

Edited by
S. Dutta
B. Tripathy



MARTIAL

TRADITIONS OF NORTH EAST INDIA



Martial Traditions of North East India



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Preface

This book has grown out of a National Seminar on the “Martial Traditions of North East India”, organized jointly by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata, and the Department of History, Arunachal University, Itanagar on 18-19 November, 2003. A number of eminent scholars and researchers from different disciplines participated in the seminar and presented their valuable papers. As many as twenty-two papers were presented, which dealt with various aspects of martial traditions like war mechanism, warfare, war-tactics, military history of tribes, cult of war goddess, forts and fortifications, war implements, village defence mechanism, martial arts, etc.

The work, perhaps is the first attempt to document the martial traditions of the people and of various ruling dynasties of North East India. The book, it is hoped, will prove useful for scholars as well as general public interested in the subject. The work is of regional as well as national importance as it throws light on the little known aspect of history and culture of North East India in particular and of India in general.

The volume would have not been possible without the help, support and cooperation from various persons, quarters and institutions. We are specially grateful to Prof. Devendra Kaushik and Prof. Mahavir Singh, Chairman and Director of the MAKAIAS respectively for providing financial aid for organizing the seminar. Prof. Atul Sharma, Vice-Chancellor, Arunachal University gave academic advice and material support in organizing the seminar. We are thankful to him. We are extremely thankful to

Introduction

The history and culture of North East India, occupies an important place not only in the history of India but also in the history of Asia. The geographical location of the region, touching Bhutan, Tibet (China), Myanmar (Burma) and mainland India, saw the blending of various cultural traditions in this part of the country since early historical period. More specifically, the socio-cultural traditions of the indigenous people of the area are so diverse and unique that the anthropologists and sociologists refer to the area as paradise for the study of tribal history and culture. The martial traditions of the people of the area have to be viewed in these perspectives.

The North East India was consisted of three independent states like Assam, Manipur and Tripura, besides many tribal pockets in various hills of the area. Before independence Assam, earlier known as Kamarupa and Pragjyotishpura, has a chequered history of warrior traditions. From the time of king Bhagadatta to the Ahom rulers of medieval Assam, the people of Assam showed their bravery, heroism in the battlefield. The military organization was efficiently structured and that is the reason, we see that throughout the history of Assam (upto 18th century), hardly the soldiers of Assam tasted defeat permanently in the hands of the enemies. The epigraphs, the Ahom Buranjis, manuscripts and various folk traditions of Assam throw light on various aspects of warfare, war organization, espionage system, war tactics, and on various related aspects. Even the medieval Muslim historians have praised the warfare of the Ahom kings in a befitting manner. Adjacent to the plain area of Assam, a number of martial tribes inhabited the Northeast Frontier (now known as Arunachal Pradesh). These

tribes are notable for their valour and courage and could challenge the mighty British off and on, which reveal their warrior traditions. The village defence system, the role of their dormitories and traditional political institutions in warfare, their war dances, festivals and rituals associated with war etc. are of considerable interest to study their warrior tradition. Here mention can be made of the Wanchos, the Tangsas, the Noctes, the Mishmis, the Adis, the Nyishis, the Tagins, the Akas and others, who used to show their valour in the battle fields, which can be known from a scrutiny of archival literature of the period. The number of actual forts and fortifications, noticed in the foothills of Arunachal and various parts of Assam, reveal their offensive and defensive techniques. Various kinds of tribal warfare can also be gleaned in the military report and political proceedings of the British period, of 19th and early 20th century concerning the region.

The Nagas, considered as a warrior tribe, have a glorious history of their warfare, which was associated with headhunting. Their mode of head hunting, warfare, war mechanisms, village defence mechanism and philosophical dimension of head hunting reveal one of their best socio-cultural traditions. The Nagas observe a number of war rituals, dances and festivals, which are reminiscent of their warrior tradition of the past. Various ethnographers, military reports and literature of the period reveal various aspects of Naga warfare.

The Mizos of Mizoram had a good system of military administration in the early Mizo society and their socio-economic and political life was also greatly determined by it. The role of the Mizo chiefs, their regular militia, zawlbuk (house of dormitory), types of village fortifications, methods of warfare, weapons, hair dresses are of immense and considerable importance in the military system of the Mizos. The role of Zawlbuk and the village fortifications, besides employment of intelligence services etc.

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reveal their form of military system. Infact every village was a military cantonment of the chief in which the chief himself was the supreme commander.

The hill region of Meghalaya, inhabited by the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias, like their counterparts in Arunachal and other states, had their own indigenous mode of warfare and war organization. The history of Meghalaya is replete with a number of references regarding British-tribe conflicts/war, in which the tribes of Meghalaya, did create a lot of problems and difficulties for the British administration. So was the case with Manipur and Tripura. The historical literature of Tripura, like the 'Rajamala' provides a number of instances of the participation of tribal people in defence mechanisms of princely Tripura.

The State of Manipur is notable for unique martial art, throughout India. The art, known as 'Thang-Ta' is part and parcel of their culture. This martial art in fact not only deals with kicks and punches but also provides enlightenment.

Though North East India has a chequered history of martial traditions, no comprehensive work has been undertaken in this regard and we do not know various facets of the glorious traditions of the people till now. Again due to modernization and other factors, these traditions are almost dying out. Taking these things into consideration, the Department of History, Arunachal University, organized a National Seminar on *Martial Traditions of North East India* on 18-19 November, 2003. The aims and objectives of the Seminar were: (i) to know various aspects of history of war, military warfare, war techniques, defence mechanisms etc. of various ruling dynasties of North East India and (ii) to document the war dances, war festivals, rituals, village defence mechanisms, role of village chiefs, role of dormitory system and traditional political organization etc. in various tribal pockets of North East India.

The present volume is the outcome of the seminar proceedings. The essays are not uniform in their content, analysis, references or otherwise. But it throws light on various unknown facets of martial traditions of the region. We hope, this proceeding will be of immense use for historians anthropologists and laymen, who want to know history and culture of North East India.

Sristidhar Dutta
Byomakesh Tripathy

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Keynote Address

Prof. Imdad Hussain

I thank the organizers of the seminar for doing me the honour of inviting me to deliver the keynote address. This is the first of its kind in this part of the country that I know of and I congratulate Professor Sristidhar Dutta and his colleagues in the Department of History on their choice of the seminar problem and the several themes they have so carefully worked out. In its planning they must have noted the absence, and perhaps ran into the context of the region this absence would worthwhile frame of reference. In the context of the region this absence would have been even more striking. Such being the status of research in this emerging new area of historical enquiry, this seminar to my mind assumes a special significance.

1. In a map in the Simon Commission Report showing the number of combatants in the Indian Army drawn from various parts of the country and Nepal, Assam figures as a virtual blank. Recruits from the Punjab, the United Provinces and the North West Frontier predominate, the first two provinces alone accounting for 62 per cent of the total Army. They were the so called martial races, "fine fighting material", the Report said "while the other communities and areas do not furnish a single man for the regular army". This has been the view of Assam of a succession of British army commanders and a host of military writers. Did Assam or what today is called North East India lack a military tradition? This is perhaps the key question before the seminar.

2. I have argued elsewhere that the martial races theory wants a more critical looking into. Indian regiment involved in the process of imperial expansion in the subcontinent from the mid-eighteenth century onwards were always raised in borderlands and frontier areas outside formal control, the very areas that were likely to become scenes of military activity, either as a prelude to their incorporation within the extending political boundaries or as regions annexed but vulnerable to external aggression.

The peasant recruit's importance after the annexation of his homelands correspondingly shifted: from that of the bearer of arms to that of the holder of the plough. This was what made wars in India different from those fought in Europe. Unlike continental warfare, colonial warfare, as one French expert of the subject noted—

aims not at the destruction of the enemy but at the organization of the conquered peoples and territories under a particular control. As far as possible it must avoid destructions during the campaign; first in order to preserve the productive potential of the theatre of operations and thus minimize the supply coming from more distant bases; but more important, because the country is to be integrated immediately after the conquest into the imperial whole, politically as well as economically.

3. British expansion east of Bengal and their recruitment policy follows this pattern in all its essential aspects. Early attempts to create buffer states and partisan forces along the Company's Eastern Frontier against the Burmese was given up once the entire region was brought under varying degrees of administrative control. Interest in recruiting local material gave way to indifference

once their territories were absorbed. It was only after the Second World War when experience had been gained of the northeastern soldier that opinions changed and at least one military officer, the author of the first volume of the *History of the Assam Regiment* (1959) was able to recognize that “Assam and her Military Traditions”.

4. In popular perception the golden age of Assam’s military history lies in her pre-colonial days, and is best illustrated in the Ahom-Mughal conflict. These wars, however, do not enjoy any centrality in regional history that, for instance, the Thirty Years’ War occupies in seventeenth century European history. Rather, it is still dominated by accounts of individuals. Some time ago the Department of History of the Gauhati University held a seminar on Lachit Barphukan and his times, because the Governor of the state, himself a former Lieutenant General, felt that in not adequately projecting the military exploits of the great Barphukan historians have neglected Assam. The river battle fought at Saraighat has become the *Locus classicus* of Ahom warfare and military system. That Lachit Barphukan was heir to a military tradition has all too often been overlooked. Saraighat was in reality the culmination of techniques and structures that had been evolving over the past centuries. It started with the early rulers of Kamata followed by new military technologies adopted by the Koch, and both of which were developed under the Ahoms. The main elements of that tradition were the art of fortification, use of firearms and the methods of riverine warfare.
5. Sir Edward Gait says that the use of firearms by the Ahoms dates from the close of the conflict with Hussain Khan in 1533-34. Did this lead to a transformation of Ahom

warfare from about the middle of the sixteenth century with corresponding changes in social and political organization? Major technological advances in arms in Europe in the seventeenth century is said to have led to what Michael Roberts and Geoffrey Parker have called the 'Military Revolution'. Some of the collections in Goman and Kokff's Oxford Readings on *Warfare and Weaponry in South Asia 1000-1800* (2001) discuss the relevance of this concept to India.

did the Sultanate period see a military revolution? (Asked the General Editor of the series) How important was the development of artillery and firearms for Mughal Warfare? How far were new technologies of warfare devised in the immediate pre-colonial, the result of diffusion from the west or local initiatives?

6. There may not have been a military revolution in Ahom or Koch history comparable to what occurred in Europe but the impact of new technologies on their warfare seems to me quite discernible. To understand these one needs to go beyond the conventional periodisation into ancient, medieval and modern periods as in European history. This begs the question whether such periodisation is at all valid for military history. "Are not the real dividing lines in the history of a country based rather on social and material independent of the race or religion of the rulers"? Asked Susobhan Sarkar some years ago. Likewise, can we not build the chronology of military history around military technology or certain recognizable strategic or tactical concepts? The well-known military historian Major-General J.F.C. Fuller attempted just that in his *Armaments and History* (1945). He divided the period from approximately the fifth century BC to the post-Second

World War into six ages: the age of Valour, of Chivalry, Gunpowder, Steam, Oil and Atomic Energy. In his case, however, the result was a curious mix of social values and scientific developments. Yet such an effort would be much worthwhile than such narratives as Jagadish Narayan Sarkar's *The Art of War in Medieval India* (1984), which does not convey any sense of military dynamism.

7. Much of the difficulty academic historians have in writing military history lies in the confusion about definitions and terminology. The bulk of the writing on India or Assam have titles about military policy and military systems. An *Aide Memoir on the Science and Art of War* of the mid-nineteenth century defined military policy as "the habitual views of the Government regarding its ambitions or interests externally directed towards objects to be attained by force, or internally to be guarded by defensive means". Of the second, it says:

the military system of a state denotes the nature and composition of the forces by sea and land; the militia and reserves; their organizations; laws, pay, recruiting, clothing, discipline, instruction, promotion, rewards and punishments; fortifications, fleets, ordnance, equipments and all elements required for war.

Thus considered P.C. Chakravarti's well-known *The Art of War in Ancient India* (1972) which deals almost exclusively on subjects enumerated in it could well have been entitled the Military System of Ancient India. I would, therefore, draw the attention of the seminar to the importance of understanding military terms, concepts and definitions. They help not only in categorizing and evaluating the existing literature but also provide the direction to further studies.

8. In the hill areas where the tribal peoples were organized into small village based polities rather than in large territorial units, warfare was materially different from that waged in the plains. What in the nineteenth century literature on the hill tribes was called tribal warfare consisted of two distinct categories. The first was the inter-tribal and intra-tribal conflicts. Why these so frequently occurred has not yet been satisfactorily explained. But around them was built what I would like to call the 'warrior tradition' in preference to 'martial tradition', with its elaborate rituals and ceremonies. This warfare took a variety of forms, each determined by circumstances of population, social and political organization, the physical features of the country and so on. Warfare among tribal societies under chiefs appears to be more organized than were those under a more democratic system. Sema Naga 'military' terminology would bear this out.
9. More important was the second, the armed response of the tribal people to British military expeditions and to the imposition of colonial rule itself. Tribal methods, often called in contemporary British manuals as "savage warfare" apparently did not differ significantly from those they adopted in the conflicts among themselves. But what was the impact of these encounters on tribal society? In the areas of psychology or their economic and social organization little is known. Among the Angami Nagas, however, the innumerable military expeditions had the effect of revolutionizing their warfare. The arms traffic of the 1860s and 1870s and the transformation of their village defences into masonry fortifications complete with loopholes for musketry is a clear indication of this change. Similar

developments are noticeable in the Lushai hills prior to their annexation. I have brought out these two categories in the hope that it will bring clarity to the discussions on warfare in the hill areas.

10. If we consider the trends and developments in recent historiography one deficiency in military history at once becomes obvious. This is the almost total lack of focus on the conduct of warfare at the lowest level of participation. How did the private or the common soldier face up to the battle, what were his fears, his thoughts or mental condition? Some insights have been gained from letters written by them from the front during both the World Wars and surveys conducted among survivors. In the context of the North East India I would like to draw our attention to a private diary of a sergeant (corresponding to a havildar) in the 1st Assam Light Infantry Battalion, which describes action during the expedition against the Adis in 1859.

it's light enough work (says the entry) to climb up these hills with a rifle and ammunition through a tolerably level country, four days ration may be carried, but here (at Kebang) the climbing tries the wind and stamina too much without a load of provisions. Of Adi tactics, George Carter, the writer of the diary says: this noiseless peppering was very annoying: we could not tell where to aim at an Abor, but when any of our men fired, a dozen bows sent arrows towards the flash.

11. This makes interesting reading. But I would be more interested in the other side of the story. A nineteenth century authority on frontier warfare has called punitive expeditions into hills as "small wars" on the basis of the numbers of troops involved. Could a column of troops armed with modern rapid fire weapons marching against a village of a

few hundred defenders destroying houses, standing crops, livestock and stored grain have been to the small victims? One might ask. How then did the tribal people view these encounters? The answer would come from oral traditions. It will be necessary therefore to widen the source base of our research. Equally important would be the need to examine maps and topography sheets. Incidentally, the map on Guwahati and its environs prepared by Thomas Wood who accompanied Captain Thomas Welsh to Assam during 1792-94 provides the key to our understanding of how the war at Straight was fought.

12. I have placed before you some stray thoughts I have had on issues concerning this interesting if neglected area of research what then would be the core of my address. The chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research wrote in October 1976 that “the study of military history, in all its strategic, tactical and logistic, as well as its economic and sociological aspects, has not received adequate attention from our historians so far.” Twenty-seven years after those words were written I am making much the same point. Dr. R. Chidambaram, former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, was said to be fond of the expression, “Velocity of Research”. Velocity implies both direction and speed. If this is to be our *mantra* we need to be able to draw upon the resources of other disciplines, beyond our own Social Sciences. There must be cooperation between individuals, between institutions and between countries. This, after all is what our ancient scriptures have taught us. The Rig Veda feels us: *Let ideas come to us from every side.* The Taitireya Upanishad says: *Let us come together. Let us enjoy together. Let our strengths come together. Let there be light. Let there be no poison of misunderstanding or hatred. That way lies progress.*

Head Hunting and Warfare

A Critical Reappraisal of Naga Political Systems

N.K. Das

Anthropologists tend to include forms of treaties, warfare and reconciliation after feuds within the purview of political system. They are called the regulated interrelationships in the political field (Notes and Queries on Anthropology, 1951 : 135). Through such pacts unrestricted vengeance may be replaced by 'blood money' or other obligations of redress. Within the Naga tribes there were socially recognized measures for taking vengeance, particularly through 'head hunting'. The practice of cutting off parts of slain enemy's corpse, particularly the head, was a widespread feature of Naga warfare and persisted until even colonial rule. Besides the value of the 'head' as a trophy, there are a number of ritual or psychological motives behind 'head hunting' as practiced by the Nagas. After the head, the hands and feet are the most usual parts to be possessed and exhibited in order to gain the warrior's status and privilege to wear scarlet gauntlets. In Naga society the head (scalp) is also treated as a source of fertility. In all Naga tribes allable-bodied men (either recruited through *age sets* or membership of *morungs*) joined the war expeditions to obtain enemy's heads.

In this chapter we will discuss the mode of head hunting and warfare, war mechanisms, village defence mechanisms and philosophical dimension of head hunting in the backdrop of Naga social structure and political system. The chapter is mostly based on secondary source material including my own anthropological works.

The entire Naga inhabited areas may be described as one culture area. Despite their occupation of distinct hill ranges and a long history of inter-tribe warfare and feud, the Nagas show strong homogeneity in terms of their kinship and political systems, uniethnic settlement pattern over the hill summits, common house and dormitory (*morung*) type, tradition of log drum, identical dress and ornaments, common food habits, modes of agriculture, hunting, fishing and weaving and customs and laws.

In Naga societies kinship provides the principle of political relations and it also defines the territorial organization, which constitutes 'the tribe'. Through internal mechanisms of kinship lineage and clan groups take shape, who are often differentiated amongst themselves, and thus play distinct ritual roles. Lineages, clans, territorial divisions and age sets provide main fields of social relations in Naga tribes. Within the system, there are institutions of 'dormitory' and 'headmanship' which regulate and maintain the social cohesion, and political stability which in the past also implied the village defence...the honour of martial traditions of people.

The Nagas portray the model of 'the tribe' in excellent manner. Thus each Naga tribe has been a politically and socially coherent and autonomous group occupying a particular territory. In the precolonial era even a single village existed and operated as an independent unit with no centralized political hierarchy (Das, 1993 : 16). Such boundary formation in a way had been a logical outgrowth resulting on account of persistence of inter-village warfare (Das, 1993 : 15, 16). This author has critically discussed the question of tribeship in Naga hills (Das, 1982, 1989, 1993).

In Naga tribes persons of same sex and of about the same age are formally grouped into distinct 'sets', which are formed at successive intervals. Each age set passes through a series of stages, each of which in the past had distinctive status and role, associated with ceremonial, military and economic activities (Das

1993 : 92). There were also procedures of ceremonial initiation and formal military training. The age confers authority in matters of law and government and the seniormost of the oldest group has the decisive voice in all matters that concern the regulation of public life (Thus Pithi-Ketsami and Mehu-chu age sets in Zounuo-Keyhonuo Naga tribe have 'elders' who deal with religious, jural and legal matters. In the past they guided the military activities including village defence).

The Nagas: Origin and Identity

J.H. Hutton (1965) the colonial administrator, Furer Haimendorf (1939), a trained anthropologist and W.C. Smith (1925) have regarded the Nagas as representative of an archaic cultural stratum extending from North East Region of India to Indonesian islands and as far east as the Philippines. In their view there is a direct link between the Naga and the people of Malaya and Indonesia in sharing many common culture traits, some of which are head hunting, common sleeping houses for unmarried men, betel chewing, tattooing by pricking, absence of powerful political organization, the simple loom for weaving cloth and a crude form of agriculture. In his book *A History of South East Asia*, Hall (1901) provides a good description of Neolithic culture in Naga Hills.

Before their settlement, the Nagas had moved in small groups and they narrate about their origin in folk tales and songs. Most of the Naga tribes have own legends indicating the course of migration. All Nagas do not emerge as a simple 'tribe'. There is no single ancestor who founded this large group of Nagas. One may refer to two books *Nagaland* (1994) and *Manipur* (1994) published under the project people of India to get current ethnographic profile of Naga tribes (Das and Imchen, 1994). In his book *Kinship, Politics and Law in Naga Society* this author (Das, 1993) has

discussed the method of law enforcement and pattern of uncentralized political system of a Naga tribe.

Naga Social and Political Structure

The Naga tribes, except Konyak, Sema and Tangkul, generally have uncentralized political system based on segmentary system of interlocking descent groups. The descent groups, which are strictly localized, confined to clan ward/village, are formed through a process of periodic splitting (Das, 1985, 1993). Besides clear-cut kinship rules and descent principles, there are definite customs and tribal laws recognized in society. Individuals have rights, jural obligations and moral responsibilities. These rights and obligations play a vital part in resolving conflicts and maintaining social order (Das, 1993: 2). Gluckman wrote that 'men quarrel in terms of their certain customary allegiance' but are restrained from 'violence through other conflicting allegiances which are also enjoined on them by custom' (1955 : 2).

Majority of Naga tribes such as Angami, Chakhesang, Lotha, Rengma etc. lack formal chieftainship or any organized political or governmental system. Thus all kinds of inter-group and inter-personal relationships serve significant politico-jural purposes. These tribes also possess well-recognized arbitrating institutions which are also often informal in character and through which the headmen and elders maintain social order and politico jural cohesion (Das, 1993 : 3). In addition to their distinct kinship statuses these elders also occupy specific positions in age sets operating in many Naga tribes. There is yet another type of elders particularly among the Zounuo Keyhonuo called as Zohdimi. They are called so far their generosity in giving feasts (of meat and rice beer) to villagers. These Zohdimi or 'big men' command respect and prestige for their age, wealth, integrity and wisdom.

In precolonial era the clan was a more significant unit politically. It emerged as a single peace group and was united for 'war and self-protection' against a common enemy (Das, 1993 : 5). Every clan was subject to the authority of its senior male members who derived their statuses through age set system. Age set systems functioned generally at the level of clan territory (Das, 1993 : 124). Writing about clan system among the Tengima Angamis, J.H. Hutton described the exclusive political status of clan territory in following words:

“So distinct is the clan from the village that it forms almost a village in itself, often fortified within the village inside in its own boundaries and not infrequently at variance almost amounting to war with other clans in the same village. In almost every dispute between two men of different clans the clansmen on each side appear as partisans and ferment the discord” (1921, 1969 : 109).

This author observed similar clan level solidarity among the Zounuo Keyhounuo Nagas (Das, 1993 : 124). This author observed that clan as a social as well as a territorial unit fully shapes and regulates the entire life of the Nagas as the customary laws to be still followed are all based keeping exclusive character of clans. Even dispute settlement and law enforcement is clan affair. Being territorially intact and socially cohesive, a clan is considered to be the widest grouping within which there is a moral obligation and a means ultimately to settle intra-clan disputes peacefully. A clan may, therefore, be portrayed as a 'peace group' (Das, 1993: 125). Clan areas of the Nagas were called as Khels by the officials of British administration. In Zounuo Keyhonuo Naga society the clans emerge as compound clans. In contrast to lineage (*sarra*), a Zounuo Keyhonuo clan or Thenu is not a mere collection of individuals. It is an organization of well defined smaller social groups—Putsanu, Lokro and Punumi. A clan grows by continuous multiplication of its parts, following the fission and segmentary

processes, and not by mere accretion of new members. This takes place by splitting of its cells into new segments in successive generations (Das, 1993 : 119).

Territorial organization is an important element of any political structure. Anthropologists have argued that 'the expression of the political and territorial structure is to be found in the field of law and warfare' (Redcliffe-Brown, 1940: XIV). Clan level territorial solidarity is an important characteristic of Naga life and this phenomenon is observable in all Naga areas (of Nagaland and Manipur). The Nagas may not be ready to organize today real blood feud or warfare but whenever there is a threat common to all clan members, it is difficult to suppress the anger of clan members. This author observed in 1977 a serious quarrel between two clans belonging to Viswema and Jakhama villages over distribution of water of a natural stream (Das, 1993 : 126).

In the past clan membership was coterminous with the political membership because the clan was the largest jural community. Help in inter-clan feud and inter-village war was a necessary prerequisite of clan solidarity. Indeed, the corporate lineages, clan localities and age sets in most Naga societies provided the main field of social relations and the arenas of political life. Since purely political or governmental system did not exist in many Naga tribes, the Naga elders remained primarily responsible for ordering relations (Das, 1993: 144-146).

The Naga-British Conflict and the Colonial Era

The British entered the Naga Hills for the first time in 1832. By 1850 as many as ten expeditions had been sent to the hills. After 1851 the British followed the policy of non-intervention in Naga areas, though till 1858 the Angami and other Nagas kept raiding British outposts. Before Naga Hills District was formed in

1866, some 8000 Kuki 'militia peasants' had been placed in Naga areas. In 1869 one of the major tasks of Captain Butler, the political agent of Naga Hills, was to interfere in inter-tribal disputes of the Nagas. In 1873 the Inner Line Regulation was passed and introduced. Thus, no British subject or foreign resident could go beyond a certain frontier that was drawn along the foothills of Naga Areas without a pass or licence issued by the Deputy Commissioner.

First Anglo-Naga War of 1879

In 1879 the Nagas had been equipped with hundreds of fire arms. In 1879 the Nagas had killed Damant, the British Political Officer with thirty-seven of his men. The Angami Nagas then besieged Kohima. Kohima and Khonoma remained impregnable for many months and its occupation was protracted owing to the strong defence lines led by warring Nagas. There are several instances of Naga raids of British outposts. During 1884-85 the Ao Naga had caused trouble. In 1885 Ao villages of Ungma and Longsa had raided British camps. In 1887 the Chang Nagas raided the British camps in Ao areas. As a result of Naga raids several punitive expeditions were sent to those Naga areas by the British. The Mokokchung sub-division was formed with the object of checking the Naga raids from Cis Diku and Trans Diku village. To check excessive occurrences of head hunting and warfare, Pangsa areas expeditions were sent during 1938-39. In 1952, Tuensang area was constituted as a sub-division of NEFA but it was merged into Naga Hills (Das, N.K. 'Introduction', Nagaland, POI). The last officially recorded case of head hunting was in 1958 (Elwin, 1961 : 12), although many head hunting like killings occurred in many areas afterwards also.

There are two broad phases of the Naga history of pre-independence era. At first there was a protracted war during which

endemic head hunting and warfare prevailed among different tribes in the Naga Hill areas. Phase two began with the advent of the colonial British who brought 'warfare', blood feud and 'head hunting' to a gradual end (Das, 1993: 24). To ensure peace the British slightly modified the existing pattern of village political system and Naga headmanship.

In fact the British relations with the Nagas then were "one long, sickening story of open insults and defiance, bold outrages and cold blooded murders, on the one side, and long suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, concession and unlooked for favours on the other" (Butler, 1875). *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Verrier Elwin (1969), is the best single ethno-historical source on the Nagas. Elwin provides extracted passages about the Naga people from printed books and articles covering the period 1827 to 1896. Elwin remarked that "there are many mistakes and misunderstanding of customs and institutions" (1969 : 1) in old British writings.

Naga Head Hunting : Practice and Tradition

Head hunting was something more than war. It inspired wonderful dances. Head hunters enjoyed great prestige. They believed that head hunting would result in a better yield of crops. Traditions and designs of weaving and wood carving were influenced by it.

The most elaborate textiles could only be worn by a successful head hunter and his relations. Small replicas of heads were carved to be worn almost like medals. Wooden pipes, with their bowls fashioned as heads, were made. Strong and vigorous human figures were carved and attached to baskets and the warrior's grave was the most splendid of all.

The practice of head hunting is based on a belief in a soul matter or vital essence of great power, which resides in the human

head (Elwin, 1961 : 11). It was believed that by taking a head from another village, some kind of a vital and creative energy would enter the head hunters village. This was valuable for human and animal fertility. It stimulated the crops to grow better.

In view of Hutton [1921(1969):132] head hunting arises from a theory of the soul as the source of all, life existing as a quasi-material entity within the body which it pervades, and transferable to other bodies indirectly through the soil and the crops, the circuit of life being continued by the consumption of the crop by human beings. Among the Phom Naga the village headmen and rich persons had controlled the warfare and head hunting activities (Roypa, 1994).

Among the Chang, the men who had taken human heads, were elaborately tattooed. This author met several such former head hunters during fieldwork in Chang area in 1985-86 (Das, 1994). This author wrote in 1989 that “till recently dormitories (*Haki*) and log drum houses had functionally existed among the Changs and sleeping houses for the girls had helped the Chang boys to select their brides. While Hakis have almost died, in many villages log drum houses have provided sites of church buildings” (Das, 1994). An informal council of elders had traditionally been responsible for maintaining social order. The prominent warriors and head hunters were the members of such councils in the past (Das, 1994). A Naga warrior thus held a great advantage over his fellows in attracting the most beautiful girl of his village for marriage.

Because of head hunting practices, the Sema had no friendly relations with the neighbouring ‘tribes’ and even within the sections of the Sema community. The Sema often used to establish new villages by acquiring land from enemies (Raypa, 1994).

This author observed that among the Sangtam Nagas the skilful craftsmanship, woodwork and woodcarving were damaged on account of neglect of morung and log drum houses. House

doors of former head hunters and richmen are also not decorated now-a-days with traditional designs (Das, 1994).

Head Hunting : Philosophy

Writing in early part of twentieth century J.H. Hutton (1921) observed that “Head hunting in one form or another is a wide-spread practice...the ultimate reason of its existence in a spot must be sought in some deep rooted characteristic of human nature”. Hutton quotes O. Henry who said “Truly the head hunter...introduced art and philosophy to a simple code. To take adversary’s head... to see it lying, a dead thing... Is there a better way to foil his plots, to refute his arguments...?” [Hutton, 1921 (1969) : 157)].

Hutton has argued that to show and produce the body of the slain is to give a definite assurance that the foe had been killed. This is the Angami explanation. Hence the Angamis preferred to bring the whole body, including head. The only difference between human head and animal head is teeth. If teeth are not cut they are not taken (Hutton, 1969 : 158).

Among the Lothas any human flesh brought into the village on return from an expedition is “vetted” by a group of old men to make sure that it is what is stated to be by the bringer. And until the trophy has been passed by this board, no ceremony can be performed for the success of head hunting [Hutton, 1921 (1969) : 157].

The killing of a man entitles the killer to certain distinctive articles of dress, so does the killing of a leopard or tiger. Among the Konyak Nagas it is common for a slave to be brought for the chief’s son to kill in order that the boy may wear ceremonial dress without risking the dangers of war. Pieces of flesh are distributed throughout the young men of the Morung.

Quoting Major Butler, Hutton stated that “the Angamis would cut off the heads, hands and feet of anyone they can meet with, without provocation or pre-existing enmity, merely to stick them up in their fields and so ensure a good crop of grain” [1921 (1969) : 160].

A.W. Davis, Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills writing in 1898 said: “All the tribes in this district consider that by killing a human being in certain cases they are doing the most effectual thing towards averting the displeasure of some particular evil spirit (*terhoma*). Amongst the Angamis especially this idea is very prevalent”, [Hutton, 1921 (1969):160]. Several instances of Kigwema and Jakhama villages are cited by Davis in which men were sent out to bring in heads as offering to ‘*terhoma*’ in order that the plague or small pox might be averted. Further, according to A.W. Davis (also *vide Human Sacrifices in Ancient Assam* by Gait) “there is a very general superstition among the Angamis and Semas that to kill a human being and place a small portion of the flesh in the murderer’s fields is a specific to ensure a good crop, and this is said to have been the reason that prompted certain men of Purobami to murder two men, a woman, and a child near the Sijju river towards the end of 1895. Murders like these partake of the nature of sacrifices, as their object is to avert disaster and so to ensure good crops” [Hutton, 1921 (1969) : 161].

A.W. Davis wrote in 1898 that “Before we annexed their country, the Aos were great slave owners, and these slaves were occasionally made use of for a semi-sacrificial purpose, e.g., two villages are at war and are desirous of making peace. It is found that one side has taken more heads than the other. To make things equal and as a sacrifice to the spirits of the dead, who have gone unavenged, an agreement would be arrived at that the village which had taken the fewest heads should receive one or more slaves from the other village” [Hutton, 1921 (1969): 161].

Davis cites another controversial practice of the case of slave burning. "In trans-Dikhu tribes, when the village Jhuns are ready for firing, a slave is tied up in the middle of them. The jhums are then lighted and the slave is burnt to death. A sacrifice like this ensures a good crop." Hutton has refuted that such practice ever existed. He says above report is incorrect [Hutton, 1921 (1969): 162]. Hanging of heads in chief's houses or Morungs is a widespread practice, particularly among the Ao and Konyak. But the Angamis buried the heads [Hutton, 1969: 162].

Head Taking Ritual

The successful warrior on returning to his village waits outside the village gate. One of his family members brings food for him. After that he enters the village escorted by the men of his clan singing and shouting, and goes first to the 'Kipuchie', the genna stone, of each clan in the village, and deposits at the foot of it the flesh of his enemy or enemies, shouting, "Wo, ho... Wu" for each man killed. Then he goes to his own house and deposits the head, limbs, or whatever flesh he has brought in front of the house, and his wife goes to make Zumho [Hutton, 1921 (1969) : 239].

War Mechanisms, Military Organization: Review of Colonial Ethnography

In numerous reports of the British colonial officers the custom of head hunting and methods of warfare are elucidated. Often ethno centric, these reports fail to provide any sociological explanation of these customs. J.P. Mills and J.H. Hutton, probably on account of their anthropological background, have dealt with philosophical basis of head hunting. Major Butler and W. Robinson are also generally sympathetic in their description of violence in Naga Hills in early nineteenth century. Captain Butler has also described about the Naga weapons.

Robinson (1841) wrote that “the maxims by which the Nagas regulate their military operations, are well suited to their political state...on approaching the enemy’s territories, they collect their troops and advance with great caution. Even in their hottest and most active wars, they proceed wholly by stratagem and ambuscade...To surprise and destroy is the greatest merit of a commander, and the highest pride of his followers...they set on fire the enemy huts in the dead of night, and massacre the inhabitants as they fly... defenceless...they rush upon them with the utmost ferocity, and tearing off the scalps of all those who fall victims to their rage, they carry home those strange trophies of their triumph. These they preserve as monuments not only of their prowess, but of the vengeance which their arm has inflicted upon the people who were objects of resentment. On the death of a warrior, all the scalps taken by him during his lifetime are burnt with his remains” (1841, Elwin, 1969: 538).

There are several organized means to defend the village/ clan territory. Robinson (1841) wrote that they defend themselves with obstinate resolution, but attack their enemies with the most daring courage: The number of men in each tribe is so small... the life of a citizen is extremely precious, and the preservation of it becomes a capital object in their policy...But wherever their communities are more populous, so that they can act with considerable force, and can sustain the loss of several of their members without being sensibly weakened, the military operations of the Nagas more sensibly those of other nations... (1841: 390-394).

‘The universal weapon of the Nagas is a javelin, which is usually adorned with coloured hair and ornamented with strips of rattan of various colours’ (1841 : 390, 394). Their shield consists of a long mat, lined inside with leather or thin boards (1841, Elwin, 1969: 540).

J.K. Butler wrote that, "When the Nagas propose taking vengeance on a neighbouring tribe, the village elders assemble, and in accordance with established customs, the omens (being) consulted and proving propitious, a plan to cut up their enemies by surprise is decided on. Each man provides himself with a spear, sword, bamboo choong, a hollow joint of the bamboo filled with water, and a small basket of rice, and the party being formed, set out in the day towards the frontier of the enemy who is to be attacked. At night they cross over and occupy a favourable position in ambush...and when the cock first crows on the following morning, they rush, with great, shouting...cut up everybody they meet with: even the cows, pigs, and poultry of the foe are slaughtered. Sometimes the victors remain on the spot for two or three days, but generally return to their own village on the same day; taking with them the heads, hands and feet of those they have massacred, these they parade about from house to house, accompanied with drums and songs (Butler, 1847: 158, 164). They then sing dance and perform all manner of antics; pierce and mangle the heads of their enemies (Butler, 1847: 158, 164). One (Naga) who distinguished himself by evincing great ferocity in cutting off more heads than any of his party challenges the villagers to mark his deeds and with many songs he drags the heads of his enemies proclaiming his own triumph: "in the world I am the most powerful and courageous; there is none equal to me. I am the greatest of all men"... After this, the ceremony of tattooing the body is performed. For a whole month from the day of massacre, the Nagas daily sing the war song and dance and manifest the greatest excitement and delight (Butler, 1847 : 1581, 64).

Material Culture: Dress, Weapons, War Helmets

Writing about eastern Nagas, a group called Molamah Naga, R. Brown (1874) observed that 'of arms, they have a formidable and very strong cross bow, with a double barbed arrow

about a foot long; the arrow head, or iron, is loose, presumably to be left in the wound; the feather of the arrow is of stiff leaf, so formed as to give a rotary motion, and consequently, greater precision to its flight, these weapons appear very hard hitting and straight shooters upto 200 yards; they are fired from the hip. The arrows were not poisoned' (Elwin, 1969 : 269). The spear (of Molamah Naga) resembles Angami spear, the head small and sharp, and the shaft ornamented with goat's hair. The Dao is worn behind over the hip, in a wooden case, faced on the outside with polished bone. They have also axes, some with iron some with wooden handles; these are evidently of Burmese manufacture (Elwin 1969: 269).

The Molamah Naga War helmet is of cane, and has a coronal of bear's hair at the base, and goat's hair dyed red and black, over it. These tribes are also tattooed on the breast across in stripes of a blue colour. These stripes have this pattern, and lines with marking between alternately thus. The extent of tattooing is about four or five inches in depth and is only on the front of the chest, extending from below the collar bone to just below the nipple (Elwin, 1969: 269).

Village Defence Mechanisms

According to John Butler (1875) "Naga villags are built on the summits of high tabular hills. Stiff stockades, deep diches bristling with panjies, and massive stonewalls, often loop holded for musketry are their usual defences. In wartime, the hillsides and approaches are escarped and thickely studded over with panjies. These panjies are sharp pointed bamboo skewers or stakes, varying from six inches to three and four feet in length, some of them as thin as a pencil, others as insignificant things to look at, they give a nasty and most painful wound, often causing complete lameness in a few hours. Deep pit falls and small holes covered

over with a light layer of earth and leaves, concealing the panjies within, are also skilfully placed along the paths by which an enemy is expected to approach, and a tumble into one of the former is not a thing to be despised."

The approaches to the villages are often up through tortuous, narrow, covered ways, or lanes, with high banks on either sidelined with an overhanging tangled mass of prickly creepers and brushwood, sometimes through a steep ravine and along the bed of an old torrent, in either case admitting of the passage of only one man at a time.

These paths lead up to gates; or rather door ways, closed by strong, thick and heavy wooden doors, hewn out of one piece of solid wood. The doors are fastened from the inside and admit of being easily barricaded, and thus rendered impregnable against all attacks. These doors again are often overlooked and protected by raised look outs, on which, whenever the clan is at feud, a careful watch is kept up night and day; not unfrequently the only approach to one of these outer gates is up a notched pole from fifteen to twenty feet high.

The several clans, of which there are from two to eight in every village, are frequently divided off by deep lanes and stone walls and whenever an attack is imminent, the several roads leading up to the village are studded over with the stout pegs, driven deep into the ground, which very effectually prevents anything like a rush. On the higher ranges, the roads connecting the several villages, as well as the paths leading down to their cultivation are made with considerable skill, the more precipitous hills being turned with easy gradients, instead of the road being taken up one side of the hill and down the other as is usually the case among hillmen.

Their houses are built with a ground floor, the slopes of the hills being dug down to a rough level; no mat covers the bare ground. They are generally placed in irregular lines, facing inwards, and are constructed after a pattern. These houses have high gable

ends whose eaves almost touch the ground on either side, to be a precaution against high winds. The gable in front, which, in the case of men of wealth or position, is often decorated with board, handsome weather boards, is from 15 to 30 feet high, and the roof slopes off in rear, as well as towards the sides, the gable at the back being only about from 10 to 15 feet in height. In width the houses vary from about 20 to 40 feet, and in length from about 30 to 60 feet. In many of the villages each house is surrounded by a stone wall, making off the 'compound' so to say, wherein the cattle are tethered for the night. Half the space under the front gable, is often walled in with boards as a loose stall, and bamboo baskets are tied up under the eaves of the house to give shelter to their poultry. Pig styes also in the corner of a compound, are not uncommon. The house itself is divided off into from two to three compartments according to the wealth or taste of its owner. In the front room, the grain is stored away in huge baskets made of bamboo from 5 to 10 feet high and about 5 feet in diameter. In the inner room, there is a large open fire place, and around it are placed thick, broad planks, for sitting and sleeping upon, and the back room of all generally contains the liquor tub, the most important piece of furniture in the house in the Naga's estimation.

In this they brew their 'dzu', a kind of fermented beer made of rice and other ingredients, composed of herbs found wild in the jungle. This liquor is the Angami Naga's greatest solace, for strange to say never indulging in either opium, or tobacco (as many of his neighbours do), he may be seen sipping this 'dzu', either through a reed (after the manner of a sherry cobbler), or with a wooden or bamboo spoon out of bamboo or mithun horn drinking cups, from morn to night (Elwin, 1969: 301).

The 'blood feud' of the Nagas is what the 'vendetta' of the Corsican was, a thing to be handed down from generation to generation, an everlasting and most baneful heirloom, involving in its relentless course the brutal murders of helpless old men and

women, innocent young girls and children, until, as often happens, mere petty family quarrels, generally about land or water, being taken up by their respective clansmen, break out into bitter civil wars which devastate whole villages (Elwin, 1969: 302).

According to Johnstone (1896), blood feuds were common among all the hill tribes, but the system was carried to excess among the Angamis. Life for life was the rule, and until each of the opposing parties had lost an equal number, peace was impossible, and whenever members of one village met any belonging to the other, hostilities were sure to result. Sometimes attempt was made to bring about a reconciliation, but then it frequently happened that the number of slain to the credit of each were unequal. Mozuma and Sephema might be at war, and Mozuma killed five, whereas Sephema had killed only four. Sephema says, 'I must kill one more to make the balance, then I will treat for peace', so war continues. Someday Sephema has a chance, but kills two instead of one that was required; this gives her the advantage, and Mozuma refuses to treaty. So it goes on interminably. The position of a small village at war with a large one, was often deplorable as no one dared to leave the village except under a strong escort (Johnstone, 1896, Elwin, 1996 : 313).

No Angami could assume the 'toga virilis', in this case the kilt ornamented with cowrie shells, until he had slain an enemy, and in the more powerful villages no girl could marry a man unless he was so decorated. The cowrie ornaments were taken off when a man was mourning the death of a relation.

To kill a baby in arms, or a woman, was accounted a greater feat than killing a man, as it implied having penetrated to the innermost recesses of an enemy's country, whereas a man might be killed anywhere by a successful ambush. I knew a man who had killed sixty women and children, when on one occasion he happened to come upon them after all the men had left the village on a hunting expedition (Elwin, 1996: 314).

Slavery

This custom was universal throughout the Ao tribe. Writing for Census of India, A.W. Davis (1891) wrote that “since our occupation of the country, every effort has been made to suppress the custom, and the selling and buying of slaves is now, I fancy, very uncommon. Slaves were and are I believe, on the whole, very well treated, being considered almost as members of the family. Cases of harsh treatment, of course, most have occurred occasionally, but these must now be very rare, and the slaves who have remained with their owners know very well that, if treated, all they have to do is to run away. In old days slaves, unless they could get down to the plains, could not run away, it being etiquette for them to be caught and returned by the inhabitants of any village in which they took refuge.

Troublesome slaves were usually sold to people living across the Dikhu, amongst whom the custom of human sacrifices is not, I believe, entirely unknown. Amongst the Aos before occupation of the country, slaves were not infrequently paid by one village to another village with which they happened to be on bad terms, to make up a quarrel, and as a sort of set off against any head taken by them. Slaves paid in this way were invariably slaughtered by the village, which received them, as an offering to the spirits of the men on their side who had been killed (Davis, 1891).

Female slaves were not allowed to marry or have children. If they became pregnant, their children were killed immediately after birth, or else abortion was procured. Female slaves are not tattooed (Elwin, 1969 : 336).

Disposal of Heads

Among the Manipur's Kachcha Nagas any heads taken were kept in the village and afterwards exchanged for those of relatives,

or redeemed by the payment of money or mithun. It was of common occurrence for two villages at deadly feud to agree to keep from the warpath for a period of two, three, or four months. During the truce the heads taken on either side were often exchanged, the two villages meeting and holding a big feast. At the conclusion of the specified time, the contest was renewed with fresh vigour.

In common with the Angamis, in old days the Kachcha Nagas looked upon no male as worthy of the name of man, unless he had taken at least one head. Any head was sufficient to stamp a warrior, an old woman's or a child's. In all probability the proud owner waited at the drinking place or one of the many paths to the village *jhums*, and smote some venerable dame toiling home with her basket of sticks. It mattered not, the head was just as valuable in the eyes of the people, and brought him as much in favour with the village belles (Soppit, 1885, Elwin, 1969 : 429).

Treatment of Prisoners of War

In former years all persons captured in war were looked upon as slaves of the captor. They could, as a rule, however, be redeemed by the relatives, on payment of a certain sum. The ordinary procedure in the case of disputes and quarrels is for both parties to be brought up before the Matai and the villagers, and a decision given. A cup of liquor is then produced by the Matai and each of the disputants drink one half. This is supposed to re-establish peace, and the quarrel is at an end (Soppit, 1885, Elwin, 1969: 432).

Arms and Mode of Fighting

Among the Tangkuls the only arm used in warfare is a long heavy spear; this is thrust, as it is too heavy to be thrown. On the left arm is worn an oblong shields of hide, ornamented with tresses of human hair and wool dyed in various colours. Amongst the

Luhupas, the headdress of the warrior is peculiar; hence the name Luhupa, which is formerly mentioned. The basis of his head piece is a conical structure of wicker work, about a foot high; over this a layer of fur and hair, black and red in colour; to the sides are stitched as wings round structures, filled in with coloured seeds in rings; in front is a disc of polished brass, with a button shaped knob in the centre; slips of bamboo, feathers, etc. are also attached to the head piece, and occasionally a long crescent shaped piece of buffalo horn scraped this is placed in front of the helmet. Warriors of distinction who have slain many people, wear the hair of their victims, depending from the side ornaments of the helmet in the first instance, and, as they accumulate, made into a kind of fringe worn round the face, like the mane of a lion. Women's tresses are preferred, as being longer. The rest of the warrior's dress presents nothing peculiar. When the villagers are desirous of fighting, notice on the one side is invariably given; and, as amongst the Angamis, the date may be given, and a stand up fight in the open agreed upon at a given place. In other cases, intimation is made to one village from another that its members from a certain time will be killed, whenever an opportunity is found. In fighting, the spear is thrust; two hands being generally used. When an enemy is killed, the head is immediately cut off by the edge of the spear; these heads are dried and hung up in the houses of the victors, and, as with the Angamis, may be returned, and the feud ended. Feuds are handed down from generation to generation (R. Brown, 1973, Elwin, 1969: 487).

Naga Offensive Weapons

The only national, offensive weapons, used by the Angami, are the spear and dao, but of late years they have managed to become the proud possessors of a considerable quantity of fire arms. "The spear is generally a very handsome one, and at close quarter, or when thrown from a ambuscade, is a formidable weapon, well

calculated to inflict a most dangerous wound. At anything over thirty yards, however, it is but of little use, and is not very difficult to dodge even at two thirds of that distance. The spear head is of iron, varying from 18 inches to 2 feet in length, and from 2 to 3 inches in breadth. Its shaft is generally from 4 to 5 feet in length, and is usually very picturesquely ornamented with scarlet goat's hair, here and there intermingled with a peculiar pattern of black and white hair; sometimes, though rarely, the whole shaft is beautifully worked over with scarlet and yellow cane, and it is always tipped at the bottom with an iron spike of from three inches to over a foot in length, used for sticking it into the ground. A Naga would never dream of leaving his spear against a wall. It must be always kept in a perpendicular position, either by being stuck upright into the ground or by being suspended against one of the walls of the house, so as to keep it perfectly straight. On the war path every Angami carries two of these spears" (Butler, J. 1875). The dao is a broad headed kind of handbill, with a heavy blade about 18 inches in length and only edged on one side. This dao is invariably worn at the back of the waist in a rough sort of half scabbard made of wood.

Item of Defence

The only article of defence they possess is a large shield from 5 to 6 feet high, 2 feet broad at the top and tapering down to about a foot in breadth at the bottom. This shield is made of bamboo matting, and is covered with either the skin of some wild animal (elephant, tiger, leopard and bear being among the most common), or a piece of cloth, generally scarlet. In the latter case, or even without the cloth, it is decorated with pieces of skin cut so as to represent human heads, and tufts of scarlet goat's hair, whilst on the inside is attached a board, so as to make it spear proof. From each corner of the upper end of the shields spring two cane horns from 2.5 to 3 feet in length, decorated with

the long flowing tresses of human hair taken in war probably the locks of some unfortunate woman butchered at the water hole intermingled with goat's hair dyed scarlet; and from the centre rises a plume about 3 feet long of scarlet goat's hair, tripped at the top for about 4 inches in depth with white goat's hair, and along the top edge runs a fringe of white, downy feathers. Along the inner edge, a string of lappets made of feathers of various hues, white, black, blue, and scarlet, wave to and fro most gracefully, at every motion of the shield. Besides the spear, dao and shields, when proceeding out on a foray, they invariably take with them several bundles of 'panjies', with which they rapidly cover the path on retreat, so as to disable and retard any party that may start in pursuit (J. Butler, 1875).

Head Hunting

The whole of the Naga and Kuki tribes are headhunters, and they all try and get heads in the same treacherous way. Any head counts be it that of man, woman, or child and entitles the man who takes it to wear certain ornaments according to the custom of the tribe or village. Most heads are taken, or rather used to be taken, not in fair fight, but by methods the most treacherous. As common a method as any was for a man to lurk about the water ghat of a hostile village, and kill the first woman or child who came to draw water. Sometimes expeditions on a large scale were made, several villages combining for the purpose of making a large bag. Even then if the village to be attacked was found prepared, the valiant warriors who had come against it would, as a rule, retire without striking a blow. If, however, it was found that the whole of the adult population was away in the fields, an attack would be delivered, and as many children and old people as could within a reasonable time be killed, a retreat being effected before the men of the village attacked could have

time to receive the news and return from their fields (Davis, 1891, Elwin, 1969: 546).

Importance of Dormitory: Military Training

Dormitory, along with logdrum, is part of the oldest cultural stratum of the Naga Hills. The dormitory (*morung*) was the main institution directly related with the Naga military organization and warfare. The Naga *morung* was the centre of warfare in the sense of imparting to its members the required lessons for fighting the enemy and of guarding the village. Thus it served as a guardhouse. The dormitory was inseparable from the institution of 'head hunting'. After the 'local war' and 'head hunting', human skulls were hung in the dormitory.

As a result of British administrative actions and persuasion since 1923 in particular, the practice of head hunting gradually stopped and thus the *morung* houses were made partly defunct. Spread of Christianity also gradually ushered in a change of attitude. Gradual development of formal education also helped in eradication of dormitory institution. In Eastern Naga hills the rites and ceremonies centring around the dormitory disappeared, though *morung* houses continued to serve some purposes among the many Nagas, particularly in Tunsang and Mon district (Das, 1994).

Morung did not exist among the Angami, Chakhesang, and other western and southern Nagas. Among the Semas the chief's house served for all the purpose of a *morung*, both as a centre of *gennas* (rituals) and as a bachelor's sleeping place (Hutton, 1921: 37).

Among the Chang Nagas, Haki, the *morung* like structure was used as a logdrum house, repository for the 'trophies' or war and the skulls of the animals sacrificed (Das, 1994). In Haki,

the head hunting raids were planned, discussed and celebrated. Heads taken in war were first brought to the Haki, followed by ceremonial functions and rite. The Lothas also brought the heads taken in war first to the bachelor's hall (Champo) and 'prisoners of war' were also detained here (Mills, 1992: 105).

To sum up it may be restated that practices of head hunting and warfare in Naga areas of Nagaland and Manipur did operate as the 'regulated interrelationships' in the political field. As we discussed clearcut kinship rules and descent principles as also tribal laws regulated the rights, jural obligations and moral responsibilities among the Nagas. Blood feud, head hunting and warfare remained part of this system of rights and obligations.

NOTE

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