

# ANCIENT AO NAGA RELIGION AND CULTURE



PANGER IMCHEN

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HAR-ANAND PUBLICATIONS



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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THE ANCIENT AO NAGA RELIGION AND CULTURE : A FOUNDATION TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY, written by tenur Panger Imchen is one of the latest books to his credit. By profession, Panger Imchen is a committed social worker, a trained theological student in Missiology. This book is a part of the exercise done by him for the award of his Degree in Master of Theology, now publishing in form of a book for the interest of many readers. This is one of the rare books written by a local scholar in such a field at a time when the position of the church is being challenged, and cultural disintegration is fast taking place due to various factors. In such a situation, this book gives a lot of remedial measures. Mr. Panger attempts to explain the essence of socio-cultural values in traditional Naga society and their possible application in contemporary Christian society. He wishes to preserve and refine the rich Naga cultural heritage, creating stronger foundations for Christianity.

This book is presented in five major chapters. In the first two chapters, he has systematically analysed the socio-cultural beliefs and practices in the traditional Ao Naga Society; followed by emergence of Christianity and its impact on Ao religion, culture and society. The last chapter reviews the whole exercise threadbare.

As a radical thinker, Mr Panger Imchen is very clear in his thoughts and in presentation of conceptual ideas; which he has brought in such a jargon free and lucid style. Whatever he writes is written with great force and precision; and from beginning to end, he always remains in complete control of his arguments. He has established a commanding position in the field about what he writes, though there may be certain limitations.

The Ao Naga society is changing very fast from tradition to modernity due to the fact that the American missionaries landed in Ao region first and established churches and schools there. This contributed towards rapid socio-cultural transformation. He has critically observed the process of change and its affect on religion, culture and society. As a young Naga scholar and an intellectual, he fails to believe in irrational thinking and action. In the process



of change, he is afraid of losing the Naga political identity as well as cultural identity and its values. To him, rejection of one's own culture, while accepting the gospel of Christ is highly lamentable, needing corrective measures. He has given many new thoughts in this direction of change.

As a student of Missiology, he has richly used the sociological and anthropological methods and interpretations making his exercise more interesting and revealing, based on empirical data. He has elaborately explained the ancient Ao Naga religion, cultural practices and beliefs in the context of Christianity and change. These can be used in the light of gospel by re-defining their concepts and usages in contemporary society, which are missing today. In his opinion, the church may pick up the advantages of rich cultural heritage of the Naga society while attempting to promote Christianity and welfare of the church, creating a strong Christian Foundation.

In spite of his ill-health, he never ceases to ponder towards the growth of church and society and their reformation in the light of the gospel. This book is one of his contributions, adding still more insights and challenges. It brings another welcome addition in the subjects of sociology, anthropology, religion, history, philosophy etc., for which the author of the book may be congratulated.

A. Lanunungsang Ao  
President  
Naga Scholars's Society



## ABBREVIATIONS

ABAM	:	Ao Baptist Arogo Mongdang, Ao Baptist Church Council.
ABTM	:	Ao Baptist Tetsür Mongdang, Ao Baptist Women's Conference.
C	:	Chungli
CRPF	:	Central Reserve Police Force
DB	:	Dobashe
FGN	:	Federal Government of Nagaland
GB	:	Gaon Bora
IOC	:	Indian Oil Company
IWGIA	:	International Work Group for Indigeneous Affairs
M	:	Mongsen
NSCN	:	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
NPC	:	Naga People's Convention
NPC	:	Nagaland Peace Council
NFA	:	Nagaland Federal Army
NC	:	Naga Club
NNC	:	Naga National Council
NEFA	:	North Eastern Frontier Agency
ONGC	:	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
PUFDR	:	People's Union for Democratic Rights
SRN	:	Sovereign Republic of Nagaland



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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Rationale

It is a hundred and sixteen years since the Gospel of Christ came to the Aos and, subsequently, to the rest of the Nagas. The occasion of Indian Independence was also the Naga Independence struggle. The days of political unrest, cultural and social transformation were also days of rapid church growth in terms of conversion from ancient religious and cultural practices. The numbers of those who came into the new faith in Christ was incredible. And all this resulted in tremendous missionary zeal among the Aos.

## 2. Motivation

When I joined the teaching staff of Clark Theological College in 1980, I developed a keen interest to examine the ancient Ao religious faith and cultural identity in the midst of rapid social, economic, religious, political, and cultural transformation. This interest was enlarged both in the classroom as well as by extensive and intensive field research, tours and observations. Then, having come across a few published documents on Aos written by early missionaries as well as the British rulers, I discovered that much of the truth had not been told. Rather, a distortion of the past of Ao society was found due to underestimating the not materially sophisticated Aos by contrast to Western technological advancement.

The ancients, who still hold on to the old culture and faith and those converts who still remember their past experience are retiring from life in a short while. On the other hand, it is felt that the essence of the pre-Christian religious and cultural phenomena have not yet been considered in the light of the Gospel and that they have, for the most part, been rejected as necessarily evil by the present generation.

As far as is known, no one has ever attempted to look critically at Ao culture with a view to evaluating it from a Christian standpoint.

Without compromising the Gospel of Christ with the old Ao religion, it is hoped that this attempt will enlighten modern Aos and outsiders to the fact that much of ancient Ao religion and



cultural values were not alien to the knowledge of the Truth and rather, were a hidden preparatory state of mind on which the Eternal Salvation of Christ was later to be declared.

### **3. Methodology**

The purpose of this project is not to give an exhaustive comparative study of Christianity and Ao religion and culture. It is not aimed at a detailed and systematic study of Ao religion and culture. Nor is it an attempt at reviving the pre-Christian religion of the Aos. The main attempt is to point out the hidden meanings of some of the major religious features and cultural moves of the ancient Aos and, more importantly, to show that the old Ao religious beliefs and background have been a foundation for the coming of the Gospel of Christ. There were many corresponding features that, logically, led to the new faith. Hence the focus is on unveiling the essence of ancient Ao faith and cultural values and the impact of the Gospel upon the Ao as the agent of change.

### **4. Objectives**

To demonstrate that the ancient Ao religion was not less than any other religion in general.

To point out that the ancient Ao religion and culture was a preparation towards the coming of the Gospel.

To show that not all Ao religious and cultural practices are good and therefore they do not correspond positively to the Gospel.

To make a distinction between the good and retainable cultural and religious practices and those evil practices that need not be revived.

In view of the recent cultural revival among the Aos, this book will attempt to give a warning, as well as recommendations, that some aspects of Ao tradition may be restored and that the good of the past culture can very well be restored to enrich the present day Ao life.

The final objective of this project is to state that the Gospel of Christ is the ultimate reality that has penetrated, changed and refined the old Ao way of life and is the answer to their quest for Salvation.

### **5. Strategies for data collection**

The following sources may be noted on which these discussions are based:

Hitherto no accurate written literature on this particular subject has been published by natives or foreigners.



There are a few references on this subject by British administrators as well as American missionaries but, unfortunately, these references are mostly oversimplifications and often contradictory.

A few unpublished papers, seminar papers and private research writings are considered as being a great source of information.

The bulk of the source material has been drawn from personal interviews and enquiries with village elders, native scholars, and the ancients themselves with whom the writer had many opportunities to talk, listen, observe and participate. This has been by far the most important source of information for this project.

Moreover the writer, being born and brought up in the semi-old semi-modern Ao society, has had the opportunity to visit many villages and talk to many elders without any linguistic barrier.

The writer had the privilege of using the libraries of the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore; Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, Assam; Clark Theological College, Aolijen, Nagaland; Art and Culture Institute, Kohima; State Library, Kohima; State Museum, Kohima; National Archives, Calcutta; District Library, Mokokchung; and Serampore College Library, West Bengal.

In Chapter One, a brief background of the land and the people of the Nagas and their ethnography with reference to the migrations of the Aos will be treated. The socio-political background and the struggle of Nagas for independence and freedom will be introduced. The aim is to give a brief socio-political background of the Nagas and their development in human history.

Chapter Two will elaborately deal with some of the major religious beliefs and practices with the aim of pointing out that they were preparatory to the coming of the Gospel. In this, the concept of God with various names and attributes; minor deities, spirits and their influences on ordinary life of an Ao will be discussed. Ceremonies and sacrifices of the Aos and their basic grounds for the new faith will be dealt with; their concept of life after death, the priesthood and their mediatory role between God and man, the importance of witchcraft, the tiger-man, and their corresponding meaning for the Gospel is considered. As well, the concept of the incarnation and its similarity to that in the Gospel stories is presented. This composes the most important section of this book.

In Chapter Three, some major cultural practices of ancient Ao society with special important stress given to the village-state



republic and its unique structure and practice of pure socialism is looked at. The ancient learning institution which was the centre of the social network in society will be discussed with a view to define it in terms of modern values. Customary laws that are still of great importance, ethics, marriage systems, music and art, literature, dance, poetry, the importance of log drums and its significant role in the lives of the Ao community, and the system of social organisation, civic rules and social works are discussed, to reveal the good elements that need preservation. The negative aspects that need to be rejected are also considered.

Chapter Four will bring about the coming of the Gospel to the Aos and to the Nagas, and its wonderful transforming work among these people, as the agent of change. In this section, a critical evaluation of the impact of Western culture and their interchanging conflicts involved are looked at followed by recommendations.

Then the final Chapter Five will present a review of preceding chapters with a critical analysis of the whole book with constructive findings and recommendations for future consideration and reflection.

### Definitions

The terms, Religion and Culture, have often been a discussion point among theistic and non-theistic scholars. The general rule of these discussions is that the two terms are intertwined, helping each other, within a given period of time. The Marxian definition of religion goes.

I came to seek the idea in the real itself. If the gods had before dwelt above the earth, they had now become its centre.<sup>1</sup>

Or in the language of both Feuerbach and Marx, "God is a projection of man ..." and, "Religion is the opiate of the people." Of definitions of religion and culture there is no end, ranging from Mathew Arnold's cold Victorian middle-class definition that, it consists of 'morality touched with emotion' to Schleiermacher's, absolute dependence, which would cover the mysticism of the most spiritually supersensitive of all religious faiths ancient or modern, written or orally transmitted. To Hegel religion meant worship, to Newman it meant authority and obedience, between the worshipper and the worshipped. Whereas to the Protestants, it has always meant a personal communion of the individual with the divine as separate entities. Scholars of ancient religions have emphasised other aspects. Max Mueller, who attempted to explain



the religions of the East to the Englishman of the Victorian age, saw religion as something which "lifted man above the realities of the material world."<sup>2</sup> Warde Fowler who was interested in the religion of Classical Greece and Rome, thought religion to be the "effective desire to be in right relation to the power manifesting itself in the universe." This idea has been expressed more elaborately by Sir James Frazer in his, *Golden Bough*, the greatest English contribution to ancient folklore, mythology and religion. Frazer says, "religion is a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to control the course of nature or human life."<sup>3</sup> There can be no doubt that fear of the unknown lies behind many forms of religion. This is evidently to be seen among the ancient people, whom some scholars term, Primitives. The tree whose leaves shiver in the wind, the river which flows incessantly, the mountains which erupt or around which the lightning plays are the first instance themselves regarded as gods. The thunder that sounds behind clouds and rain, and unusually shaped or large rocks, are believed to have been dwellings of the Unknown whose acts effect man's activities that are inexplicable otherwise. Otto, the German thinker, in his *Das Heilige, The Idea of the Holy*, explains, "the essence of religion is in the holy .... is the 'numinous', the awesome." It is, he says, a 'mystery' not fully explicable, a sacred secret which at once repels by its awesome holiness and attracts by its inherent magnitism.<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich uses the term, "ultimate" or more concretely, "absolute" by which a vedantin may be drawn to the idea of the absolute reality of Brahman.<sup>5</sup> Tylor also recognises the realm of spiritual beings and says that religion is "the belief of spiritual beings." He concentrated religion on a belief system rather than on the behavioural aspect of religion. He himself admits that mere belief in souls does not constitute religion. He maintains that transition from belief to action took place because early man recognised that the ghost-soul is superior to man. He further goes on to say that religion is individual action rather than social phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> All religions imply, one way or another, that human beings do not, and cannot, stand alone; that they are vitally related with and even dependent on powers in nature and society external to themselves. Clearly or otherwise they know that they are not independent centres of force capable of standing apart from the world. This realisation ranges from ancient mind concepts of dependence on powers and forces in the immediate social and cultural environment, to concepts in



the so-called high religions or advanced mind of a first cause of all things, a being personal or impersonal that has produced the universe and its motions. Whether it is the Aristotle's "first mover" or "prime mover", or the "unmoved mover" which is the first cause of the universe, or whether it is a mere psychosomatic nature of man's incapability against the process of history, both cases, as a general rule, relate man closely with a supernatural being above him. Jose Noss states, "most humans, from primitives in the jungles to members of societies for advanced in technology and intellectual relationships, do not think that humans are all that matters."<sup>7</sup>

He uses the term, primitive, only in quotation marks by saying there is the tendency to draw a line between 'primitive' and 'modern' where the former is understood as, less human, and the latter, more human on the basis of technological advancement. Bringing justification to the validity of ancient religions, John Noss goes on to say that, to realise all this is to have sympathy with primitive as well as with advanced religions. The former may say what they have to say mythically; or unscientifically, or unquestioning acceptance of some experience or of inherent tradition; but, their quest is not unlike that of religions in the larger or more inclusive culture.<sup>8</sup> For, although the world concepts, ideas and traditions may vary from time to time, and place to place, the eternal quest of man's inner feelings and revelation of the Eternal Being and Its relation to man remains the same. So, to pass judgement between 'modern man' and 'ancient man' in terms of, civilised and uncivilised, primitive, and scientific, implying the word 'primitive' as less civilized and devoid of the knowledge of the Truth is not justifiable. Therefore, in order to avoid misunderstandings, the term, ancient, will be preferred in this book. The term, ancient, carries both time and space and inherent practice of those ancient religions and cultures to this day among the people.

Religion and culture cannot be defined absolutely separate from each other. So also, in this book, when the first part is 'Ao Naga Religion and Culture' it is not possible to discuss in detail what Ao religion and culture are and what is the explanation. This research is not aimed at dealing with Ao culture as such; but, when religion is defined, it is understood as an integral part of culture. Culture is the most universal but most indefinite word that cannot be put under a section. Culture is the whole life-style of man in relation to his material and ideal worlds. It is an eternal process of man's inner



feelings, reflected outwardly and vice versa, ever-changing and influencing man's activities. The Lausanne Conference summarises culture as;

Culture is the patterned way in which people do things together accepted behavioral norm of a given time .... every activity of human life conditioned by his environmental ....including 'religious' one — God, spirit, etc., or 'secular' concept of reality as in Marxist society.<sup>9</sup>

Culture therefore, is understood in terms of the multiple meaning of the total response of man to life's existence and not a column of activity. Bruce Nicholls explains,

Culture is a 'design for living' which includes four things, namely; (1) World views and ideas such as religious phenomenon like the concept of God and creation, etc., (2) Value systems such as the concepts of Good and Evil, right and wrong, moral-ethical values, etc., (3) Society such as family, education, laws, social structures and institutions and (4) The Customs and Manners. Culture is in constant change in process of time.<sup>10</sup>

The French word for culture was used by scholars till the second half of the Nineteenth Century to cover only the Art of painting, music and philosophy. But since 1871, E B Taylor adopted the German word, *Kultur*, to include the total non-biologically transmitted heritage of man. Therefore, culture may now be interpreted as the whole human reaction to existence.

To underestimate the religion and culture of a people is to miss the proper understanding of that race. As in the case of every race, the religion of the Aos played an important role in socio-cultural and moral-ethical life of the ancient Aos amidst tremendous cultural and social changes.

The religion of the Nagas has been termed, Animism, by social scientists and scholars, without looking inside the essence and structure that composed and held together the ancient Naga society. Western writers have used it perhaps because Nagas do not dress like them. Ao Naga religion is characterised as animism, not only by outsiders, but also by the Nagas themselves. It is unfortunate to note this kind of approach as held by those who differentiate between Higher and Lower categories of religion,



attributing to the so-called higher the only ethical and reasonable way. Tylor holds that animism is almost devoid of an ethical element. And tribal religions are termed by many as, animism. There is no justification for holding the view that only so-called higher religions have ethical content. If tribal religions are animistic, then animism has strong ethical elements and, if it is held that animism is devoid of any ethical element, then tribal religion is not animism. Both literate and illiterate societies find elements of moral strength in their religion. Durkheim maintained that, in simple societies, codes of social behaviour are a necessary religious rule, the moral constraint of society and its religious systems were not the same.<sup>11</sup> This does not seem to have been accepted by writers who claim to have knowledge of Ao Naga religion and culture. For instance, A.W. Davis observed that the Nagas have practically no religion,<sup>12</sup> and J P Mills, who claimed to have looked into Ao Naga culture, observed the religion of the Aos has no elements of a moral code and that it is a mere system of ceremony.<sup>13</sup> This is unjustified. It is true that the Ao religion is the guiding principle of the moral, ethical, cultural and social life of its people in terms of an individual's immediate relation to society and a cohesive force for the whole community.

The Ao religion has been branded primitive or animistic but, what actually is primitive or animistic requires greater explanation. Religion is a matter of adherence to an accepted world view. A world view of a people is conceived in their own religion and vice versa. A world view incorporates ideas and values that form the basis of social structure. A negligible section of the Nagas continues to hold honestly to their ancient way of religion still, it is possible to look and discover what the ancient Ao religion is about. If gratitude is to be given to Western writers, it is also to be stated that their observations were usually fleeting and hearsay. It is an undisputed statement that there can be no religion as such, be it so-called higher or lower, that has no elements of animistic culture. If, at the moment, terms such as higher or lower religion are used—and the term, higher religion is for the Biblical religion—then there is no problem to bring in Ao religion as a higher one, for Old Testament religion, especially, is filled with the ideas and concepts of what can be called, animistic elements. If then the Ao religion is branded as animism, then so also is the Biblical religion, except for the fullest incarnation in Christ Jesus. Precisely if the Biblical religion is accepted as also having animistic elements, then



the ancient Ao religion is justified in also having animistic cults. They were not materially sophisticated in the modern sense, but the pre-technological world view which was categorised as primitive should not be the measuring rod to pass swift judgements. For the religion of ancient people is the prime factor of all modern religions. Therefore, it is most relevant to use the word, "primal" in order to fit ancient religions to be the foundations of well-organised religions. If the Gospel of Christ is the ultimate satisfaction of religions, as it is believed, then the ancient Ao religion is as devoid of a total way of salvation as any other religion before Christ. But the ancient Ao religion was not nonsense. It was a well-organised, doctrinated and reasonable religious system. The emotional feelings in the presence of the super-natural of these people is seen to be more religious than the theologies and confessions of organised religious adherence. The Aos had no texts, no written creed, doctrine, or worship services. Nevertheless, it has been carefully transmitted from generation to generation through tradition as a part of her culture. Ao religion cannot be categorised as not logical just because it had no written scriptures. Literature cannot be the measure of judgement of a people, its culture or its religion. Aos cannot think of an external world detached from religion. There is no separation between the secular and the sacred; every inch of the earth, space and time is filled with the presence of the unseen as observed by Horam;

....that in old Naga belief the world of the living was everywhere ruled by the world of the dead, that the individual, at every moment of his existence, was under ghostly supervision. All about and above him, and beneath him, were invisible powers of life and death ....<sup>14</sup>

Generally speaking, sociologists study folklore, ritual and legends in order to understand the religion of the past. So too an enquiry into the Ao Naga religion, myths and legends are given consideration. Myths are symbolic features of social and religious reality of human existence. Interpretations of myths are more important than content and historicity. They are like windows into the thought process. Myths contain values, laws, explanation and philosophy of a people; they give insight into what people believe. John J Honigman says,

Myths affirm the values of the past event, even those unsupported by sound documentary



evidence. A social system's value-charged mythology is a distillation of the past prepared from selected facts and beliefs.<sup>15</sup>

Ceremonies, rites and sacrifices are the carriers of tradition and media of religious expression. Ceremonies make individuals conscious of themselves as group affirming belief in common symbols. Rituals maintain cohesion protecting their identity as a community; they are the implementation of belief. A closer examination of the sanction behind every rite and ritual may lead to myth and myths give meaning to ritualistic behaviour. Rituals are vehicles by which ideas and beliefs and conviction are put into action and strengthened, they are in a sense the material aspect of religious ideas and concepts. No religion can be conceived stripped of rites, ceremonies and rituals. It is disquieting to label these as uncultured practices in the case of the Nagas only. It is a fact that round the essence of every religion there gathers coverings of rites, faiths, myths and mysteries, rituals and dogmas.

For an Ao, there is no compartmentalisation between religion and secular spheres. Their entire existence is surrounded and guided by a sense of religion. His entire field of activity, right from his fire-place to the field, from his waking to his slumber, and every step he takes, there is the presence of, *Tsüngrem*, the hidden and yet omnipresent Being. *Tsüngrem*, God, is not a personal name. For AOs, *Tsüngrem*, is a common name given at different times according to his revelation and manifestations. Thus, he is called, *Lichaba*, the Lord of the Earth, when the creatorship is attributed to him. He is called *Meyutsüngba*, when thought of as the Lord of the dead, the God of justice, who judges man on the day of his death. At times, God is called, *Aningtsüngba* or *Longtitsüngba* when he is understood as the God of heaven; when God is talked of as the pre-destiner, he is called, *Tiar* or *Tiaba*, who determines man's fortune at his coming into the world. *Tsüng Lord*, is the root cause of the concept of God. *Tsüng* is 'the Lord' or the 'highest' in position. *Ba* is the suffix of a male name and thus, the Ao concept of God is male, old man. Thus there is *Tsüng* in a village who is the final authority on certain things which others are not entitled to look into. *Tsüngbakin* is a particular clan which is entitled to certain authority to announce village laws and certain ceremonies. *Rem*, literally means, hidden; but, when it is applied to *Tsüngrem*, it means, under whose feet, or before whom, everything has its finality. Or, under whose feet all lives disappear. *Aningtsüngba* is



sometimes called, **Lata-Zuni**, moon-sun, meaning, the sun and the moon will judge; or under the sun-moon no lies can be hidden when disputes are unsettled between persons. The Etymological meaning of **Tsüngrem**, as some think, can mean, **Tsüng**, feet, and **Rem**, hidden; hidden under the feet.

Thus, **Tsüngrem**, means under the feet hidden and yet, present every space where man walks. Invisible, yet present, everywhere man roams.

The various names of God mentioned here do not mean the Aos had a polytheistic religion like that of popular Hinduism which has many gods; nor does it relate the Ao concept of God to the Max Müller **Henotheism** of the Vedic period of Hinduism when Agni, Varuna and Indra dethrone one another as one rises to its highest importance and power. The Aos are popularly known for their speciality of giving titles and new names with relevance to one's actions, and deeds. For example, a pretty young girl is addressed by boys as **Kongru**, orchid. **Sangpang**, meaning a prominent red fruit, when addressing a young boy; or **wapong**, male hornbill.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the various titles attributed to **Tsüngrem** are qualitative names for one God, given according to his action in different ways. For the Aos, life on earth is not the final existence. There is a world after death; **Diphu yim**, or **Asü Yim**, the city of death. That life is a retribution for this present life. And the kind of life lived then is determined by the life lived here. This is the guiding principle for the moral-ethical and social philosophy of the Ao society. Examination of past way of life for Nagas and their culture it is apparent that ancient Nagas and the Aos in particular had a well-organised and systematic way of society which was religion-oriented. Another Ao peculiarity is their system of social democracy in their village states; their ceremonies whether individual or communal; cultural dress and traditional dances which reflect their inner philosophy of life and world-view. These are signs of mature mental behaviour expressed by their external activities in society. Some of the cultural heritage selected in this research will convey constructive meanings as to how the Ao past cultural behaviour laid the ground for the coming of the Gospel of Christ.

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# CHAPTER I

## PROFILE OF THE LAND AND PEOPLE

### 1. The Land

Nagaland is sometimes called, the Switzerland of the East, because of its charming landscape and natural beauty. It is a land of exotic charm and diverse culture, inhabited by families of the Pan Mongolian race. It is largely unexplored; with tremendous underdeveloped potential.

The mountaineous regions of Nagaland in its original state, before its disintegration under the British and then by India, was bounded by the Hawkong Valley in the north-east; China to the North; the Brahmaputra Valley on the north-west; Manipur to the south and the Valley of Chindwin river on the east. Thus the Nagas inhabit an enormous tract of mountainous country. Towards the north, they occupy the entire hill country bordering the plains of Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. In the southern direction, they cross over the great main watershed between the Irrawady river and the Brahmaputra and extend into the Valley of Kainwin or Ningthi to the north-eastern corner of Manipur up to the Patkai range. Thus the land stretches from the Patkai range in the north to the Thangdut state in the south; from Assam frontier in the west to the Chindwin river in the east.<sup>1</sup>

Naga country has been bifurcated by foreign invasions. Hence, only one-fourth of its country is under the political territory of India, with a population of 12,09,546 according to 1991 census report. There are altogether about 50 different tribes of which only 14 are found in the actual state of Nagaland.

Nagaland is a pleasant country with bright summer and clear winter, abundant rainfall with an average of 250 cm per year. Winter is chilly with thin snowfall and summer is pleasant. It is a long narrow strip of land with high, rugged mountains, hills studded with villages at their top, slopes and narrow deep valleys, dense forests and rushing streams. In winter, white puffy waves of



fog rise through the deep valley and in summer, clouds descend from the mountains.

"The scenic beauty of Nagaland strikes the visitor. He can never hope to see the place in one or two visits. It is a Paradise for research scholars, anthropologists, botanists and tourists."<sup>3</sup>

The Nagas, as Yonuo Asoso has recorded, are collectively living in the Indian state of Nagaland, Manipur in the north, Cachar and Mikir hills, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Nowgong of Assam; in the north-east of Arunachal, in the Somrat tract and its contiguous parts of Burma covering an area of more than 20,000 square miles, with a population of more than one million.<sup>4</sup> But the Naga underground sources say that the total population of Nagas in the whole region is more than ten million.<sup>5</sup> The Assam census says, "the Naga Hills extend geographically eastward to the Patkai, but the Dikhu is our frontier for political purposes, government resolutely declining to undertake the thankless and costly task of keeping order amongst the tribes living on the further side of this river."<sup>6</sup> John Butler, a British explorer, describes the topography of the Nagas as the numerous tribes: Garos, Khasis, Syntengs, Mikirs, Kacharis, Kukis, Nagas, Kachins (Singphos), and Khamptis—inhabiting that vast tract of mountainous country which hems in Assam on the south, the largest numerically, as it is territorially, as the 'Nagas.' He continues to say that under this comprehensive term is included the whole group of cognate races, dwelling along that broad stretch of hill and upland which, roughly speaking, is comprised between the Kapili river on the west, and the Bori-Dihing on the east, and which lies between the parallels of 93° and 96° longitude.

This tract extends northwards to the low hills bordering the alluvial plains of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Nowgong of all Indian rivers, the sacred Brahmaputra.<sup>7</sup>

The present state of Nagaland under India has three massive ranges which run irregularly parallel to one another from north to south. The Barail, the Naga and the Patkai, rising from 2,000 feet to Saramati, the highest peak, which is 12,663 feet above sea level in the Tuensang area of the Patkai range overlooking Burma. It stands on the international boundary of India and Burma with thick forests with snow in winter which lasts until April. The Barail range broadens from north-west of Manipur through north Cachar and culminates in the peak of Japfu, with 9890 feet; with Kohima, the capital, below. Other important peaks are Padna 9,156 feet,



Kapu or Ezupu 7,970 feet. There are beautiful glacial gorges with frowning, steep-wooded sides, running up to the crest of Barail which consists, of the greater part, of grey rock walls with precipices. From this elevated mass transverse spurs connect neighbouring parallel ranges which are widened at intervals so as to enclose the fertile cultivable ravines and valleys criss-crossed by the rivers.<sup>8</sup>

Nagaland is famous for an abundance of minerals such as, oil, lime, coal, gold, diamond, iron, uranium and also rich forest resources. These natural resources have been drilled by the Indian Military forces under O.N.G.C. (Oil and Natural Gas Commission) and I.O.C. (Indian Oil Company) since 1980 and 1981, despite the protests of the Naga people.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Ethnography of the Nagas

The nomenclature of the term, Naga, has attracted researchers and resulted in some instances in confusion. It is felt that there is a necessity to mention some of the different etymological meanings suggested by various people. The term, Naga, appears to have been given by others and not by the Nagas themselves. It was not used by the Nagas until the advent of the British, for each tribe or villae in some cases was a sovereign independent state known as the Aos, Semas, Angamis, Konyaks, etc. This term came into common usage during British rule and became more evident during the rise of the Naga Club (N.C.) in 1918, and subsequently, at the formation of the Naga National Council (N.N.C.) as a united Naga Political Institution in February 2, 1946, Feb.2. The first reference to ancient Nagas is found in the writings of Ptolomy, the Greek writer, who visited south and west India, having heard the Hindus refer to a Mongoloid race as, Nagalok, written as, Nangalok, meaning, naked, who were located in the exact region where the Nagas reside today. That was about A.D. 150.<sup>10</sup> This general reference may be accepted to mean that there already existed some Naga tribes. The writer of this book is of the opinion that these references do not apply to present day Nagas. Local tradition and research show that, though there have been migrations from south-west China since 2000 B.C. in this direction, present Naga tribes had either just arrived or were arriving in this location, in wave after wave, about the time of Ptolomy writing, where as he referred to the epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and the reference found in the Yajurveda of the four Vedas of vedic literature which mentions the Indo-Mongoloid race, as Kirata and Cines (Chinese)



found as early as 1000 B.C. The Aryans bought herbs and drugs from their mountain produce (the Vadas are supposed to have been compiled about Tenth Century B.C.). In the Seventeenth Century, Mir Hussain, historian of the disastrous expedition into Assam of Shayista Khan's Moghul General, Mir Jumla, wrote of them as, the Nagas, and a Dutch sailor wrote in his account of his shipwreck and cannibals.<sup>11</sup>

Professor W.C. Smith maintains the different scholars' opinions of the word, Naga, which is worth mentioning here. He says that, according to Peak, the true form of this word is not Naga but Noga, from the root, *nog, nok*, meaning, people. They are so named in the Borunjis, or "History of the Kings of Assam" dating back to the Thirteenth Century A.D. Here it may be noted that, until today, the Assamese people address a Naga as *Kokai*, meaning, elder brother; thus pointing to the ancient tradition of *Nokaka*; *no*, nine and *kaka*, great grandfather, or nine great brothers, of a family of which the present Naga was the elder brother of Ahom. This points to a common origin of ancient Nagas. Smith further goes on to say that the word, Naga, is only a corruption of Naga by the Bengalis, confusing it with the Sanskrit-Bengali Naga, snake worshippers of India. This cannot be accepted, for in Naga history, there is no trace of snake worship. Rather, the snake is a delicious food for some Naga tribes.

E.A. Gait suggests the word known to the Assamese seems to be derived from *Nok*, folk, in some local dialects. Thus *onok*, we; *nenok*, you (plural) *parnok*, they meaning, we people, you people, those people, etc. found in the Ao dialect.<sup>12</sup>

Capt. Butler and Hutton have favoured the origin of this term to be derived from the Hindustani word, *Nanga*, meaning, naked, or the Bengali word, *nanhta*, with the same meaning, crude and barbarous; while another theory suggests the Kachari word, *Naga*, a young man, and hence, a warrior.<sup>13</sup> Others have linked the word with the Sanskrit, *Naga*, naked.<sup>14</sup> Another theory says that the word is derived from the Sanskrit, *Naaga*, mountain and subsequently, mountaineer, as the Nagas are highlanders.

Peal, Holcombe and V. Elwin also favour the word, *Nok*, people, as having a common term in some local dialects,<sup>15</sup> and V. Elwin writes,

the most likely derivation—to my mind is that which traces 'Naga' from the word *Nok* or



'people', which is its meaning in a few Tibeto-Burman languages, as in Gero, Nokte and Ao...<sup>16</sup>

Owen and Rowney hold the theory that the word is closely related to Sanskrit, *Nag*, meaning snake, or snake worshipper. This idea has been rejected earlier.<sup>17</sup> Owen further goes on to argue that an authentic Sanskrit scholar may translate Naga not only into snake, but a swiftly-moving one, too, a derogatory term.<sup>18</sup>

P.T. Philip suggests the term comes from the Ao dialect, *nok* meaning, a *dao*, a long knife used in war; and *ka*, meaning, to have; it was impossible for a Naga to do without a *dao*, and so it was a permanent accessory for the Nagas. Hence, the word, Naga, comes from *Nok-ka*, having a *dao*.<sup>19</sup>

W. Robinson<sup>20</sup> says that the Sanskrit *Nagna*, applied by the Bengalis from the paucity of their clothing, cannot be justified. He argues that the Bengalis have never used this term for the Garos and Khasis who were their immediate neighbours and accustomed to a greater degree of nudity than any of the Nagas with whom they were acquainted. Some local researchers are of the opinion that the term, Naga, has nothing to do with any of the Indianised speculations. They are more convinced by the eastern etymological derivation such as *Naga* and *Nabas* of the Philippines; *Naka* of Malaya; *Nagreg* of Java Island in Indonesia, etc. There is also a story of a Naga King's daughter connected with formation of the earliest state; Funan, the Lin-Yi, which existed in the lower Mekong and its delta, north of Hue in modern Annam, and the northern part of the Malay peninsula.<sup>21</sup>

A.Z. Phizo,<sup>22</sup> the legendary Naga leader, maintains that the Burmese word, *Naka*, is the origin of this word. In Burmese, *Na* means, ear; *ka*, pierced; i.e. one whose ear is pierced and therefore, the one wearing earrings. In fact, Naga men and women both have their ears pierced and they put flowers and creepers as they are lovers of natural beauty.

A clarification of the term and concept of Tribe and Tribal applied to the Nagas is necessary. The generally accepted anthropological meaning of the word is applied to a group of people with a distinctly separate mark which binds them together with a common belief of the same ancestral origin; language, culture, blood relationships, taboos and tatoos; with a close feeling of kinship and oneness apart from other groups outside its fold. Every human race has its own tribal identity one way or the other. This term is divorced of meaning and so is derogatory in the Indian



context. For Nagas, to belong to a tribe is a privilege and a mark of respect in society, while in the Indian sense it could mean, untouchable, sub-human, savage and uncivilised. The tribesmen of the Nagas cannot be confused with other Indian tribals as the Adivasi, Harijan etc. of Bihar and Orissa and the Lingayats of Peria Malai in Tamil Nadu. Thus Presler says,

By tribe we mean a state of mind, and society, characterised by isolation, homogeneity, sacredness, illiteracy and simplicity. By tribe we mean a way of life unaffected by one of the organised religions, notably Hinduism.<sup>23</sup>

This is applied to those Indian tribals who do not fall into one of the beautiful but devilish Varna, or caste system of Hinduism which makes no sense to the Nagas. They know themselves as Naga; and as Aos, Angamis etc. Thus, Andrew Grey recognises that "the term 'tribe' has little meaning for Nagas who prefer the term 'nation' for each group. The Nation of Nagaland would thus consist of a Federation of Nations."<sup>24</sup> This may best be compared with the ancient Israelite social structure, a confederation of tribes of a nation for socio-political and religious cultural integration.<sup>25</sup>

The Nagas are one of the Mongolian racial groups found in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunanchal Burma, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet, the fringes of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir of the Himalayan tract. They have their distinctive names with sub-names such as, Angami, Chakhesang (Chakroma, composed of three sub-tribes such as Chakru, Kheza and Sangtem). Also found in Ao, Sema, Rengma, Lotha, Kuki, Chang, Konyak, Keamngan, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Tikir, Phom, Dimasha (Damsa) Zemai, Liangmai, Rongmai (three combined Zeliangrong), Mao, Kabui (Shi-Poumai). Other tribes are Maram (Maharamai), Thangal, Tangkhul, Maring, Kom, Chiru, Anal, Moyang, Mongsang, Mhar, Lamgang (Pakan), Nocte, Tangsa, Wanchu, Singpho, Khampti, Haimi, Htangram, Rangpan, Para, Kalyu Kengyu, Kanchari, Karbianglong, Miri, Abhor, Mishmi, Kachin, Shan, Chin, Karen and numerous tribes of the Kachin and Chin states in Burma. They are known for their hard work, honesty, stamina, cheerfulness, frankness, hospitality, openness, humour, devotion, hot temper and uncompromising ways. They are fond of singing, dancing, have a fierce love of liberty and independence, and are wild when it comes to defending their family and fatherland.<sup>26</sup>



According to philologists of the Nagas, they belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group not to the Siamese-Chinese or the Sino-Tibetan language though the origin of the former is traced back from north-west China between the Huang-Ho and Yangtse-Kiang rivers. Each tribe has its own dialect with common roots. The Nagas do not have a script of their own. They have adopted the Roman script brought by American missionaries in the Nineteenth century. According to one tradition the Nagas had their own script written in animal skin, but they cooked it by mistake and ate it up.<sup>27</sup> Another legend says it was the dog that ate the skin in the absence of its master.<sup>28</sup>

Asoso Yonuo maintains that Nagas today came to this area of Nagaland and Manipur some time between the last century B.C. and the beginning of the Christian era. They came from the modern Yunnan through Burma, taking the land trekking route extensively used by Chinese travellers and the embassies between China and India; as well as from Rome and Constantinople to the court of China.<sup>29</sup> This is supported by local tradition and stories. Based on the count of generations of Ao historical tradition, the sociological researchers agree that Aos entered Nagaland between 300 B.C. and 100 A.D.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. The Ao Nagas

The Aos are one of the 14 major tribes found in the political map of the Indian Union. They are comparatively the most advanced among the Nagas in literacy, education and physical development. They were the first people to accept Christianity and subsequently, the enlightenment. Literacy rate among the Aos is 62 per cent while, in general, Nagaland stands at 48 per cent and is reported to be the fastest-growing group in literacy in India.<sup>31</sup> The land occupied by the Aos is situated in north-west Nagaland and lies between 25°6' and 27°4' latitude north of the Equator, and between 93°20'E and 95°15'E longitude. The Ao area is one of the seven districts in the state called Mokokchung district. Mokokchung district covers an area of 1,615 sq. km.<sup>32</sup> bounded by Wokha district in the south-west, Zunheboto district in the south-east, Tuensang and Longling districts in the east, Mon district in the north-east and Assam in the west.

Mokokchung district enjoys the monsoon type of climate which is quite pleasant and healthy over the year, with maximum temperatures during the summer of 27°C which do not rise beyond 32°C. In winter (January and February) the night temperature



drops to 2°C. Average rainfall is about 250 cm which is concentrated between 80 per cent and 95 per cent. The land is hilly with minimum slopes of 10°, while maximum slopes range from 45° to 60°. The population of the Ao tribe, according to the 1991 census, is 1,30,000.

The Ao country is divided into six administrative ranges. Ongpangkong, Asetkong, Langpangkong, Changkikong, Japukong and, recently, the Tzürangkong. Mokokchung is the capital of the district and Impur is the mission centre. The Aos are composed of at least four linguistic groups representing Mongsen, Chungli, Changki and Sangpur. The last one used to be spoken in the Sangpur Khel, sector, of Longsa village and is now obsolete, as observed by J.P.Mills. Mongsen dialect is poetic and original. All traditional songs, poetry, technical words and literary works are found in Mongsen while Chungli has now become the common official language. It is easier because the American missionaries happened to appear in a Chungli-speaking village and introduced writing in Chungli. Changki has mongsen roots and sounds more musical due to a mixture of the Lotha language acquired during their migration.<sup>34</sup>

The etymology of the word, Ao, according to local tradition, and as was also observed by J.P.Mills,<sup>35</sup> is a corruption of the verb, Aor, meaning, to go, (i.e. to go across the Dikhu), a boundary river that divides Ao from Sangtam and Phom tribes. Those who did come were called, Aor, opposite to Mirir, those who did not come, pointing to Sangtams, Phoms, Changs and Konyaks. But a closer hearing and comparison shows this meaning unsatisfactory. The Aos call themselves Ahor, with a stress given to Ho, which in several local dialects means, mountain, or, mountain dwellers. Consequently, invincible, as in Ahom (Assam is a corruption into English) Ahor (Aor), Mahor (Mao) Hao, the hillmen of Manipur, Abhor, Pao, Leo, Wancho, Singphor, Sangpor, Kom etc.<sup>36</sup>

The Aos have a fantastic myth connecting with their ancestral origin in an ancient city called Chungliyimti,<sup>37</sup> Chungli, means, the chungli phratry; yimti, city. Tradition holds that the Aos came out of stones near this city, tracing all the six major clans as having emerged from six stones, called, Longtrok.<sup>38</sup> (Long, stone; trok, six). Thus, having six Ung chiefs symbolic to the six stones. Both, longtrok, and Ungtrok, may be used. Ung, Ungr meaning, chief i.e., six ancestors from six stones. Modern archeologists have unearthed artefacts from this city yielding to the plethora of informa-



tion about its historical importance. Neolithic cultural remains have been discovered recently in the shape of stones and tools such as awls, hammers, mullers, whorls, knives, axes, scrapers, flakes, terracotta, smoking pipes of stone, etc. as well as an appreciable quantity of mica which was used.<sup>39</sup> From Chungliyimti, tradition says, the Aos came to Aongyinden and on their arrival, ten sons were born. Hence the place was called Soyim. While at Soyim, one of the Ungr was killed by a tiger and so Soyim became Ungma, meaning, Ung/Chief is lost. Therefore, they left this place and came to Koridang, a new site, and from Koridang to the various parts of the present Ao country. According to local research, Aos came to Chungliyimti around A.D. 100 and to Soyim about 1030.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. Socio-Political Background of the Nagas

A brief account of the socio-political background of Nagaland is felt to be necessary in order to provide a rough knowledge and appreciation of the present Nagas.

The Naga leader, A Z Phizo, from his London office, repeated;

The Naga case is a case of invasion. We are not demanding 'Independence' from India. We are invaded, and we are just asking India to withdraw her military troops from our country. When India withdraws her army force from Nagaland, everything will be solved. If she does not do that, we will disclose her shame to the world and she will be responsible for the consequence.<sup>41</sup>

Again, in his meeting with the then Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai, on June 14, 1977 at India House, London the Naga leader reminded Mr. Desai of his talk with Mahatma Gandhi;

In 1947, when the British were about to leave their empire, a mass delegation went to Delhi to meet Mahatma Gandhi because our situation may not have been understood by Indians ... the Nagas are not Indians and Nagaland is not Indian territory... . We asked Gandhi if Indians will attack Nagaland when it became free. Gandhi said, if you say that Nagas are not Indians and Nagaland is not Indian territory then the matter must stop there... . India will not attack you. She has no right to do so and I will sacrifice my life for you before any Naga is shot.<sup>42</sup>



The Nagas are not Indians. By race, culture, religion, tradition, history, philosophy, politics and socially, the Nagas have no familiarity with any one of the rest of the Indian races. Nagas can never bow to India for an exchange of their liberty and freedom. They may be ruled by the terror of Indian armed forces for decades, but it does not mean Nagas are Indians. Political bargains, changes, ups and downs may have been witnessed over the years, but there is a free Nagaland beyond the present 'imposed State' under Indian military occupation.

Inhuman treatment, rape and molestation of women and children; torture of innocent people; ring and chase hunt of Naga nationalists, tight security measures for students; burning down Naga villages and property with heavy loss of wealth; destruction of homes and paddy fields; unwarranted arrests, detainments and beatings became daily activity. The Naga case is totally closed to hearings from the outside world such as the press, news media, etc. The world little knows the actual case and occurrences in this small country where a fine people live who love peace and humanity. Nagas will give away anything but freedom and liberty in their fatherland. Newsmen, photographers, voluntary social workers and human rights organisations are restricted from entering the country and if they are permitted they are agents of the Indian government who bring tales suppressed by military authorities.

In his book, Dalle Namu regretted the fate of the Nagas; The British reigned over us for more than six decades with red blankets only, but upon their leaving they made Nagaland a gift to India ... because of this 'gift' about which the Nagas were not informed by Great Britain, the history of the Nagas turned into a tragic tale leaving wounds never to be healed.<sup>43</sup>

From time immemorial, Nagas had their own independent way of life, were self-reliant and unconquered by any external force. Even the British did not include this country in British India. The first Naga contact with the British was in 1832; and since then, there were 46 battles between the British and the Nagas until, finally, Naga country became partially a part of British supervision in 1880 as an 'excluded area'. During this period, the British adopted (a) control by means of punitive expeditions; i.e. by force rather than by direct control (1832-1850); however, the British failed in this and adopted, (b) a 'non interference policy' from 1851-1865; and then,



(c) a direct administrative control from 1866-1947. In 1866 Hill District was formed, which included the Angami village states and partial area of Doyang area only. The main purpose of British control was not for political benefit but to prevent the Nagas from raiding Manipur, Assam and Cachar, who were under the British flag.<sup>44</sup> British subjects began expanding their plantations towards Naga territory. The people retaliated and so, in 1873, the Government passed an Inner Line Regulation. This was revised in 1884, 1928, 1929, 1934, and lastly, under the Indian military rule in 1959; which still exists. When in 1879-80 the greatest war between the Nagas and the British was fought, the British in retaliation divided the country into pieces. Parts went to Assam, Manipur, Burma, Arunachal and only a segment of the territory inhabited by the Nagas was formed in 1881. Thus the Nagas were divided into several pieces and handed over to the Indian army to rule when the British left. The Nagas were ignored and deprived of rights and independence.<sup>45</sup> This did not bring about the end of the Divide and Rule policy of the British. Between 1832 and 1924, 11 reserved forests and 43 tea estates on the foothills of Nagaland were carved out and added to Assam. In 1925 the entire foothills bordering Assam were loped off.<sup>46</sup>

The first official-level discussion of Naga freedom appeared in 1929 when members of the Naga Club produced a representative to the one-man commission. This was called the 'Simon Commission' and informed that the Nagas would not join the Reformed Act to be passed in 1935. The Nagas told the Commission that their independence must be restored when the British pulled out of India. The Commission did not consider the Naga memorandum.

In 1935, in the Constitution of India and Assam, the areas inhabited by the Nagas were kept outside the jurisdiction of the Provincial and Central Governments. They were then informed that they were part of an excluded area under the direct responsibility of the Governor of the province in his capacity of the Crown Representative.

During World War II there was a proposal for a Crown Colony by the Governor of Assam, Robert Reid 1937-43. This comprised the Naga Hills, NEFA, Chittagong Hills and parts of Burma all inhabited by the Nagas. But this was no option for the Nagas for they would not accept anything short of their age-long complete freedom.<sup>47</sup>



In June 1947 the N.N.C., Naga National Council, delegates met the Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari and proposed a Nine Point Agreement called the Hydari Agreement. In this, the last point stipulated a ten-year interim Government at the end of which the Nagas will decide their future course. This failed when the Governor warned the Nagas he would extinguish them if they insisted on independence.<sup>48</sup> This denied self-determination to the Nagas, so they declared independence on the August 14, 1947 just a day ahead of India's independence. But in the Indian Independence Act 1947, Nagas were brought under the Indian Union by force. This was the beginning of the tragedy of Naga political history which has cost thousands of lives.

Things went in different directions. Therefore, as per International Law, the N.C.C. conducted a voluntary plebiscite on May 16, 1951 as a result of which 99.6 per cent voted for independence. This decision was communicated to the Indian Government but, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, turned a deaf ear to the voice from the freedom-loving Nagas. New Delhi was not ready to listen to the Naga cause.<sup>49</sup>

As a result, the first Indian General Elections in 1952 was boycotted by the Nagas, in toto. In 1953, Nehru, the Prime Minister of India and U-N, the Premier of Burma, in a joint venture, visited Kohima. There the N.C.C. wished to present its appeal for independence but this right was denied. Therefore, the Nagas protested and walked out leaving the two Premiers in a most embarrassing situation. That was the beginning of the nightmare in Nagaland. All kinds of inhuman activities were committed by the Indian military troops from 1953 up to the present day. In January 1956, Nagaland was declared a 'disturbed area' and the Naga Hills' Disturbed Area Ordinance Regulations came into force. In that same year, under the Defence of India Act, the Indian Army moved into the country replacing the light Armed Assam Police troops with full military exercise and committed genocide. The military personnel began destroying crops in the field and burning villages. Curfew was almost a daily routine with search and kill, mass torture and free shooting everywhere. Grouping villages into one sector, they banned daily manual fieldwork which resulted in malnutrition, starvation and death. Church buildings became slaughter houses with rape and torture.<sup>50</sup> For instance, Mangmetong village (the writer's native village), was moved to Longkhum village in 1957-1958 under such military occupation



where 72 people died out of torture or starvation and lack of medical care.<sup>51</sup>

In order to defend their faterhland, the Nagas formed the Federal Government of Nagaland (F.G.N.) in 1956, on March 22. Under their own Constitution, they declared Nagaland, Sovereign Republic of Nagaland, (S.R.N.) with a parliament, a president and a cabinet.<sup>52</sup> This was followed by endless war and casualties both for the Indian Army and the Naga Federal Army (N.F.A.).

A group of Nagas, under the influence of Indian politicians, formed the Naga Peoples Convention (N.P.C.) in August 1957 with the idea to settle the Naga problem within the Indian Constitution and subsequently signed in the state within the Indian Union, called Nagaland. As a result, the signatory was assassinated immediately by Naga nationalists. However, the state of Nagaland was inaugurated under heavy pressure by the Indian Armed Forces on December 1, 1963. This was done by a few opportunists of the pro-India group, to the surprise of the Nagas, and came in force on December 1963. This carried a Sixteen Point Agreement after an amendment of the Indian Constitution Act 371 (a) which gave a certain autonomy to the Nagas. This was not accepted by the Nagas.<sup>53</sup> Fierce fighting between the Naga Underground and the Indian Army continued and resulted in a widening gap.

In September 6, 1964 a Ceasefire Agreement was reached at between the Indian Government and the Naga Federal Government through the initiative of the Nagaland Peace Council (N.P.C.), headed by the Church in Nagaland. The idea was to hold face-to-face talks and reach a permanent settlement and to suspension of the cruelty of Army operations in Nagaland. But the Agreement was broken by the Indians and Military operations which continued despite the Ceasefire Agreement.<sup>54</sup>

Since the Nagas would never give up their desire for freedom, ambush, attacks and counter attacks, curfew and killings became a daily routine on both sides. India sent her best military jawans from the Assam Rifles, Assam Regiment, the Dogra Regiment, Mahar Regiment, the Sikh Regiment, the C.R.P.F., the Boder Security Force, and the newly-formed Nagaland Armed Police. It is a common phrase in Nagaland today that "there is one Indian military jawan for two Nagas." Until today there is one Army post in practically every Naga village. If the village is hardcore Naga nationalist, there are two Army camps overlooking the village.



India, under the Special Arms Act, started a combing operation throughout Naga country to liquidate the Nagas from their hideouts. Jungles were cut and burnt, Naga Army camps were destroyed and untold inhuman activity. The tiny Naga Army, which was comparatively less armed, could not resist the mighty ocean of the Indian Army with its sophisticated equipment.

When it was found that combing operations was not the answer, the whole of Nagaland was brought under President's Rule on March 22, 1975, under direct Army rule from New Delhi, and in June, under Emergency Rule, which lasted until March 1977. This meant the Nagas were under the terror of Indian military operation. If ever Nagas were to give up hope of their freedom, it was during this period.

During this period of terror, the Nagas were forced to come out of their underground camps. Prisons were extended and a large number of Nagas compelled to surrender. Many Nagas chose suicide rather than dying at the hands of these merciless killers. There were mass killings. Life came to a standstill in Nagaland. At this crucial point, captured Nagas were forced to sign a draft Accord with India, which is called the, Shillong Accord,<sup>55</sup> drawn up without the consent of the Naga public and the remnant of Naga fighters. This so-called Shillong Accord was signed and by force became part of the Indian Constitution. The Nagas discarded outright this Accord and condemned it as a betrayal of the Naga political philosophy. The signatories were designated, traitors, in Naga history and so they are "liable for prosecution in future."<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, a group of the Naga army, led by the General Secretary of the N.N.C., Th. Muivah, was out in China for Ale e Command, foreign mission. On their return home, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (N.S.C.N.) was formed in 1980, the salvado of the Naga political history. Now the N.S.C.N. operates for Naga nationalism from across the border in the East of Nagaland, between India and Burma.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, the story of the Naga struggle for the restoration of its national freedom goes on. The world is yet to hear the cry of the Nagas from this mountainous country for independence. It is not a story from the past, nor has it a futuristic ideal; but it is a fact; a drama being lived on by a tiny nation in this part of the world, undisclosed and unheard by peace-loving people and nations in the rest of the world.



A Z Phizo struggled to let nations know, Naga patriots still continue to relate their sufferings to right-minded people, and villagers are anxious to restore the glory of their past—free from suppression, exploitation and genocide. Unnamed intellectuals and former underground patriots are tirelessly striving for a higher degree of freedom movement.

Thus, a Naga is a Naga by blood who longs for a free Nagaland, sooner or later, where he can feel at home and sing that old song of, 'God Bless Mine Nagaland.'

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tourists for its tradition about the origin of the Aos, and its rich archaeological discoveries. Above are megalithic stones (male and female) resembling the linga, yuna cults which tradition says the Aos came out of the six stones lying there.

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51. The writer recollects how he was victimised under such dreadful Army operations and how he lost his mother and his younger sister under this situation. He was four years old at that time.
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