society. In this context the church felt a sense of moral responsibility: First, because a majority of the populace were now members of the churches, and therefore, the churches felt responsible to address the issues they faced. Second, the 1970s revival created a sense of spiritual urge towards moral advocacy among the churches affected by it.

The 'revived' churches, the Baptists and NCRCs, took much exception against the ill-effects of alcoholism. They felt that it was their moral responsibility to rid the society of alcohol. The temperance initiative in Nagaland was not altogether new. It was in fact a continuation of the initiative of the American Baptist missionaries. But what was new was that earlier it was an internal affair within the church; but now, the church was calling for prohibition in the entire society. The NBCC spearheaded this movement though

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<sup>217</sup> The decision to establish the NDO was made at the NBCC Executive Committee meeting from 14-15 October 1998. NBCC NBCE-46/98, Bade, 14-15 October 1998. The following year, in 1999, it came to fruition. NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 45.

<sup>218</sup> CASA is a social action initiative of National Christian Council of India.

<sup>219</sup> An evangelical interdenominational social action organization.

<sup>220</sup> NBCC, *One New Humanity*, 45, 48.

members of other churches also were involved. As early as 1962, they had appealed to the Governor to abolish 'sale and use of liquor in Nagaland'.<sup>221</sup> In 1966 a similar appeal was made, this time to the state legislature.<sup>222</sup>

The spiritual vigour created by the 1970s Revival provided further impetus to the movement. Part of the act of repentance during the revival was to get rid of habits like alcoholism. The Naga Baptist women, who played a key role in the revival movement spearheaded the temperance movement in the 1980s. Intense agitation and effort towards liquor prohibition began in 1984 with the formation of an 'Action Committee' by the Naga Baptist women association (NBCCWD). Of the work of NBCCWD, Easterine Iralu noted:

Posters and pamphlets were printed on evil effects of liquor and distributed for education of people. Women secretaries toured all over Nagaland, meeting Government authorities, Town Committee members, leaders and women groups and to educate and mobilize people for liquor prohibition movements. Processions were conducted in all Towns in Nagaland by women groups with the help of Church leaders and student unions and memoranda were submitted to Deputy Commissioners to declare dry district.<sup>223</sup>

The initiative by the Naga Baptist women resulted in a mass movement all over Nagaland. However, the ultimate push came from the NBCC in 1990. On 15 March, when the State Assembly was in session, the NBCC launched a fast unto death stand demanding the State Assembly to legislate an Act of Liquor Prohibition.<sup>224</sup> Church leaders led by Executive Secretaries gathered at Kohima to participate in the fast. The members of the State Assembly were caught in a tight spot from where they could not wriggle out. Thus, the State Legislative Assembly was pressured to pass the 'Nagaland Total Liquor Prohibition Act, 1989' on 29 March 1990, which stated: 'To totally prohibit possession, sale,

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<sup>221</sup> In its meeting on 5 February 1962 at Mokokchung, NBCC passed the following resolution: 'Voted: to resolve that we appreciate the effort being made by Government of India to lessen the use of Liquor in India and some states already going dry, and that since Independence the use of Liquor has been on the increase which alarms the Naga people, we appeal to the Governor of Nagaland to do all in his power to abolish immediately the sale and use of liquor in Nagaland and divert the fund of the Political rum to some other welfare project.' NBCC ANBC-62/78, Mokokchung, February 5, 1962.

<sup>222</sup> NBCC ANBC-66/166, Kohima, October 11-13, 1966.

<sup>223</sup> Easterine Iralu, Arenla Longchar and K Kapfo (eds), *A Brief History of NBCC Women Department* (Kohima: NBCCWD, 1994), 27.

<sup>224</sup> NBCC NBCE-106/89, Kohima, March 6-7, 1989.

consumption and manufacture of liquor in and of import and export thereof in the State of Nagaland.<sup>225</sup>

Since the 1990s civil societies also began to play an active role in the Naga society. The Naga Hoho, Naga Mothers' Association and Naga Students' Federation were at the forefront, which as apex Naga organizations engaged in all kinds of social concern activity. Other civil societies like the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) and Against Corruption and Unabated Taxation (ACAUT)<sup>226</sup> engaged in specific matters. With the emergence of these civil societies, the church was no longer the sole campaigner against social and economic corruption in the Naga society. Partnership with these civil societies became an important aspect of the church's engagement in society.

One of the key occasions for corruption in Nagaland was taxation. Each nationalist faction maintained its existence mainly through taxation of the general public. Taxation was also imposed on government offices and contractors, thus obstructing development from reaching its intended target. Even the church was taxed. The minutes of the NBCC Executive Committee meeting of 30-31 May 1995 read: 'The Executive Committee discussed with concern the present trend and the problems and pressures that churches are facing especially in the area of monetary demands made by individuals and groups which has [sic] no connection with the Christian ministry.'<sup>227</sup> Similarly the minutes of 21-24 January 1999 read: 'members also shared serious concern over the continued collections (extortion) taking place in different places in name of different groups, including the church and its workers.'<sup>228</sup> Again the minutes of 29 January 2004 read:

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<sup>225</sup> The Bill received the assent of the Governor of Nagaland on 13 April 1990. 'The Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1989.'

<sup>226</sup> The original name was Action Committee Against Unabated Taxation, thus the acronym ACAUT. Later a slight change was made in the name, but the acronym remains the same.

<sup>227</sup> 'Minutes and Actions of NBCC Executive Committee Meeting', Kohima, 30-31 May, 1995, 7.

<sup>228</sup> 'Minutes and Actions of NBCC Executive Committee Meeting', Kohima, 21-24 January 1999, 2.



‘There was report that the national workers sometime demand tax from the Church’s establishments.’<sup>229</sup> Thus taxation was a serious issue that affected both the church and the society.

In recent years the ACAUT has emerged as the flag carrier for the fight against taxation in Nagaland. It was formed as a people’s movement at a public rally against taxation organised by the Dimapur Naga Council on 27 May 2013 at Dimapur, the commercial hub of Nagaland. It actively pursued to expose incidents of ‘taxation’ and its ill-effect on the general public. Besides, it also sought to expose corruptions in the state government.<sup>230</sup> Its proponents used Christian rhetoric to establish its rationale. S Temjen, an ACAUT activist, writing in the local daily wrote that ACAUT upholds ‘Christian principles such as honesty, truth and morality in public office and life.’<sup>231</sup> ACAUT has also worked closely with churches from its very inception. Thus, a partnership between the church and the civil society has developed in their common stand against corruption in the society.

Election in Nagaland is a mockery of democratic procedure. An article by Vikheho in the local daily, *Nagaland Post*, noted: ‘Elections have become a futile and meaningless exercise, as election results are predetermined by manipulative methods through party voting,<sup>232</sup> booth capturing and exploitation of the poor ignorant by creating [a] culture of putting a price tag on their vote.’<sup>233</sup> The situation is made worse by the involvement of the nationalist groups, whose support the candidates use to intimidate their opponents.<sup>234</sup> While the politicians are guilty of bribing the voters, the public are equally guilty of

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<sup>229</sup> ‘NBCC Executive Committee Meeting’, Tuensang, 29 January 2004, 4.

<sup>230</sup> The ACAUT website (<http://acaaut.org/press.html>) posts reports on incident of corruption with documentary evidences.

<sup>231</sup> S Temjen, ‘What is true and untrue of ACAUT Nagaland?’ *Morung Express* (26 April 2017).

<sup>232</sup> Refers to the practice of voting based on the loyalty to a certain party rather than the quality of the candidate.

<sup>233</sup> Vikheho Swu, ‘Naga People’s Experience with electoral and Party politics’ *Nagaland Post* (23 August 2000).

<sup>234</sup> ‘NBCC Executive Committee Meeting’, Longleng, 17-18 January 2013, 2.

selling their vote for a price. The money game played out during the election also triggers more corruption. During the election the candidates distribute huge sums of money. So once they are elected, they pocket the public funds not only to recover what they have already invested, but also to prepare for distribution in the next election. The vicious cycle goes on and on.

In the fight against corrupt practices during elections, the church remains the key player. As noted in the previous chapter, the NBCC has been speaking out against the use of unfair means in elections since the 1970s (see section 4.6). Speaking in a State level seminar on Clean Election, the NBCC General Secretary, Zelhou Keyho, said that the Clean Election Campaign is a ‘prophetic’ stand against ‘evil and corrupt practices so that holiness is not only talk in the church but lived in the public square in spirit and in deeds.’<sup>235</sup> Since the 2003 election it has become a collective effort of the various Naga churches through the platform provided by the NJCF, an ecumenical initiative formed in 2000 (see section 5.2). The NJCF and its constituents initiated rigorous ‘clean election’ campaigns through various activities including educating the general public on the matter, publishing guidelines in local papers and seeking political parties to commit to the cause. Reporting the work of the NJCF during the 2003 election, the minutes of a meeting of the NBCC Executive committee record:

The General Secretary also informed that the N[J]CF called a meeting of all the political party leaders of which only three parties could attend. After discussion and deliberation, the party representatives agreed to abide by certain points agreed upon.

Feeling the need for more action on the part of NBCC and the churches, the house decided to continue the education of the people on free and fair election. Associations will request their pastors to preach from the pulpit on free and fair election. NBCC will also give out press release on this subject matter.<sup>236</sup>

The result has not been encouraging. In the aftermath of the 2003 election, NBCC released a press release stating that the Council was ‘disappointed for ignoring its

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<sup>235</sup> ‘Clean Election Campaign is apolitical: NBCC’ *Morning Express* (Dimapur, 3 May 2017).

<sup>236</sup> ‘Executive Committee Meeting Minutes and Actions’ Kohima, 30-31 January 2003, 4. Another meeting minutes noted the following activities of the ‘Working Committee on Election’ of the NBCC: preparation of video on Election and publication of booklet, car stickers, sermon outlines, guidelines, banner, pledge card, etc. ‘NBCC Executive Committee Meeting’, Longleng, 17-18 January 2013, 2.

directives' by its constituent members.<sup>237</sup> Writing in the local daily, the *Morung Express*, Moa Jamir noted that in spite of the efforts by the church, 'Come election, the church often become hapless spectators as its flocks immerse themselves in money, booze and politics.'<sup>238</sup> The haplessness of the church is because it does not have the means to make a binding decision for its members, while the society is often dictated by powerful players like the village council, which has the traditional and constitutional authority (see section 2.1) to enforce its dictates over its constituents with binding force. During elections in Nagaland, often the village council decides for whom to vote and imposes its decision on the people under its jurisdiction. Objection of any kind, even the advocacy of freedom of choice, is considered as anti-social and subject to persecution. For example, on 19 December 2016, Khochiyi was assaulted by the Phek Village Youth Organization for promoting NBCC's Clean Election Campaign at Phek. The action of the youth organization of the village was in line with the imposition of the decision of the village council to support a particular candidate in the election. He was thus 'punished' for going against the 'resolution of the village council.'<sup>239</sup> The church, on the other hand, do not possess such 'tangible authority' to impose its dictates.

Over the years, Naga churches have been proactive in addressing social and economic challenges in the society. Since the 1990s, with the emergence of conscientious civil societies Naga churches no longer found themselves as the sole player in this area of engagement with the society. In the light of this, they realized that it is a good thing to partner with these civil societies as they also bring something (money, expertise and others) to the table, which is good for the common fight against social evils. Thus,

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<sup>237</sup> 'NBCC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes,' Kohima, 29-30 May 2003.

<sup>238</sup> Moa Jamir, 'NBCC clean election "bugle"' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 24 July 2016).

<sup>239</sup> 'Youth beaten up for purportedly supporting NBCC clean election' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 23 December 2016).

partnership with like-minded civil societies became an important part of the mission of the church in the society.

As in the previous period, mission emphasis differs among the various Christian denominations. Evangelism continued to be emphasized among the Naga churches: the evangelistic work during this period was mainly cross-cultural mission outside the state, though cases of individuals moving from one denomination to another is also considered a result of 'evangelistic' work (often referred to as a case of 'sheep stealing', it has been a source of antagonism among the churches). All the churches, except TPM, were involved in providing education through opening schools and colleges. The churches' involvement in health care suffered a hiccup due to the State Government's medical policy; nevertheless, they (specifically the Baptists and the Catholics) continue to contribute significantly in educating and providing resources for the rehabilitation of HIV patients, drug addicts and prostitutes. As in the previous period, the Catholic and Baptist churches were also engaged in developmental work in the light of the poor economic conditions in the region. Though the Baptist church continues to be more proactive than the others in being involved in the political process in Nagaland, through initiatives of NJCF and FNR, other churches in Nagaland have for the first time begun to be involved in the peace initiative in the region.

### **5.7. Conclusion**

With the signing of the ceasefire agreements between the GoI and the various Naga nationalist factions, a certain degree of calm prevailed in the Naga society. Nevertheless, internal divisiveness in relation to the political future of the Naga people, economy, gender and others caused much division and conflicts.

In spite of the peace negotiations, the political question of the Naga people in India remained unresolved. Furthermore, inter-tribal conflicts resulted in heated debate (even violence) on the very question of who constitute the Naga people. In the light of this

context, 'identity' and 'peace and reconciliation' emerged as the key areas of missional and theological concern in the Naga churches. Tribal Theology, theology of forgiveness and peace mission are examples of the churches' attempts to engage with the continuing political conflicts in the Naga society.

The sincerity of the churches towards social involvement has often been questioned in the Naga society. Writing in 1989, Aier called the Naga Christians of the time as 'Saints' who have failed to engage themselves in 'Christian service in the community.'<sup>240</sup> Similarly, Thepfulhouvi Solo (2014) wrote in the local daily: 'The Church in Nagaland today - by and large - seems to have become like a Corporate Body grown insensitive to reality, become self-serving, and lacking conscionable responsibility to the Faith.'<sup>241</sup> Thus, he questioned the churches' awareness of the 'reality' in Nagaland and the failure of the churches in taking responsible action. However, I have argued that there has been many initiatives taken by the churches towards engagement with social concerns in the society. Through the temperance movement, clean election campaign and other such initiatives, Naga churches showed their desire to engage in moral reformation, not only within their four walls, but also in the society at large. Besides, they continued to contribute in the areas of education, medical work and economic development.

As noted above, internal divisiveness was a key challenge faced by the Naga society during the period examined in this chapter. In such a context, the shared Christian faith often acted as the uniting factor. The FNR is an example of how a shared Christian faith was able to bring people of various tribes, factions, civil societies and denominations to work towards peace in the society (see section 5.3). The use of Christian rhetoric by civil societies like ACAUT is another example of attempts to use Christian faith to make appeal for a collective response. This, however, does not mean that churches in Nagaland

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<sup>240</sup> Aier, *A Cry from the Rice Fields*, 56.

<sup>241</sup> Thepfulhouvi Solo, 'Challenges to the Church in Nagaland' *Eastern Mirror* (March 19, 2014).

were totally immune to segmentation and divisiveness. As in the wider society, Naga churches also faced difficulties in coming to a consensus in making decisions (as in the discussion on women ordination) and in implementation of mission initiatives (as in the clean election campaign).

Overall, what has been observed is that Naga churches' engagement with the cultural environment of the society continued to effect changes in the churches. Many of these engagements were a continuation from the previous period, as in the case of the peace mission, education and medical work. Others, however, were new experiences, as in the case of systematic theological articulations, moral reforms and partnership with civil societies. All these were the responses of the Naga churches to the change the Naga society as a whole was undergoing. Moreover, through all these, Naga churches also underwent changes as they continue to realign themselves in the light of the changing context in the Naga society.

## Chapter Six

### Segmentation, unity, and a church divided

The twentieth-century rise of Naga nationalism led to the popularization of the imagination of a collective Naga nation. According to Anderson, all human communities ‘larger than primordial villages’ are ‘imagined communities’.<sup>1</sup> The imagination of nation-state in the modern period, he posited, was facilitated by various factors including ‘print-capitalism’ and development of vernacular language, which provided the necessary tools for people to imagine that they are part of a larger community, a nation.<sup>2</sup> In the Naga context, a combination of factors including British colonization, Christian mission work, education, and exposure to modern idea of nation-state during the World Wars influenced this development (see section 2.2). This idea of a collective Naga nation among the otherwise autonomous segments of the Naga society was founded in a common feeling of ‘otherness’ against the ‘other’ Indians (see section 3.4). Otherness is central to the imagination of a nation-state. Nations defined their self-distinctiveness, according to British historian, Anthony Smith, ‘vis-à-vis other national communities and their members.’<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Naga nationalism was rooted in the feeling of otherness the Naga people had against other people groups in India. In this, Christian faith came to be endorsed by Naga Christian nationalists as a key aspect of their uniqueness. Among other aspects, the fear of being assimilated into the majority Hindu (and Muslim) society was a key factor. This was explicitly expressed in the very first Naga political document, the memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission in 1929 by the Naga Club. The memorandum distinguished the Naga people from the Hindus and Muslims of the rest of India (see

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 39-48.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History, second edn* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 20.

sections 2.6 and 3.4). Here, for the first time Christianity was implicated in the Naga quest for political freedom. That this document was produced at a time when the majority of Naga were not Christians reflects the audacity and vision of Naga Christians of the time to imagine a Naga nation with Christianity as an integral part of it. Existing literature on the rise of Naga nationalism often overlooked this religious dimension in the rise of Naga nationalism. They usually attribute it to a realization of their ‘cultural uniqueness’ and a desire to safeguard it (see discussion on section 3.7).<sup>4</sup> However, I argue that in the twentieth-century imagination of the Naga nation, Christian appropriations were key.

It was through the initiative of the NNC after 1947 that Naga nationalism underwent transformation from the imagination of a few to a mass movement (see section 3.1). NNC leaders like Phizo, Imkongliba and others were all Christians. Under their leadership the nationalist movement was bracketed in Christian principles laying the foundation for the Christianization of the movement (see section 3.4). Thus, when Naga nationalism took its popular form, Christianity was seen as an integral part of it.

Since the 1970s, internal conflicts had tainted the collectiveness that was fostered among the Naga people by the nationalist movement, with factionalism among the nationalists causing much conflicts and bloodsheds. In this context, the shared Christian faith often proved to be the one unifying factor in the segmentary Naga society. Historically, until the coming of British colonialism and Christian mission, there was no united Naga existence. It was the colonizers and the missionaries who first began to consider the various Naga tribes as one people group. Naga people began to experience a sense of collective identity through the shared Christian faith and the rise of Naga nationalism. Nevertheless the strong feeling of otherness (tribalism) remained among the Naga tribes, which has led to a number of open conflicts in recent years. The political

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<sup>4</sup> See Singh, *Naga Polity*; Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement*.  
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unity fostered by nationalism was also broken with the emergence of various factions among the Naga nationalists (see section 4.1 and 5.1). In the light of this, the shared Christian faith attained greater significance in the Naga society. Amidst the divisiveness of factionalism and inter-tribal conflict, commitment to Christian faith was called upon to foster unity. NSCN's declaration of 'Nagaland for Christ' was an attempt to rally Naga people for the nationalist cause under a 'Christian' banner (see section 4.4). The formation and work of FNR was another, in which the shared Christian faith helped Naga people transcend the divisiveness of tribalism, factionalism and even denominationalism (see sections 5.3).

Thus, Christian faith provided Naga people a unifying tool. As discussed above, Christian faith was integral to the formation of collective Naga identity and nationalism. It has also invoked collective response to various issues in the Naga society as seen in the case of the FNR and ACAUT (see section 5.3 and 5.6). Rhetorics of Christian convictions (as in the case of FNR-initiated 'Covenant of Reconciliation' that it was 'deeply convicted by God's call in Christ'<sup>5</sup>) or basis (as in the case of ACAUT's claim of being based on 'Christian principles'<sup>6</sup>) of these initiatives resulted in largescale collective response in the Naga society.

Christian religion, therefore, filled a vacuum that was there in the Naga culture. This was unprecedented especially in the light of the minimal role played by traditional religion in unifying the Naga people. Traditional religion was so village-oriented it did not have the scope to encompass all the Naga tribes. Christianity, with its universal appeal, on the other hand, was able to transcend the various village, clan and tribal divisions. This became very significant in the context of the socio-political difficulties

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<sup>5</sup> This was part of the covenant of reconciliation signed by the various faction of Naga nationalist as a result of FNR's initiative.

<sup>6</sup> S Temjen, an ACAUT activists noted that the movement was based on 'Christian principles such as honesty, truth and morality in public office and life.' Temjen, 'What is true and untrue of ACAUT Nagaland?'

the Naga people had after 1947. Many found spiritual solace from their daily struggles in the Christian faith. This was especially so during the revivals. The Christian message of hope and assurance and the culturally appropriated worship practices during the revivals were sources of spiritual comfort for many in the Naga context, living as they were, in a conflict situation. Leadership given by Christian people in the society as mediators and peace makers also fostered the status of Christian faith in the Naga society.

The growing appreciation of the Christian faith in the Naga context in the light of Christian contributions noted above, in return, effected the growth of the churches in Nagaland. Christian conversion movement in Nagaland has been widely examined in the existing literature. Various reasons were being attributed for the growth of the Christian population in the region: mission strategies like the implementation of the three-self principle (Philip, 1976; Ao, 2000),<sup>7</sup> conduciveness of the Naga/tribal culture (Philip, 1976),<sup>8</sup> association of Christianity with progress (Elwin, 1957; Philip, 1976),<sup>9</sup> political condition (Linyu, 2004)<sup>10</sup> and revivals (Dozo, 1983; Longkumer, 1986).<sup>11</sup> While not negating these factors, I argue that cultural appropriation of Christian faith in the Naga context was a key factor for the growth of churches in Nagaland in the post-1947 period. Christianization of Naga nationalism, Christian leadership in the society and the inculcation of culturally-derived practices in the worship and spirituality of Naga churches facilitated the identification of the Christian faith as not just a foreign import, but a faith that addresses the various needs in the society, and one that expresses the spiritual vigour of the Naga people in their particular socio-political context.

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<sup>7</sup> Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*; Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Ao Naga*.

<sup>8</sup> Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*.

<sup>9</sup> Elwin, Verrier. *A Philosophy for NEFA*. Shillong: NEFA Administration, 1957; Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*.

<sup>10</sup> Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*.

<sup>11</sup> Dozo, *The Growth of the Baptist Church in Chakhesang Naga Tribe*; Longkumer, *Revival in Nagaland*.

Naga churches were also at the forefront of organised peace efforts in the strife-torn Naga society. In the first place, they attempted to foster peace negotiations between the government of India and the Naga nationalists. Second, they attempted to bring reconciliation between the various factions of the Naga nationalists. The Peace Mission, the Peace Council and the FNR were various avatars through which Naga churches contributed towards this effort. These experiences influenced the Naga churches in both their mission practice as well as in theological formulation. In terms of mission involvement, peace and reconciliation became a key mission focus of the Naga churches in the society. Theological articulation in the Naga context also came to be dominated by discussion on the theological basis of Christian peace initiative. Biblical themes like love and forgiveness in conflict resolution have been the emphasis of such theological articulations (see section 5.4).

As a unifying factor and as an agent of peace, Naga churches were countercultural agents in a segmentary society. However, the churches were also shaped by the prevailing tendency in the society towards segmentation.

First, segmentation influenced the structure and function of the churches. This is no less seen in the way churches were organised in Nagaland. Following the linguistic and geographical divide among the various Naga tribes, Naga Baptist and NCRC churches have formed church associations for each Naga tribe (for example, the Ao Baptist Church Association, the Sumi Naga Christian Revival Church). These associations are then affiliated to the whole Naga association of that denomination (NBCC and NCRC). The organization of the Naga AG churches is also influenced by the tribal division, though they name it in terms of region (AG Wokha sector, AG Kohima sector). The lay associations of the Catholic churches in Nagaland also follow the tribal delineation (Angami Catholic Associations, Kyong Catholic Associations).

Thus, apart from the denominational delineation, churches in Nagaland are further divided based on tribal associations. Relationship between these tribal church associations often reflects the inter-tribal rivalry, as has been discussed with regard to the wider society (see section 5.3). There is no open conflict as such, but there exists an undercurrent of competitiveness to stay ahead of the churches of the other Naga tribes. Speaking in a seminar on 'Role of Religion in promoting Inter-Tribe Harmony among Nagas' on 4 October 2016, Elias T Lotha, the President Catholic Association of Nagaland (CAN), noted: 'We have Church organizations of this tribe, that tribe but never a fellowship to believe and worship together without our tribe color. Consciously or otherwise, we are bracketing each other into tribe pockets and not as Christians.'<sup>12</sup> Thus, divisiveness and lack of collective focus have also found their way into the Naga churches.

The presence of unity among Naga churches as discussed earlier in this chapter, on the one hand, and the continuing presence of division among the churches, on the other hand, can be explained as the cultural influence of the segmentary society on the churches. In a segmentary society, there is a tension between the centre and the periphery. Speaking in political terms, Southall noted: 'There is centralised government, yet there are numerous peripheral foci of administration over which the centre exercises only a limited control.'<sup>13</sup> Both Naga society and churches exhibited such characteristics. State level organizations like Naga Hoho, NBCC or NCRC have limited control over its local constituents. For the Baptist and NCRC (since the latter has also adopted the Baptist form of church governance), this was partly due to the Baptist tradition of the autonomy of local churches. But in the Naga context, tribal division further adds another level to the organizational structure. Between the state level organizations (like NBCC and NCRC)

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<sup>12</sup> 'Promoting Inter-tribal harmony in Nagaland' *Morung Express* (Dimapur, 4 October 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Southall, *Alur Society*, 248.

and the local churches (of villages and towns), there are the church associations of the various Naga tribes. It is with these tribal church associations that the local churches are affiliated to. These tribal units form strong autonomous units with their own agenda.

In the Naga churches, many of the initiatives by the state level organizations are not implemented effectively at the grass root level. For instance, the campaign for clean elections has been going on for years. The NBCC and NJCF gave press releases and sent out directives to the local churches every election (see section 5.6). But in most cases, their effectiveness or lack of it, boils down to their implementation by the local pastors or churches in their own area (which often is not the case). Another example can be drawn from the discussion on women's ordination in the Naga churches. The NBCC, though supporting women's ordination, in the light of its inability to convince most of its constituents, resorted to keep it open for each of its units to decide on its own (see section 5.5). Only three tribal church associations, the Ao, Chang and Chakhesang followed the lead of NBCC. Thus segmentation in the churches and society has hampered the effectiveness of the working of the Naga churches. There is a gap between the association/diocese level and the grass root level.

Second, the segmentary social structure of the society has affected the mission of the churches in Nagaland. In a segmentary society, the commitment of the local segments is key to the effectiveness of the working of the segmentary society. Their vigour, noted Durkheim, 'is necessarily proportional to the intensity of this more local activity.'<sup>14</sup>

As in wider society, segmentation and disunity has often been the undoing of the mission of the Naga churches. Local focus of the constituent churches and tribal organizations plus denominational rivalry meant that collective effort was often hampered. Thus, though the shared Christian faith had been a uniting factor in the Naga

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<sup>14</sup> Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 174.

society, segmentation continued both within the society and the church hampering the mission of the Naga churches.

Existing literature often accused churches in Nagaland of a lack of mission engagement in the society (see section 5.7). Thus, the churches' involvement in dealing with socio-cultural issues in the society has been put in the dock. However, the findings of this research indicate that the Naga churches have actively engaged with the social, political and economic issues in the society. In the political process in Nagaland, Naga churches have engaged in initiating peace and reconciliation through the Peace Mission, FNR and other such initiatives (see section 3.4, 4.3, 5.3). They have engaged in ideological discussions in the region. The churches' assertiveness in their anti-Communist stand was a decisive factor (see section 4.4). Socially, the shared Christian faith had been a key unifying force among the Naga people (see section 5.3). Naga churches have also come to be considered as trusted players in economic development initiatives. Church-run organizations like the DAN and NDO are pioneer non-governmental organizations formed to work towards economic development in the Naga society (see section 4.6, 5.6). Naga churches have also engaged in moral discussions in the Naga society. Over the years churches have also been very vocal in their condemnation against corruption, unfair election, drugs and alcohol addictions and such other concerns (see sections 3.6, 4.6 and 5.6).

Thus in contrast to what has been stated in the existing literature, Naga churches have been engaged in various mission initiatives to deal with social concerns in the society. The question therefore is not necessarily on the lack of effort but on the lack of effectiveness. This research argues that the problem is a cultural one. Segmentation within the society and the church has hampered the effectiveness of the mission of the Naga churches, as disunity and local focus of the churches took precedence over collective

effort. Negotiating the dynamics of the segmentary Naga society is therefore paramount for effectiveness of the future mission of the churches in Nagaland.

Finally, theological discussion in the Naga churches has also been influenced by the social and political condition of the society. Segmentary society is defined in relation to its 'opposition to adjacent unrelated groups', on the one hand, and the 'oppositions between them[selves]', on the other hand.<sup>15</sup> Theological articulation in the Naga context reflects both aspects of these cultural characteristics.

A key discussion among Naga theologians over the year was the question of who the Naga people are in relation to 'other' Indians. Naga theologians like Dozo, Medom and others used a nationalist paradigm giving a biblical basis to assert the 'right' of the Naga people to be a separate nation from India. Naga theologians belonging to the school of Tribal Theology, on the other hand, attempted to reconcile their Naga identity with Indian identity by asserting that the Naga people, along with the other tribal communities in India, are the indigenous people of the country (see section 5.4). The focus of some of the most recent Naga theologians like Aier and Kevichusa was on the issue of internal divisiveness within the Naga society. As mentioned above they sought to bring about a biblical basis for the churches' engagement in peace and reconciliation in the society (see section 5.4).

Apart from these works of Naga theologians, this research has shown that many more theological formulations have taken place in the Naga context, and expressed in the form of slogans, songs and architecture. The earliest statements of political theology were in the form of slogans raised by the Naga Christian nationalists. The songs composed during the revivals represented the eschatological emphasis of the theological fervour of the time. Even church architecture modelled in the traditional Naga houses represented

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<sup>15</sup> Southall, *Alur Society*, 260.

the positive attitude towards traditional culture the Naga Christians had developed since the late 1980s. Studies on the development of Naga Christian theology usually begin with the emergence of Tribal Theology in the late 1980s.<sup>16</sup> However, I argue that while Tribal Theology was a formal effort by some Naga theologians (with other Tribal Theologians in India) to formulate what they perceived to be the theology of the tribal/Naga, many more theological formulations have taken place in the Naga context and expressed in popular slogans, songs and even architecture.

### **Conclusion**

This research has performed the dual function of, on the one hand, bridging the gap in the lack of in-depth research on the post-1947 period of church history in Nagaland, and on the other hand, attempting to decipher the distinct formation of churches in the context of segmentary Naga society.

Cultural influence in general, and the influence of the characteristics of segmentary Naga society in particular, have not been used to assess the history of Naga churches in the existing literature. I have pointed out in the literature review (see section 1.2) that existing literature on Naga churches either deal with how the Christian faith spread in Nagaland or how Christian mission and churches contributed to the Naga society through education, social reforms and others. However, no research has been done on how the culture of Naga society shaped the contours of the history of churches in Nagaland. This research is therefore different from the existing literature on Naga church history. It has shown that cultural characteristics of segmentary society like divisiveness and local focus of the constituents have shaped the contours of the history of Naga churches. Commitment to Christian faith has invoked much collective response and unity in the Naga context. However, segmentation has also effected the churches, leading to

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<sup>16</sup> See Keitzar. *Good News for Northeast India*; Bendangjungshi. *Confessing Christ in the Naga Context*. 238



divisiveness and local focus, which consequently has shaped the organization, mission and theology of the churches in Nagaland.

This research has also shown the importance of taking into account the ‘meanings and values’ expressed in the practices of the Christian people in writing the history of the church. Apart from the writings of the theologians, slogans, songs and architecture in Nagaland also represent the theology of the Naga Christian people. The ‘band party’ and shooting of spiritual gun reflect the engagement of Christian people with the conflict situation in the region. The Prayer Warriors, dancing and playing of traditional drums reflects the appropriation of Christian religion in the Naga culture, especially during and after the revivals. The practice of ‘majority decision’ and the resistance against women ordination reflect the influence of cultural value system on the Naga Christian people. Such ‘concern for values and symbols’, as Burke would state, has not been seen in the existing literature on Naga church history.

Understanding the nature of the churches in the global south has received much scholarly attention in recent years.<sup>17</sup> The stories of these churches, especially in Asia, are generally set in the context of Christianity being a minority religion within a largely non-Christian society. But the story of the Naga churches is one with a difference, being set in a predominantly Christian context. The ethnic status they assumed, the extent of the identification of the Christian faith with the local culture, and the scope of their mission as key stakeholders in the society, narrate a unique facet of Christian history in the global south.

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<sup>17</sup> Sebastian Kim, in his *The Future Shape of Christianity from an Asian Perspective* posited the need to understand the ‘identity and mission of the churches’ in the global south in the light of the demographic shift of centre of Christianity to the region. Kim, ‘The Future Shape of Christianity from an Asian Perspective,’ 69. In a similar vein, Katalima Tahaafe-Williams wrote in the forward to the second volume of the *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South* that ‘the significance of this expansion (of Christianity to the global south) still needs explaining: the impact of these changes on the nature and character of Christianity requires assessment and articulation. This is a task for scholars.’ Mark A. Lamport, *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South, Vol. 2* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), xvii.

The latter part of the twentieth century was a period of much optimism and hope in the global south with many new independent nations relishing the responsibility of building their own destiny. The same cannot be said of the Naga, who went through a time of much uncertainty and bloodshed, confusion and corruption, under-development and poverty. The churches' response to this shaped the contours of their history. The political crises in the region made the Naga churches give priority to conflict resolutions, comparatively much more than churches in societies without such issues. The social problem in Nagaland coupled with the dominance of the Christian population led the churches to be involved in bringing reformation to the whole society in a way not possible in places where Christians are a minority.

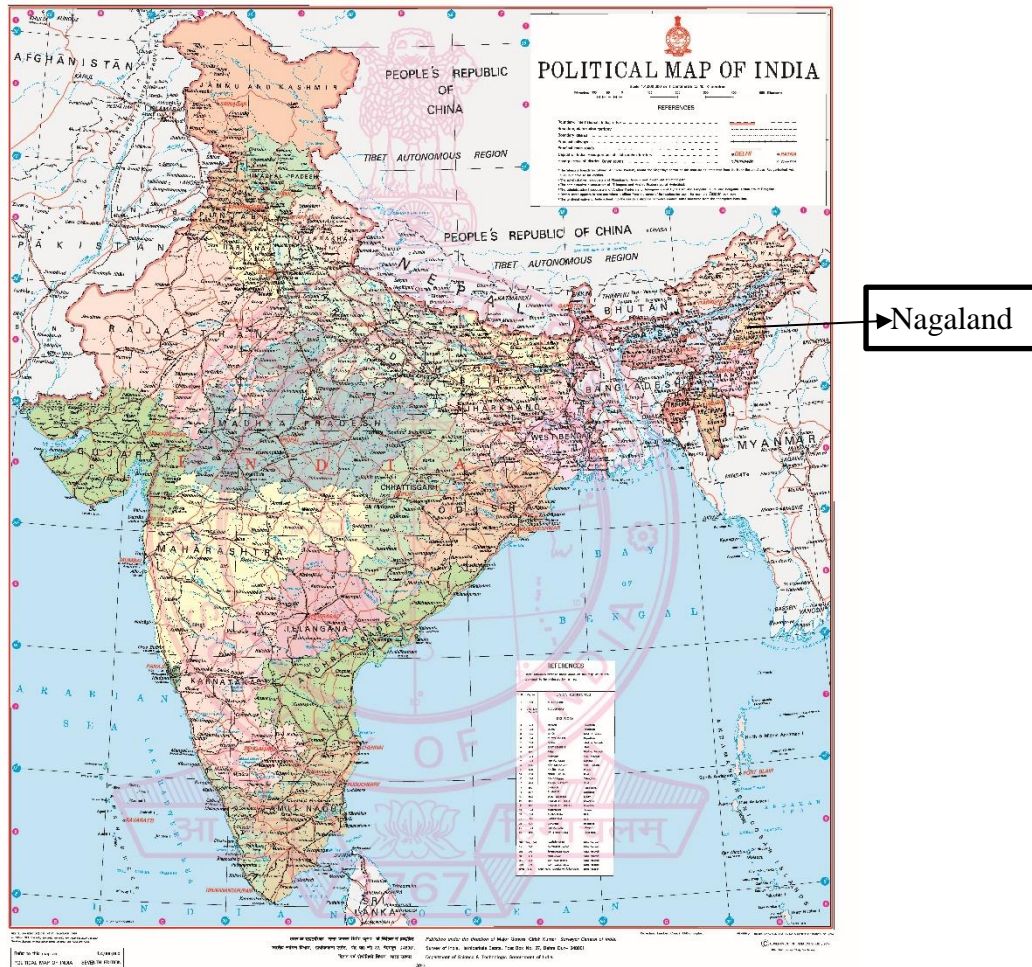
This research has shown the definitive role played by culture<sup>18</sup> in shaping the course of the history of the Naga churches. However, due to the limitation of space there were areas where this research has not expounded the relation between the cultural context and the church to its full extent. Therefore, going forward, there is need for in-depth study of the influence of Naga culture on individual Christian movements like revival, Christian NGOs, mission among Naga diaspora and theological writings.

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<sup>18</sup> Culture here refers to the ideas, values and customs that govern the way of life – political, social, economic and religious – of the people in a society. See, section 1.3.

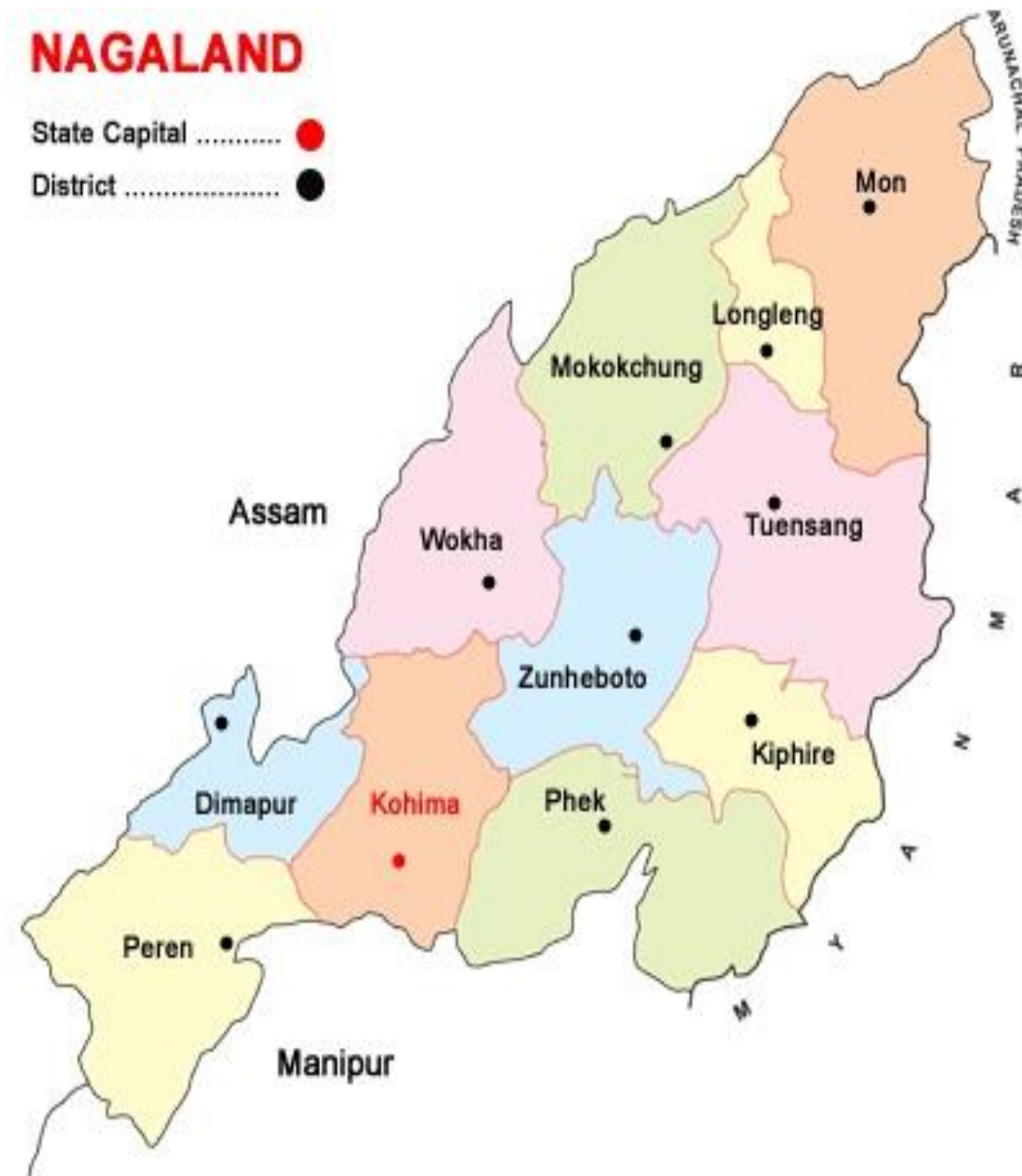
## APPENDICES

### Appendix One: Maps



Map 1: Nagaland in India<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Source: [http://www.surveyofindia.gov.in/files/POL\\_MAP\\_4M\\_ENG\\_WTR.jpg](http://www.surveyofindia.gov.in/files/POL_MAP_4M_ENG_WTR.jpg) (18 March 2019).



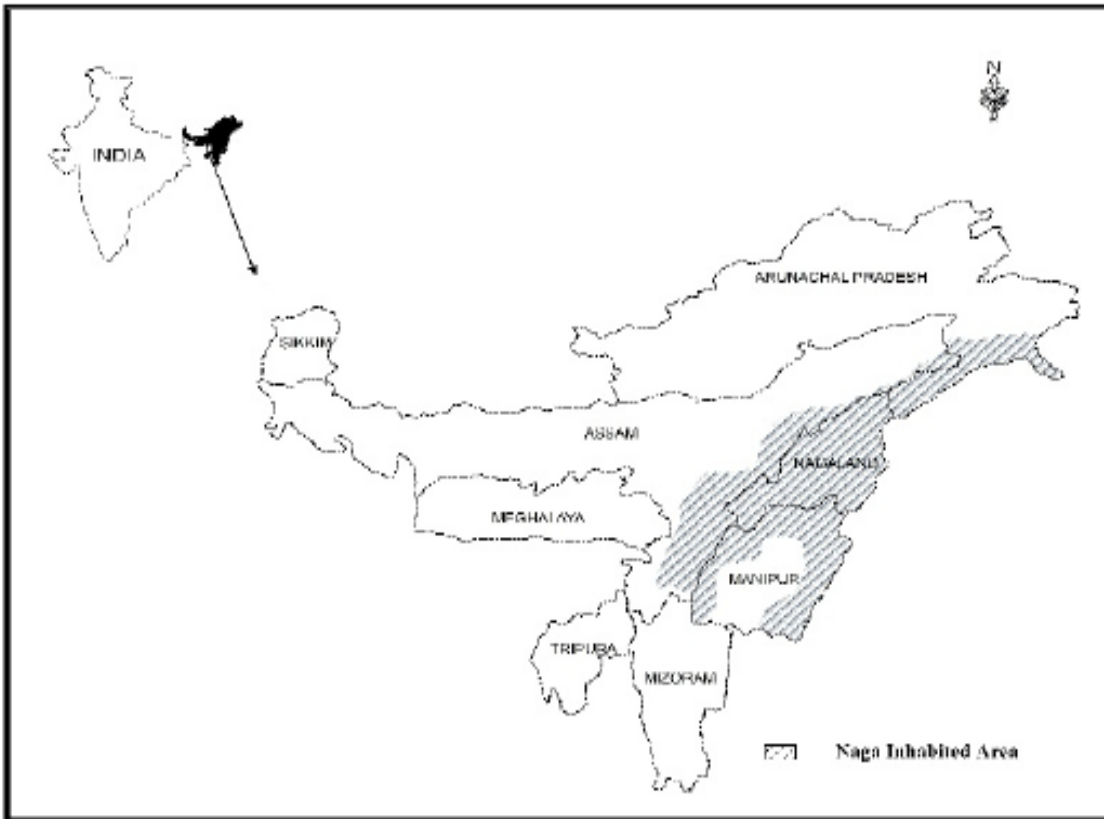
Map 2: Nagaland and its districts<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Source: <https://www.nagaland.gov.in/portal/portal/StatePortal/AboutNagaland/NagalandInfo> (12 November 2018).



Map 3: Naga Hills, 1896<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Source: James Johnstone, *My Experiences in Manipur and the Naga Hills* Page (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1896), 37.



Map 4: Naga Inhabited Areas, 'Nagalim', in reference to Nagaland, north-east India and India.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-showing-the-location-of-Naga-inhabited-areas-of-N-E-India\\_fig1\\_279973809](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-showing-the-location-of-Naga-inhabited-areas-of-N-E-India_fig1_279973809) (Accessed on 12 November 2018).  
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## Appendix Two: Naga Tribes

### 1. Naga tribes in India<sup>23</sup>

<b>Nagaland</b>	<b>Manipur</b>	<b>Arunachal</b>	<b>Assam</b>
1. Angami	1. Anal	1. Tangsa	Zeliangrong
2. Ao	2. Chiru	2. Wancho	
3. Chakhesang	3. Chothe	3. Nocte	
4. Chang	4. Kabui (Poumie)		
5. Chirr	5. Kacha Naga (Zeme and Liangmai)		
6. Khamniungan	6. Koirang		
7. Konyak	7. Lamgang		
8. Lotha (Kyong)	8. Mao		
9. Makhori	9. Maram		
10. Phom	10. Maring		
11. Rengma	11. Monsang		
12. Sangtam	12. Moyon		
13. Sema (Sumi)	13. Tangkhul		
14. Tikhir			
15. Yimchunger			
16. Zeliang			
17. Pochury			

### 2. Naga Tribes in Myanmar<sup>24</sup>

1. Anal
2. Konyak
3. Lamkang
4. Leinong
5. Makury
6. Moyon
7. Nokko (Khamniungan)
8. Para
9. Somra
10. Tangshang

<sup>23</sup> Source: *Census of India 1991*.

<sup>24</sup> Source: 'Naga in Myanmar' <http://www.nagasinmyanmar-burma.com/2012/01/naga-tribes-and-territory-of-nagas-in.html> (Accessed on 20 January 2019).

## **Appendix Three: Interview Guide**

### **Church, mission and spirituality**

How did the Naga churches make their decisions and formulate their policies? How much of them were influenced by the cultural practices of the land?

What were the mission initiatives of the churches in Nagaland? Why were they initiated?

Was it in response to any societal or ecclesiastical challenges?

How did the revivals occur? What were the practices introduced in the Naga churches during the revivals? How much of it was rooted in the indigenous culture?

What was the role of women in the Naga church? Why?

### **Church and society**

How did the Naga churches respond to the political, social and economic challenges in the Naga society?

Was the political movement in Nagaland religiously motivated? What was the role of Christian people in the movement? How did it influence the policies and practices of the churches in Nagaland?

What was the churches' view on ethnicity? How did they react to the perceived experiences of discrimination?

How did the economic condition of the members of the church affect the policies and practices of the churches in Nagaland?

How integral was the Christian faith and Christian people in shaping the ideologies and moral values in Nagaland?

Are the civil societies in Nagaland Christian movements?



### Appendix Three: Key Ecclesiastical Events in Nagaland

- 1839 On 7 January, American Baptist missionary, Miles Bronson became the first Christian missionary to enter Nagaland.
- 1847 On 12 September, Hubi became the first Naga to be baptised into Christian faith.
- 1872 In October, Assamese Evangelist, Godhula Rufus Brown, of the American Baptist Mission, visited the Naga village of Dekhahaimong (Molungkimung) laying the foundation for establishment of permanent Christian mission in Nagaland.
- 1876 On 2 March, American Baptist missionary, Edward Winter Clark settled in Nagaland.
- 1948 On 31 December, sisters, Margarita and Guadalupe, and their priest, Emmanuel Bars, became the first Catholic missionaries to enter Nagaland.
- 1951 On 1 May, Naga Catholics held their first religious service at Lakhuti.
- 1952 Rikum Ao's preaching resulted in the 1950s revival.
- 1955 On 8 January, RF DeLano, the last American Baptist missionary left Nagaland.
- 1962 In a conference of the revivalist held from 6-9 January, the Nagaland Christian Revival Church (NCRC) was formed.  
Those revivalist who prefer to be associated with TPM organised themselves into Naga Pentecostal churches.
- 1964 In a convention of the Naga Baptist churches at Wokha from 3 January to 2 February, the decision was made to form the Peace Mission.
- 1965 The first Prayer Centre, 'Chathe Prayer Centre' was established by Delievi on the Bank of Chathe River.
- 1972 On 13 February, the first Nagaland District Council of the Assemblies of God churches was held at Mungya village.
- 1974 On 8 December, Aloysia Humtsoe joined the missionary sisters of Mary Help of Christians to become the first Naga Catholic to enter religious order.
- 1976 On 8 May, the 1970s revival started at Anaki village.
- 1978 On 5 November, Beilieu Shuya was ordained during the World Mission Conference in Chennai becoming the first Naga woman to be ordained.
- 1980 On 29 June, the diocese of Kohima was created.
- 1989 On 17 December, Carlos Neisalhou and Abraham Mhonchan were ordained as the first Naga Catholic priests.
- 1992 On 31 May Noksangshila became the first woman to be ordained by Naga church.



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## Oral Sources

### Contributors

	Name	Date interviewed	Description
1	Odila	18 August 2014	Formerly an adherent of the traditional religion. She became Christian in the 1950s.
2	Takotosula	22 December 2014	Formerly an adherent of the traditional religion. She became Christian in the 1950s.
3	L Temjen Jamir	23 December 2015	An eyewitness-participant in the temperance movement of the Naga churches in the 1980s.
4	MI Luen	26 December 2015	Former Naga Nationalists. A key preacher of the 1970s Naga church revival.
5	Ezambemo Lotha	7 July 2016	Present pastor of the Baptist Church at Lakhuti, the village where the first Catholic church was established in Nagaland.
6	Sakutula	12 July 2016	An eyewitness-participant of both the 1950s and 1970s Naga church revivals. Also a first generation NCRC member.
7	Chenrochila	12 July 2016	An eyewitness-participant of both the 1950s and 1970s Naga church revivals. Also a first generation NCRC member.
8	Ayimneken	12 July 2016	The only surviving member from the 'seven' that confessed to have received the Holy Spirit in 1952 at Longkhum Baptist church. He is also an active member of NNC.
9	Tesang Jamir	12 July 2016	A first generation NCRC member. He was also the pastor of the NCRC church at Longkum, the village where the NCRC movement first started.
10	Daniel Yanthan	14 July 2016	A first generation Catholic church member at Lakhuti Catholic church.
11	Temsu Imchen	20 October 2016	Son of Rikum Ao, under whose influence the 1950s Naga church revival started.
12	Ashoka	21 October 2016	Pastor of The Pentecostal Church, Purana Bazaar, Dimapur. He is originally from Uttar Pradesh, central India.
13	Chacko Karinthayil	24 October 2016	Originally from Kerala, he had been a Diocesan priest in Nagaland since his ordination in 1979. Presently, he is the Rector of the Good Shepherd Seminary, the only Catholic seminary in Nagaland.
14	Phuveyi Dozo	24 October 2016	Former General Secretary of NBCC (1980-1988). A Participant of both the 1950s and 1970s Naga church revivals.
15	Kesa Sekhose	27 October 2016	His father, Sasiekuo Sekhose, established the first Pentecostal church in Nagaland.
16	Azo Sekhose	27 October 2016	A first generation TPM church member. Active leader among Pentecostal women in Nagaland.
17	Carlos Neisalhou	27 October 2016	One of the first two Naga Catholic priests. Presently he is the Vicar General at the Parish church at Kohima.
18	TR Angami	27 October 2016	A first generation AG church member. He is currently the pastor of the first AG church Kohima.
19	DL Sanchu	28 October, 2016	A Second generation NCRC member. He had been a missionary to Sikkim (1991-93) under the NCRC mission initiative. Present Executive Secretary of the NCRC (1995-present).
20	Imchayanger	2 November 2016	A first generation NCRC member. He is the present Mission Secretary of the NCRC.

21	O Alem	9 December 2016	A veteran Naga theologian and church leader. Former principal of the Clark Theological College, Alichen.
22	Beilieu Shuya	28 June 2017	A first generation NCRC member. She is also the first Naga woman to be ordained.
23	Philo Mylady	5 July 2017	The Superior of the Medical Mission Sisters (MMS) in Dimapur.
24	Rita Miasalhol	5 July 2017	The superior of the Sisters of Charity of Saints Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincensa Gerosa (SCCG, in short, Sisters of Charity), who manages the Holy Redeemer Health Centre at Chumukedima.
25	Moses Murry	5 July 2017	A second generation AG church member. He is the present General Superintendent of Assemblies of God East India (AGEI).
26	Yanren Humtsoe	11 July 2017	First chaplain of the Naga Christian Fellowship (NCF), shillong.
27	Lincy Francis	14 July 2017	The Superior of St Mary's Convent, Dimapur,
28	I Yanglu Imsong	20 January, 2018	An elderly Naga Baptist Clergy. He was also a preacher during the 1970s Naga church revival.
29	Longerkaba	20 January 2018	An elderly Naga (78 years) of Merangkong village.
30	Menuoselie	12 February 2018	The assistant pastor of Koinonia Baptist Church, Kohima.



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