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From Sedentarisation to Border Generation: 'Impossibility' of the Nation

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Abstract

Are hills meant for Nagas and plains for Assamese? How and when the idea of hills and plains as isolated and separated terrain got solidified? Drawing references from the tour diaries and reports of the colonial officials, this article attempts to deconstruct the binary of hills and plains by emphasising on networks of communication and citing instances of trade and commerce between the dwellers of hills and plains. It draws a trajectory of the policies of the colonial and post-colonial governments, which began drawing lines between people and regulated their mobility. The sedentarisation attempted by the state, ended in drastic results, finally culminating as the border. The article is therefore an attempt in understanding the politics of border, which hints towards two directions: impossibility of writing history with Capital 'H' and the continuous 'unmaking' of the nation.

Assam Nagaland border dispute is unilaterally created by the Government of Nagaland and the Naga People...there is no justification of their claims...the encroachment of the Naga people in the Reserved forests goes against the law of the land.²

Nagaland has been projected in an unfavourable light in the National Press. It pains us to see that one sided versions given by people sitting in the places where the national press corps is well represented got a better sweep in the media than the actual position existing on the ground.³

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Bhupen Sarmah for initiating the idea of exploring the border, for the discussions we had, for being a brilliant host and for 'OKD dialogue' which was organised at Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development on 29th August, 2014. I also thank Dr. Arunima Deka for regularly reading my drafts and providing valuable inputs and Dr. Uddipan Dutta for his valuable insights, in addition I thank the librarian, the faculty and the staff at OKD for helping me sincerely.

² *Public Memorandum Submitted to the Local Commission on Assam- Nagaland Dispute*, on 20th August 2007. The Local Commission was constituted by the orders of the Supreme Court of India, to enquire into the border affairs. The memorandum was submitted with the title- *Facts about Assam- Nagaland Border Dispute*, 2007.

³ *Untold Story about Merapani*, p.1. The Government of Nagaland came out with the booklet in 1985 after it was accused of carrying out acts of violence in the border areas. Instead Nagaland accused the Assam Police and of incessantly firing on the Deputy Commissioner of Wokha district of Nagaland, establishing police posts inside the border areas, burning villages and firing on the people. The book aims to historically establish, the claims of Nagas over the forest reserves. It argued that 'the question of retransfer of all the Reserve forest of Nagaland, transferred to Sibsagar and Nowgong districts by the then British administration, from time to time,

The above excerpts present us with two opposite perspectives over the 'disputed territory', offered by the respective state governments. My enquiry into the terrain of 'disputed' hills and plains is emerging out of the recurring outbursts of emotions over the claims over the forest reserve in the foothill areas which, according to the 'constitutional arrangements' falls in the geo-political body of Assam but has been repeatedly contested by Nagaland.⁴ Both the states narrate their claims as historical 'truth'⁵ and deny the claims of the 'other'. As per the arrangement between the Union and the State⁶, Assam and Nagaland share a 434-km boundary.⁷ Assam states that 'Nagaland has been "encroaching" upon over 66,000 hectares in Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts...the "encroached" area also includes over 80 per cent of reserved forests'.⁸ Assam further states that 'Nagaland has set up three civil subdivisions on Assam territory'.⁹ Nagaland, on the other hand, insists that, 'more tracts under Assam "occupation" belong to Nagaland'.¹⁰ The National Socialist Council of Nagaland- Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah (NSCN- IM) demands the entire Assam tract south of the Guwahati-Dibrugarh railway track in 'Greater Nagalim'.¹¹

in the past, is not an issue that has suddenly come to the fore'. It further argued that a Nine point settlement was signed between the Naga National Council and the then Governor of Assam Sir Akbar Hydari, in June 1947 and it was agreed that the boundaries of the administrative division of Naga Hills district would be modified and all the forests transferred to Sibsagar and Nowgong districts of Assam would be brought back.

⁴ The Naga delegation which went to New Delhi in July 1960 presented a 16 point memorandum to the prime minister of India. Jawaharlal Nehru announced the final decision on the formation of Nagaland on 1st August 1960 in the parliament. Accordingly The State of Nagaland Act was passed in 1962 and on 1st December 1963 Nagaland was formed. For details see, Elwin, *Nagaland*.

⁵ The Government of Assam and the Government of Nagaland came with their own versions of 'facts' and 'truths' about the border. The booklet of Assam is titled- *Facts about the Assam- Nagaland Border*, 1985, and the booklet of Nagaland is titled- *A Brief account on Historical Sequences of Nagaland Assam Border Affairs* (n. d).

⁶ <http://indiakanon.org/doc/1490539>, accessed on 25th November, 2014. *The State of Nagaland Act, 1962*, provided for the formation of Nagaland. The Act stated the following, 'As from the appointed day, there shall be formed a new State to be known as the State of Nagaland comprising the territories which immediately before that day were comprised in the Naga Hills- Tuensang Area and thereupon the said territories shall cease to form part of the State of Assam. Without prejudice to the power of the State Government to alter after the appointed day, the name, extent or boundaries of any district, the State of Nagaland shall consist of three districts to be called the Kohima district, Mokokchung district and Tuensang district, each comprising the areas respectively set out in the Schedule'. For detailed version of the Act see, Government of Nagaland, *Nagaland Code* Vol. 1. The Act came into force on 4th September, 1962 and was called Act 27 of 1962- The State of Nagaland Act, 1962.

⁷ Bhattacharyya, *The Troubled Border*, p. 2. The following details would clarify the exact boundary length between the state of Nagaland and Assam. Sivasagar and Nagaland share a boundary length of 320 Kilometers, Karbi-Anglong and Nagaland= 74 kilometers and North Cachar Hills and Nagaland= 40 kilometers. Total= 434 kilometers.

⁸ Kashyap, 'Explained: Assam vs. Nagaland', *The Hindu*, 22nd August, 2014.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.* The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) was formed on January 31, 1980 by Isak Chisi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and S.S. Khaplang as an opposition to the 'Shillong Accord' signed by the then NNC (Naga National Council) with the Indian government. Later, differences surfaced within the outfit over the issue

Amidst these claims and counter claims, history is a reference point for both the contesting parties. The media, the civil society, the intelligentsia and the government of both the states have their own versions of 'truth'.¹² In the process the 'truth' gets multiplied, history is revisited, archives re-explored, and files and documents are quoted to validate ones claim and reject the claims of the other. Lost in these transactions of history, one is bound to repeat the following methodological questions asked by E.H. Carr- What is a 'historical fact'? Can history be written with capital 'H'?¹³ Borders and the emotions encircling it brings before us, the impossibilities and challenges associated with the writing of an objective history. It also brings forth the picture of contested histories, multiplicity in narration and role of opinions in the framing and re-framing of history. I proceed to begin my enquiry amidst these confusions.

The colonial politics of constituting territories was an outcome of detailed topographical study: mapping people and territories as resources, and thereby constituting provinces and districts. Under such circumstances Assam became a province and Nagaland became a hill district.¹⁴ The advent of tea industry gave a new identity to Assam. Provinces were constituted around natural resources and geography was carved with monetary objectives and administrative convenience.¹⁵ Now the question of mobility of population was decided by the state and so was the utilisation of resources.¹⁶ I shall elaborate on the 'quantitative episteme' through which the colonial state aimed to extend its territory and attempted to create

of commencing a dialogue process with the Indian Government and on April 30, 1988, the NSCN split into two factions, namely the NSCN-K led by S. S. Khaplang, and the NSCN-IM, led by Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah. The principle objective of the outfit is to establish a 'Greater Nagaland' ('Nagalim' or the People's Republic of Nagaland) based on Mao Tse Tung's ideology. Its manifesto is based on the principle of Socialism for economic development and a spiritual outlook - 'Nagaland for Christ'. For further details see, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/nagaland/terrorist/outfits/Nscn_im.htm, accessed on 18th September, 2015.

¹² For details see my section, 'Border in Flames' in this essay, which elaborates on the multiple narratives offered by media, civil society, government and the intelligentsia.

¹³ Historians have now and then encountered these questions and have tried to understand the 'making' and 'unmaking' of history. Answering to the above queries which arose under a different historical circumstance, E.H Carr wrote, 'The historian starts with a provisional selection of facts and a provisional interpretation in the light of which that selection has been made- by others as well as by himself. As he works, both the interpretation and the selection and ordering of facts undergo subtle and partly unconscious changes through the reciprocal action of one or the other...The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless, History is therefore a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past'. For a better understanding see, Carr, *What is History?*

¹⁴ Assam after 1826 was ruled as an appendage of the unwieldy province of Bengal, it was in 1874 that Assam as a separate province was constituted and was placed under Chief Commissionership. Naga Hills District was formed in 1866. For details See, Baruah, *India against Itself*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26. For a detailed study of the political economy behind the conquest of North East India, see, Cederlof, *Founding an Empire*.

¹⁶ For details about the mobility of population, and usage of resources see, Sharma, *Empire's Garden*.

'subjects'.¹⁷ The mapping of the territory by the colonial state revealed that there was a free flow of people and commerce and the communities were interdependent. Salt was one of the important items of exchange between the people of the hills and plains which is testified by the existence of *paths*, *dwars* and *kotokies* and its exchange was facilitated by the existence of these networks of communication.¹⁸ The pre-colonial society was not guided by unitary notions of sovereignty and nation and these networks of communication kept the flags of interdependence flying. The binaries of the hills and the plains was a colonial invention, which emerged out the complexities associated with geography and administrative tactics adopted by the colonial state. The ideas of closed and protected frontiers, fenced boundaries, solid nation and closed citizenship will therefore be studied historically. In the course of my essay I shall elaborate on the networks of communication and draw a trajectory of the evolution of the above mentioned ideas.

The colonial state in India chose to define multiple identities and bring them under the banner of the 'empire'. It made 'concerted attempt to create the institutional procedures for systematically objectifying and normalising the colonised terrain, for the realisation of governability of its subject'.¹⁹ The Nagas are one such identity, which was constructed in layers.²⁰ The invention of the Nagas, the making of

¹⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of Bio Politics, Lectures At The College De France*. For Foucault, the 'episteme' is something like a world-view, a general stage of reason, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, imposing on each one the same norms and postulates. He defines 'episteme' as the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalised systems; the way in which, in each of these discursive formations, the transition to epistemologisation, scientificity, and formalisation are situated and operate; the distribution of these thresholds, which may coincide, be subordinated to one another, or be separated by shifts in time; the lateral relations that may exist between epistemological figures or sciences in so far as they belong to neighbouring, but distinct, discursive practices. . . . The 'episteme' is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities. 'Quantitative episteme' therefore meant that now the population emerged as a *datum*, or field of intervention and as an objective of governmental techniques. The body of the subject was now to be statistically depicted categories such as age, sex etc. were deployed by the state to generate data around the population. Governmentality by which Foucault meant the 'ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power was to be achieved through this quantitative episteme. For details see, Foucault, *The Birth of Bio Politics, Lectures At The College De France 1978-1979*.

¹⁸ *Dwars* means roads which connected the hills and the plains and *Kotokies* refers to interpreters and messengers.

¹⁹ Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, pp. 19-20.

²⁰ Debojyoti Das argues that the Naga identity was based on information gathering; morphometric-scientific enquiry and visual illustration of racial 'other' designed to subjugate the feuding Nagas with a civilising discourse and rule of law. The ethnography which was carried vis-à-vis administration is broadly understood by him under three phases; Military phase (1832-1866), Political Control phase (1866-1877) and Administrative Phase (1878-1947). During these three phases a variety of information were collected through first hand encounter with the Nagas. The description of the Nagas entered the public sphere through writings in the form of monographs and journal publications particularly the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and other little magazines and expedition reports that were outlets for official and public knowledge. Besides the printed literature that caught academic attention of scholars, visuals, sketches and photographs played a critical role in

Nagaland, the recurring disputes associated with the formation of Nagaland and the constant tussle over the boundaries which the state shares with Assam, Manipur and Arunachal hints towards the complex linkages between the politics of space, resources, identity and the nation. It also opened gateways towards the constant 'making' and 'unmaking' of the nation. By focusing on the politics of border, I shall establish that the contestations around the border hints towards the 'impossibility' of the nation.²¹ My effort is to locate the complex transitions over a period of one hundred and fifty years, which takes into account the mutations of the networks of communication, the manufacturing of identities, emergence of Naga Nationalism, the skirmishes and multiple narrations about the border and the many roads which the union, the state and the people have been traversing.

'Knowing' the 'Unknown': The 'Making' of the Nagas

The objectification of people was central to the manufacturing of identities. Mapping was central to objectification; it was carried out meticulously with an objective of exploring the population, knowing the 'unknown', and making them 'known'.²² With reference to the Nagas, a similar attempt was made, to know the 'unknown'. Tours were carried out by colonial officials, boundaries were marked, village-feuds were settled, new villages were identified, and 'new people' were found. The book titled *Tours and Adventures in Assam* by Major John Butler gives a detailed account of expeditions carried against the Nagas. The first expedition which was directed against the Angami Naga chiefs was to meet them and prepare them to co-operate by conciliatory intercourse. The expedition was designed with the objectives of 'repressing their annual murderous and marauding incursions against the peaceable British subjects; to survey and map the tract of country in question and to open a regular communication with the Muneepor and Nowgong through the Angami country'.²³ In between 1845 to 1850 ten expeditions were carried out against the

objectifying the Nagas as 'primitive' and 'uncivilised'. For details See, Das, 'The Construction and Institutionalisation of Ethnicity: Anthropology, Photography and the Nagas', pp. 28-49.

²¹ Arguing in the case of Tamil polity, the impossibility of nation is very clearly emphasised by M.S.S Pandian, who argues that the nation form is not an enabling political arrangement of our times, hence he suggests that the work of imagination and the work of politics need to seek newer, pluralistic and enabling forms of politics beyond the nation-form. Pandian, 'Nation Impossible', pp. 65-69. I carry the argument further by emphasising that borders provides us with the picture of contested terrains which questions the political arrangement forwarded by the political elite. The defining of territories, lack the vision and fails to take the sensibilities of people into consideration. The contested border of Assam and Nagaland is an example of the impossibility of nation-state.

²² The binary of 'known' and 'unknown' has been used here to explore the mapping and quantitative mechanism of the colonial state. With respect to the subcontinent especially the plains the methods of mapping were utilised rigorously, but with respect to the hills: lines were drawn owing to the difficulty of exploring the hilly terrain. The geographical extension of the empire with special reference to the hills was inherently tensed. The hills were differentiated from the plains; the people of the plains were the British subjects (Known), while the people dwelling in the hills were the 'unknown' (head hunters/savage/naked).

²³ Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, p. 12. The spellings of the people and places have not been altered and it follows the spellings subscribed by the colonial officials. Present day Manipur was

Nagas. In the course of the expeditions many villages were burnt, in addition granaries, crops and houses were destroyed.²⁴ To the colonial authorities whatever was 'different' was to be subdued, thus through survey operations, through tours and through raids attempts were made to conquer and extend the frontiers of the British Empire. In 1873 the Surveyor General wrote the following to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal-

... attempt has been made to extend the revenue topographical survey beyond the limits of the cultivated area or revenue paying area as laid down on the usual revenue system, so as to embrace all the tracts lying between the open plain country near the Brahmaputra river and the tribes inhabiting the lower hills and which although not absolutely in a revenue sense within the fiscal jurisdiction are yet subject politically and geographically to the British Government, and of which some topographical knowledge is most essential for the completion of the maps of the British province.²⁵

Mapping of topography was of immediate necessity, ironically without knowing the topography the territories were claimed as 'British territory', the people and the topography were gradually mapped. The Naga country was identified as the 'unknown sea', for very little was known of the tribes beyond the Angami country.²⁶ Hence both from the perspective of knowing the unknown tract and conquering the people, attempts were made in exploring the 'unknown sea'. In the year 1873 a Topographical Party No. 6 was constituted under Major Godwin to conduct a topographical survey around the Naga Hills.²⁷ Knowing the 'unknown' was initiated with the objective of revenue generation, but as the Surveyor General admitted before proceeding with the revenue survey party it was essential to have a clear idea of the topography.²⁸ This leads us to the conclusion that the boundaries of the eastern frontier were yet to be defined, and the region was yet to be explored. The Eastern frontier of empire was therefore still the 'unknown tract'.

The colonial archive is full of details, of the tours carried out by Deputy Commissioners in the hilly terrains. Three principal Naga clans were identified who

referred to as Muneepor/Munnipore, the river Brahmaputra was spelled as Brahmapooter and Nowgaon as Nowgong. Similarly in the later course of my essay I have subscribed to the old spellings for the districts of Sebsaugor/ Sibsagor, Demapore, Luckhimpore which are presently spelled as Sibsagar, Dimapur and Lakhimpur.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

²⁵ Bengal Government Papers (hereafter BGP), Assam State Archives (hereafter ASA), File No. 37/44, 1873-74.

²⁶ BGP, ASA, File No. 214/522, 1871.

²⁷ BGP, ASA, File No. 37/44, 1873-74.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

were in communication with Assam, they were- the *Namsangeeas*, *Bor- Dwarreeas* and *Pannee- Dwarrees*.²⁹ After surveying the landscape, customs, people and the climate, John Owen noted that the Nagas and the 'Assamese' were in communication with one another which was disrupted a little between the month of July and August because of the incessant mountainous torrents. The difference between 'we' and 'them' was constituted in manners of eating, dwelling, dressing and their cultural and economic practices. Owen wrote-

such a value do the Nagas attach to their *daos* and spears that one would almost imagine them to have been consecrated by some great unknown. The battle-axe is his companion whether asleep or awake, in sanguinary conflict, in his agricultural pursuits, and in the domestic exercise of making a basket, or shaping out a wooden ornament.³⁰

The Nagas were therefore the carriers of '*daos* and spears', who were incessantly into head hunting and warfare.³¹ *Daos* and spears exhibited a picture of 'difference'. To the white men this was a gaze of 'difference'. The gaze of 'difference' between the white sahibs and 'naked' Nagas was thus solidified. The 'metaphor of head' was used by the colonial officials to construct the imagery of the savage, and 'head hunting' was read as a site of cultural difference.³²

These tours through which the metaphors were constructed around the people were also used as mechanisms of entering the 'unknown' domain, conquering them and mapping resources. In the process of mapping, new naming was done, this time it was the Sebsaugor Nagas, who were identified inhabiting long strip of hill country bordering Sebsaugor on the South. Between the river Doyang and the Dikhu the Naga country was divided into six *dwar*s.³³ To each of this *dwar* was attached a *kotokie* or clan representative who served as the messenger between the government and the tribe ordinarily using that *dwar*.³⁴ As early as 1844, Colonel Brodie carried out a tour through the hills marking from the Dikhu to the Doyang. In the course of his tour he passed through a number of villages and made agreements with the

²⁹ Owen, *Notes on the Naga Tribes in communication with Assam 1844*, pp.1-2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

³¹ See the *Notes By Lieut. R. G. Woodthorpe of No. 6, Topographical Survey, 1875*, ASA.

³² For details about the head and deconstruction of the imagery of head as a site of cultural difference see., Kar, 'Head in the Naga Hills', in Chatterjee, Thakurta and Kar, eds, *New Cultural Histories of India*.

³³ Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, p. 85. The *dwar*s were used by the Nagas as roads for communication.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94. Each clan used to have their *kotokies* who were paid both by the government as well as by the Naga chiefs. The *kotokies* generally received *khats* or grants of lands in the plains. In 1845 it was found out that in Sebsaugor alone there were 88 *Kotokies*, who not only received land grants from the Naga chiefs but also remissions on their lands by the government.

different chiefs, who in turn 'acknowledged the supremacy of the British Government'. The agreements however did not yield the desired result and very soon it reached a dead end.³⁵

In November 1845, Captain Butler, Principal Assistant of Nowgong was deputed to the hills with a force and he made progress and conciliated the tribes and mapped the topography. He succeeded in inducing the chiefs to come and meet him who paid up their tribute in ivory, cloth and spears. The tours led to the opening up of a new road from Mohung Dijooa to Samoogoodting and a new stockade and grain godown were erected at Demapore, and a market established at Samoogoodting.³⁶ The initial policy of the British with the Nagas was of active control and tolerably vigorous interference in tribal matters.³⁷ It included the policy such as 'show of force by the government' upon the diverse clans.³⁸ From 1855 onwards a change in policy was initiated, now, non- interference became the rule and the officers were encouraged not to visit the hills or to keep up intercourse with the hill men.³⁹ But by 1862 the official position changed, in 1862 the Commissioner wrote, 'it is quite certain our relations with the Nagas could not possibly be on a worse footing than they are now. The non- interference policy is excellent in theory, but government will probably be inclined to think that it must be abandoned'.⁴⁰ When, the attempts to subjugate the hills failed, than a new policy was devised, the new policy was initiated to regulate the mobility of the 'unruly' population.

In 1874 a survey operation was carried out in the Naga Hills East by Lieutenant W.A. Holcombe who was the Assistant Commissioner of Jaipur sub-division Upper Assam. He defined the Nagas, as a 'typical savage', brave with his own weapons as in an attack on a wild beast. They were identified as lively, confiding, good-tempered, honest, moral and hospitable. Similarly the darker side of his character were identified as cruelty, idleness and love for strong drink'.⁴¹ In the course of his exploration he found out that the Nagas manufactured salt and the villages east of the Disang possessed salt-wells.⁴² The salt identified was perfectly black and was

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96. From 1844 to 1855, there were six instances where the government actively interfered in the internal matter of the Nagas.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.116.

⁴¹ *Report on the Exploration Survey in the Naga Hills (East), 1874*, p.1 4. On 7th August 1874 Lieutenant W. A. Holcombe, Assistant Commissioner, Jaipur subdivision, Upper Assam, presented a detailed report of his survey operations to the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur.

⁴² *Ibid.*

sold in Jaipur at ten seers for the rupee.⁴³ The salt wells were the sites where salts were manufactured which were worked by families in turns, who made money while in office. Among the articles that found their way to the plains from the Naga Hills were- chillies, cotton, gum, bees' wax, salt, matting, baskets, sieves and little rice in the Makum direction.⁴⁴ Emphasising on the importance of trade he wrote-

The trade between the Nagas on the Burmese side and our Nagas is extremely limited and is confined principally to an exchange of pottery, brass plates, coloured cane and *daos*, for salt and cloth; between the inner Nagas and those bordering on the plains, cloth, salt, and knives are bartered by the former in exchange for rice, ginger, *daos*, cane baskets and hats. In the cold weather some of the inner Nagas were employed by those nearer the plains to carry salt into the Muttok country, being paid about Re. 1 per maund for carrying it eight days journey there and back from their homes.⁴⁵

Although trade was identified as 'limited' in nature, but one cannot underestimate the importance of trade which facilitated the interaction between the people residing in the hills and plains. The salt manufactured by the Nagas was highly preferred by the Muttok country, in the oral vocabulary of the Muttok country one hears of the term - *khar khua axomiya* (khar eating Assamese)⁴⁶ salt was scarce in the Muttok country, thus the Muttoks were actively engaged in importing salt from the Nagas. Trade was an acknowledged phenomenon for the Nagas residing in the Sebsaugor areas. The Boree Nagas on the Sebsaugor frontier frequented the plain markets regularly.⁴⁷ Mackenzie wrote that, 'the Eastern clans of the Sebsaugor Nagas trade both with the district and with Luckhimpore'.⁴⁸ The parties of traders brought down cotton, chillies, ginger etc and took away salt, irons, fish and pariah pups.⁴⁹ Brodie described that the intercourse among the people of the hills and the plains was maintained with the help of interpreters (*kotokies*) and he further stated that it was the custom for the Nagas to leave their spears at the *kotokies* house as they came down from the hills on trading expeditions and they reclaimed them on their return.⁵⁰

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ There are around 24 varieties of *Khar*, but mainly the people preferred the *khar* prepared by Papaya or Banana. *Khar* was also used as a substitute for salt, and it still forms a diet for the sizeable population of the region.

⁴⁷ Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, p. 96.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Trade was therefore crucial to the economy of both the hills and the plains. In an agrarian and self sufficient economy the volume of trade should not mistaken in terms of quantity, rather the local exchange i.e. the exchange of goods and articles between the hills and the plains reflected mutual dependence. It was through these networks of communication the people of the hills and plains continuously interacted and it is through trade one can deconstruct the fixity associated with the people of hills and plains. The project of the colonial state to sedentarise the people to a geographical location, and confine their mobility, drastically affected the dynamics of mobility and interdependence. My next section specifically highlights on the theme of sedentarisation.

Drawing line, taming the 'thieves' and 'raiders'

In the year 1871 the British government was faced with three very 'difficult questions'. The first question was associated with the boundary between Munnipore and the Naga Hills district. The second question was the policy to be followed by the officer stationed at Samoogoodting vis-à-vis the Nagas who constantly raided Munnipore and third was the policy to be adopted with the Lhota and other Nagas living in the hills south of Sebsaugor, who raided the Naga hills districts, Munnipore and also the constant bickering by the Nagas with tea planters in the south of the Sebsaugor and Luckimpore district.⁵¹ Describing the Naga country, J. Ware Edgar wrote that-

The Naga country began where the Khasia country ended and extended to the sources of Doyang. It comprised the North Cachar, the Naga hills district, the hill country north West, north and north east of the Munnipore valley and the hills south of the Sebsaugor district...The tract of the Nagas extended from the Kopili on the West to the Burra Dihing on the east and lying between the cultivated parts of Assam, Cachar, Munnipore and Burmah is not exclusively inhabited by Nagas. There are in it villages of Cacharies, Cookies, Meekirs and possibly some other tribes. But the Nagas preponderate to such an extent that it may accurately be called the Naga country.⁵²

The hills skirting the south side of the Sebsaugor district was reported to be inhabited by Sanglois, Namsangs and many other families whom Colonel Hopkinson described as 'Lhotas and cognate tribes'.⁵³ To the east of the Naga Hills district were the Naga Hills of Sebsaugor, which was reported as 'a tract which has not been explored' and 'very little was known of the people in the South and east of

⁵¹ BGP, ASA, File No. 214/522, 1871.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

the district'.⁵⁴ 'A military outpost' wrote Hopkinson is a 'protection against the hill tribes, as an umbrella is against rain, but no more'.⁵⁵ Under such condition it was concluded that a partially occupied and protected country would be a constant source of annoyance, expense and discredit hence the policy advocated by Col. Hopkinson was that of exercising complete control over the tribes, acknowledge them as subjects, extend the influence over them and bring them under and within the pale of civilisation.⁵⁶ He further invoked the sentiments of civilisation and the burden of white men, whereby he argued that in relation to the hill tribes 'they have failed in their duty and have separated the people of the plains from the people of the hills, making former the subjects and renouncing the latter'. This neglect according to him was yielding drastic results which he exclaimed by citing that, 'the Abors have made the country between themselves and the Brahmapooteer a desert, and the Nagas have driven away the population of North Cachar'.⁵⁷ Hence a new inning of annexation was to be begun, which meant advancing yearly 'step by step, opening roads, clearing villages and building permanent station'.⁵⁸ The Nagas were therefore to be imagined as the British 'subjects' and no frontiers was to be recognised vis-à-vis 'them'.⁵⁹

But very soon the British government was forced to make a review of its policies and define boundaries in the south of the Sibsagar district. The independent Nagas laid claims to the land which was constantly being occupied by the Planters for the establishment of Tea gardens. Colonel Haughton remarked that the wild tribes saw this as trespass.⁶⁰ Under such circumstances the expansionist policy of the British and their advancing of the cultivated limits into the hills received a blow, for the Nagas laid claim to the territories. It was at this point, a need was felt to define the limits of Sibsagar district. In 1863 a planter named Mr. Vanqulin in the Sebsaugor district made an arrangement with the Naga chief and rented from the latter a salt spring, this was located in the Juboka Naga territory. Within a year a dispute emerged between the chief and the Planter over the salt spring. It was found out in the course of enquiry that the area under conflict was located in the South of Ladoighur road and it was a Naga territory. It was at this very juncture the need to define the border was felt. Colonel Hopkinson remarked that whole of the tribes bordering on Luckhimpore and Sebsaugor were within the territory of Assam but

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Letters by Col. Hopkinson to the Government of India, dated 30th October and 4th November, 1865.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

the British never exacted any tribute from them, the planters made their arrangements with the Naga chiefs with regard to their personal safety.⁶¹

With each expedition the identity of the 'unknown' was solidified, but the state was never able to subjugate the population. James Scott argues that the modern colonial state had many detailed and administratively competent techniques: the census, the cartographically correct cadastral survey etc.⁶² Adding to the above techniques, the inner line permit system was invented by the state as a mechanism to regulate the mobility of the population. The inner line permit system was one such process of drawing boundaries which was continuously extended depending on the needs of the new political economy. The inner line regulation was initiated in 1873 to bring under more stringent control the commercial relations of the British Subjects with the frontier tribes living on the borders of the empire's jurisdiction. The regulations were more of an economic measure whereby rules were laid down regarding the trade, the possession of land beyond the line and it gave the executive government an effective control. The regulation also provided for the preservation of elephants and its capture by the government, as well as control over the rubber forests and the spread of tea gardens.⁶³ The growth of the tea industry and exploitation of minerals, including coal and oil, resulted in the earlier contacts with the tribes along Assam's eastern frontiers during the nineteenth century. Land acquired by newly founded industries was claimed by the tribes as their exclusive property. In addition to land, there emerged the question of forest and water rights; these resulted in raids by the hill people on tea gardens and mining areas.⁶⁴ The British on the other hand chose to regulate these raids by closing *dwards*, inflicting fines and carrying forward military operations.

The British officials realised the importance of trade and chose it as a tool to regulate the people of the hills. A new policy of closing the *dwards* was initiated. In 1861 the *dwards* were closed to Naga traders by the order of the Commissioner of Assam in consequence of the murder of Tonoo Cachari in the Gelaki *dwar*, which was used by the Namsang and neighbouring clans. In 1867 when the Gelaki guard house was attacked by the raiding Nagas, the *dwards* were closed and the outpost strengthened. The reasons for the attacks remained uncertain yet three possible causes were cited- first the Naga trading party was prohibited from carry spears to market, second the encroachments of tea planters in the hills were unsettling all the frontier tribes and

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² For details see Scott, 'The State and People Who Moved Around: How the Valleys make the hills in Southeast Asia'.

⁶³ Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, pp. 55-56.

⁶⁴ Rustomji, *Imperiled Frontiers- India's North-Eastern Borderlands*, pp. 17-18.

third the survey operations carried out by the colonial officials might have excited the suspicion of Nagas. Closing the *dwards* meant denying the people of the hills to trade with the people in the plains and vice versa. The raiders were traced. They belonged to the *Yungia* Abor Nagas and it was reported that, 'they had love for plunder and a craving for skulls and they kept a stealthy war party', on enquiry it was further revealed that they had 'attacked the police station under the notion that it was a settlement of *ryots*'.⁶⁵ In 1894-95, Nagas on the Sebsaugor border burnt the manager's bungalow and the godown in the Cherideo garden. The path by which the Nagas came was diverted and it was ordered that the old path was to be closed until the offenders were given up and that a substantial fine should be inflicted on each of the villages using the path in the event of their failing to surrender the guilty persons. In 1896-97 the blockade against the Nagas on the Sibsagar frontier was enforced and a guard posted. The Nagas gave no trouble but the fines were not paid, the guard was removed in 1898-99.⁶⁶ In 1903-04 it was found that the Rangpang Nagas committed theft at Margherita and Ledo. It was ordered that any inhabitants of the Yogli village who are found in the British territory would be arrested.⁶⁷ In 1905-06 owing to the murder of three British subjects by Bebejujas, in 1905 a blockade was maintained against this tribe and the Chulikatas for their failure to intercept the murderers.⁶⁸

In the Sebsaugor area, 'thefts' by Nagas, in the neighbourhood of the inner line was frequent and the chiefs of the principal Changs were warned that if these thefts continued the Naga paths to the plains would be stopped. 1907-08 a Naga path was closed and a small police force stationed at Sautak for a few days to see that a newly cleared path was used. In 1913-14 owing to thefts of rails by the Rangpang Nagas, they were warned that on the recurrence of such thefts they would be prevented from coming to Margherita and the village concerned were forbidden to enter the British territory. It was reported that owing to the regulations imposed on the raiders, the thefts stopped.⁶⁹ The policy of blockading was based on an assumption that the nearer tribes would if they chose, prevent those more remote from coming down to raid and commit offences or at all events could inform the government officials which would be of help.⁷⁰ On 18th April 1918 the manager of the Towkok Estate wrote the following to the Deputy Commissioner of Sebsaugor-

⁶⁵ Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, p. 97.

⁶⁶ ASA, Political Department, Political Branch- B. Progs., Nos. 85-91, July 1918.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

I have the honour to report that during the last night some Nagas cut the wall of a coolie house at Namtolla- the outlines of this garden. The owner Sagroo Gond attempted to arrest the first one, but was attacked by the others and severely wounded, receiving one cut 6" into 1" deep in his right shoulder and another cut 3" long into 1" deep on the left arm. His wife Tulsi Gond was also severely wounded getting one deep wound 6" long on the left side of neck dividing the ear and also being wounded on right leg and left foot. It shall be obliged if you will take steps to have the Naga path closed until the culprits are handed over. I have wired you to-day 'coolie house broken into and two coolies badly cut by Nagas here last night please take action to allay them, manager Towkok'.⁷¹

The manager further wrote, 'the Naga path which lay to the East of the Towkok river was under the control of the Sangloi Chang' and hence he suggested that 'if the Changs path was closed the neighbouring Nagas would soon produce the culprits'.⁷² The path mentioned was used by Kamlung and Mulung Changs but Sangloi controlled it.⁷³ The search for the raiders began and Kotokies were deployed to the Naga villages of Joboka and Changuoi by the *Mauzadar* of Abhaypur to find out as to who came down the Towkok path. In the course of the enquiry it was found out that three paths were used by the Changuoi Nagas to come down. The Towkok path was used by the Joboka and Changuoi Nagas and it was stated that in the rains the Nagas rarely came down to the plains.⁷⁴ The Deputy Commissioner of Sebsaugor issued a warning to the Joboka and Changuoi Changs stating that, 'if the culprits were not surrendered, the paths used by them i.e. the Safrai, Napuk, Towkok and Tingalibam paths would be closed next cold weather'.⁷⁵ For closing the path, he suggested that 'guards numbering eight or ten men would be sufficient to close each path'.⁷⁶

In the year 1873, the Banfera Naga Chief was identified as 'a violent and ignorant man' who laid claims to much of the land around Sapakatie. The Deputy Superintendent of police of Sibsagar noted, 'my experiences of seven years in Sibsagar, makes me believe that the whole of the border tribes are the same'. He further noted 'the planters constantly complained of the parties of Nagas, who were in the habit of coming to their various factories and committing excesses which they

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Letter dated the 22nd April 1918 from the Manager of Towkok Tea Estate, to the Deputy Commissioner Sibsagar, ASA, Political Department, Political Branch- B. Progs. Nos. 85-91, July 1918.

⁷⁴ Extracts from the Report of the Mauzadar of Abhaypur, dated 30th April 1918, submitted to the Deputy Commissioner Sibsagar, ASA, Political Department, Political Branch- B. Progs., Nos. 85-91, July 1918.

⁷⁵ Letter From B. C. Allen, Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, 4th May 1918, addressed to the Commissioner Assam Valley, ASA, Political Department, Political Branch- B. Progs., Nos. 85-91, July 1918.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

were powerless to restrain'.⁷⁷ What is therefore significant is that 'Nagas' were seen as perpetrators of raids and conflicts, and the British 'subjects' namely- the planters, *ryots* and *coolies* were seen as the 'victims'. To counter the 'raids' of the Banfera Nagas he asked for 'granting a loan from the arsenal of a few breach loading fire arms and ammunitions and some small bursting rockets'.⁷⁸ The threats mentioned were therefore to be 'severely punished, by imprisonment if possible' because 'if no notice was taken than the whole frontier would be utterly demoralised'.⁷⁹ The concerns of the British were to cater to the needs of the new political economy: the tea plantations and the factories demanded that new tracts were to be constantly added. The economic drives of the British visibly transformed the landscape and ecology. By the year 1905, Sibsagar district was transformed into a wide plain where there was hardly any jungle to be seen, while on the lower levels, rice was grown in the higher levels tea covered the terrain.⁸⁰ The resistance of the people of the hills was seen as a breach of law, and intrusion in the domain of the empire. Nagas were criminalised as perpetrators of raids, who were violent in their dealings and a narrative of state and its 'subjects' as victims was built. They were identified as 'violent aggressors', committing atrocities on the British 'subjects'. Under such conditions military tactics were applied to control the 'aggressors'. They were therefore the 'other' who had to be subdued, the paternalist regime therefore chose arms to protect its 'subjects', and Nagas were reduced as the 'objects' of their political and economic drives.

Robert Reid who was the Governor of Assam from 1937-1941 wrote that 'the history of the Naga hills since 1882 where Mackenzie leaves off, is the same in kind as that of the years preceding'.⁸¹ Now the question arises as to what was the policy which was followed before 1882? The policy he answers was that of 'gradual penetration which were dictated by the necessity of protecting the settled districts, Nowgong and Sibsagar from raiding Nagas. The visits to troublesome villages led to the establishment of posts to control their doings'.⁸² The 'troublesome villages' were to be 'controlled' and it was with the above objective wrote Reid, 'the first permanent footing, Samoogudting was chosen in 1866-1867'.⁸³ The footing and the posts were further shifted to Kohima in 1878 from where they commanded control over the Eastern Angami country and the Manipur frontier and simultaneously the post was

⁷⁷ BGP, ASA, Political, Judicial, File Nos. 24-28, 1873.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Allen, ed. *Assam District Gazetters, 1905-1914*, p. 2.

⁸¹ Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883- 1941*, p. 99.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

extended to Wokha in order to dominate the Lhota country to protect it from the raids from the north and east.⁸⁴ The extension of the frontiers knew no end. After 1882 the process went on and on, 'inexorably if irregularly'. 'It was impossible' he noted-

'to draw a line as the boundary of our area of control and to say that we should be blind and deaf to all that went on across that line...Nagas raid our administered villages...head hunting and massacres go on just across the border and under the very nose of our officers...the local officers inevitably and with reason, clamour for a forward policy'.⁸⁵

The binaries of 'we' and 'them' are therefore clearly ascertained, the usage of sentences such as 'Nagas raid our administered areas', and 'head hunting and massacres go...across the border' brings forth the politics of 'difference' and the gaze through which the white men viewed the people of the hills. The idea of 'British subject' was strictly governed by differentiating the plains from the hills. The hills were different because, they were at 'war', the wars were viewed as 'primitive' to the political vocabulary of the 'civilised' empire, the empire chose to go at war to tame the raiders and put an end to the 'recurring wars'. The forward policy was therefore a mechanism to tame the 'unknown'.

The forward policy resembles the policy of the hunter, who goes hunting depending on his leisure and mood. Although the inner line was drawn, the policy of subjugation of the tribes beyond the frontier continued, the hunter went on with the expedition, to subdue, to burn villages, and to control the frontier tribes. In June 1883 an expedition was carried against the Sema Nagas, it was a full scale military expedition with a force of 72 officers and men of the 44th Sylhet Light Infantry under Lieutenant Boileau and 42 officers and men of the frontier police under Mr. Livesay, Assistant Superintendent. In the expedition, Nagas lost between 50-60 men, their houses and *dhan* (rice) were destroyed and their cattle carried off.⁸⁶ Annexation was a laid out principle by Mr. McCabe, in his letter addressed to the Chief Commissioner he wrote that his policy of annexation was based on four principles- first, to insist on strict obedience within his own jurisdiction; second, to punish villages within his jurisdiction for all raids committed against trans-frontier; third, to punish trans-frontier villages for raids against cis-Frontier villages, and fourth to mediate in disputes between villages adjacent to the Frontier.⁸⁷ In 1884 the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Charles Elliot ordered the Deputy Commissioner of Naga

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁸⁶ ASA, Foreign- B, File Nos. 4-11, December 1883.

⁸⁷ ASA, Judicial Department, File No. 149- J of 1884. On 10th June 1884, a letter was addressed to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

Hills to make two expeditions to a number of eastern Angami villages to the east of Kohima and outside the existing boundary of the Naga Hills district and to a number of Ao villages east of Wokha. The Deputy Commissioner of Sebsaugor was instructed to lead an expedition to the Konyak villages to the east of his boundary.⁸⁸ Military promenade, tours and visits were carried annually by the Commissioners and the political agents and every year fines were imposed on the people of the hills. Forward policies were further institutionalised by categorising the hills as Excluded and Partially Excluded areas which was ratified by the Government of India Act of 1935.⁸⁹

Military and police were used as weapons to control the frontier tribes, in this context the history of Assam Rifles is replete with examples of aggression and expeditions carried against the tribes residing in the frontier tracts. Lt. Col. R.S. Chhetri wrote-

The whole of nineteenth century and the first half of twentieth century is full of myriad expeditions launched by the British with Assam Rifles as their spearhead to get control of the entire Northeast. The Assam Military Police in conjunction with the Army carried out various expeditions. Some of the famous ones are: Kuki Operations of 1880-82 and 1917-1919, Manipur Expeditions of 1886, Lushai Hills Expeditions of 1880-90, 1896 and 1917-19, Abor Expeditions of 1893-94, 1911-12, Apatani Expedition of 1887 and Mishmi Expeditions of 1899-1900, 1911-12'.⁹⁰

Several strategies were devised by the Assam Rifle's to control the tract of the tribes, it was stated that, 'the war against the jungle tribes of the Assam Frontier is a Jemadar's War rather than a General's War', hence specific strategies were to be applied 'to teach them a lesson'.⁹¹ The directives read that 'to defeat the tribesman of the frontier it was necessary for the troops to make an indefinite stay in their country, the troops were to be dispersed in small units who were to act with vigour and give the enemy no peace'.⁹² They were directed to 'burn his villages and crops and prevent them from building or tilling, they were also directed to hunt him out and attack him whenever seen'.⁹³ Thus to the popular vocabulary of the colonial state, Nagas were the 'others' who were to be subjugated and brought within the frames of governability and when they refused to be governed they were declared as the 'enemy' who were punished and hunted.

⁸⁸ Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883- 1941*, p. 104.

⁸⁹ Naga Hoho, *White paper on Naga Integration*, p. 25. Emphasis is mine.

⁹⁰ Talukdar, 'Frontier Force'. In the article, Talukdar cites the views of Lt. Col. R.S. Chhetri from his book *The Guardians of the North East - The Assam Rifles 1835-2002*.

⁹¹ ASA, *Jungle Training for Assam Rifles*, pp. 26-28.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Internalisation of objectification- From 'Wild Child' to the 'Untamed Man'

Bernard S. Cohn argues that 'the cultural change and the development of new cultural identities should not be understood as a by product of an historical experience'.⁹⁴ So the question arises as to how did the Nagas perceive themselves? The formation of the Naga Club in 1918 in Kohima and Mokokchung, after the war veterans returned from World War I marks the beginning of a new chapter in the art of resistance, as well as the perceiving of a new 'nationalist identity' by the Nagas.⁹⁵ They chose the path of constitutional resistance, filing petitions, writing memorandum and thereby opening gateways for their entry into the modern political arena. However the politics of the Naga club was unique, although, it chose letter as a means to bargain with the colonial state, it had a clear cut objective. They had recognised it very early that India would inevitably gain her independence and they prepared for the changes which they knew were on the way.⁹⁶ On 10th January 1929, the members of Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon commission. Through the memorandum they claimed to be spokesperson of the Nagas. The memorandum read-

We, the Undersigned Nagas of the Naga Club at Kohima, who are the only persons at present who can voice for our people have heard with great regret that our Naga Hills is included in the Reformed Scheme of India without our knowledge, but as administrator of our Hills is continued to be in the hands of the British Officers and we did not consider it necessary to raise any protest in the past. Now we learnt that you have come to India as representative of the British Government to enquire into the working of the system of Government and the growth of education and we beg to submit below our view with prayer that our Hills may be withdrawn from the Reformed Scheme and placed outside the Reforms but directly under British Government. We never asked for any reforms and we do not wish for any reforms.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, p. 228. He further argues that the colonial people had begun to 'think of themselves in different terms', the new mode of thinking not only changed the 'content of their culture', but 'the way they thought about their culture has also changed'.

⁹⁵ Here 'nationalist identity' means that through the formation of Naga Club, the Nagas chose to speak for all the diverse communities belonging to the Naga tribe. Naga National identity had nothing to do with the pan Indian national identity which evolved as a result of anti-colonial struggle.

⁹⁶ Elwin, *Nagaland*, p. 49.

⁹⁷ 'Naga Hills Memorandum to Simon Commission, 1929',

<https://nagalandjournal.wordpress.com/2013/04/05/naga-hills-memorandum-to-simon-commission-1929/>,

accessed on 19th September, 2014. The memorandum was signed by the following members of the Naga Club- (1) Nihu Angami, Head Interpreter, (2) Hisale Peshkar, (3) Nisier Angami, Master, (4) Khosa Doctor, (5) Gebo Kacha Nagas, Interpreter, (6) Vipunyu Angami, Potdar (7) Goyiepra Angami, Treasure, (8) Ruzhukhrie Angami, Master, (9) Dikhrie Angami, Sub-overseer, (10) Zapuzhulie Angami, Master, (11) Zapulie Angami, Interpreter, (12) Katsuno Angami, Interpreter, (13) Nuolhoukielie Angami, Interpreter, (14) Inzevi Sema, Interpreter, (15) Apamo Lotha, Interpreter, (16) Resile Rengma, Interpreter, (17) Lengjang Kuki, Interpreter, (18) Neikhriehu Angami, Interpreter, (19) Miakrao Angami, Chaprasi, (20) Levi Kacha Naga, Cleric.

It clearly stated that reforms were not desired by the Nagas. It not only celebrated the idea of freedom and customary practice, but also constructed a history where it was argued that before the conquest of their country by the British they lived 'in a state of intermitted warfare' with the Assamese of the Assam valley to the North and West of our country and Manipuris to the South. They never conquered us nor were we subjected to their rules. On the other hand, we were always a terror to these people'.⁹⁸ They further argued that their language was different from those of the plains and they shared no social affinities with the Hindus or Mussalmans, they are looked down by them one for 'beef' and the other for our 'pork' and also because of lack of education.⁹⁹

The memorandum had three crucial elements- first the idea of Nagas being an independent entity since ancient times, second the idea of difference which was depicted both in terms of food habit and their backwardness in education and the third element focused over the issue of customary laws, whereby it was cited that, 'our country is poor and it does not pay for any administration... if it is continued to be placed under Reformed Scheme... heavy taxes will have to be imposed on us, and when we cannot pay, then all lands have to be sold and in long run we shall have no share in the land of our birth and life will not be worth living then'.¹⁰⁰ They voiced their fear over the idea of the people of the hills being brought under the reformed scheme. This they said, 'would lead to the introduction of foreign laws and customs to supersede our own customary laws which we now enjoy'.¹⁰¹ Citing these fears they wrote that, 'we pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights but to leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient times. We claim...to represent all those regions to which we belong'.¹⁰²

The Naga memorandum to Simon Commission marks the entry of the Nagas as a new political phenomenon. The anthropological and administrative tool through which the 'Naga identity' was constructed and othering practised was internalised by the Nagas. Now the 'objects' evolved into a political phenomenon and began speaking for their interests. By specifying the 'difference', now the Nagas defined themselves as the 'other', who were historically different, different in 'customs and traditions', different in 'food habits', and different from the 'people of the plains'. They gradually chose to mark a break from the grand narrative of the 'empire'. Thus the 'other' embarked on a new journey, which was beyond any adoption, the 'wild

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

child' graduated as the 'untamed man' and marked a break from the political vocabulary of the empire and evolved as the 'untamed subject' of history.

The formation of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in April 1945, which was initiated by the British Deputy Commissioner, Mr. C. R. Pawsey and the renaming of the council as the Naga National Council (NNC)¹⁰³ are therefore to be read as developments through which the collective identity of the Nagas was getting solidified. The renaming of the Council from the 'District' to the 'Nation' was not a linguistic move; rather it should be studied as a political move. The Council began the project of solidification of identity by bringing out a small newspaper called the Naga Nation.¹⁰⁴ On 20 February 1946, the Naga National Council submitted a memorandum to his Majesty's Government and the Government of India. The memorandum was therefore an attempt in the construction of the self vis-à-vis Indians which was based on the principle of 'othering'.¹⁰⁵ The 'new self' conceived was based on the idea of ethnic difference, difference in manners of living, laws and customs as well as methods of governance, and the in terms of religion whereby they argued that they were animists and Christianity was fast spreading.¹⁰⁶ These memorandums also help us understand the new narratives of the nation, and how on the logic of difference and 'otherness' a new nation was being imagined. In the process of imagining of the nation, past was reconstructed and the idea of Nagas being a distinct race was forwarded. The shifting of political terrains from the constitutional (legal) to the extra-legal (armed movement) is however a post-colonial saga. In my next section, I shall briefly discuss the circumstances under which Nagaland was formed. I shall limit myself to the policy adopted by the Government of India, vis-a vis the Naga people's convention and shall return to the border question.¹⁰⁷

'Making' and 'Unmaking' of the Nation: The Post Colonial Spectacle

The Deputy Director of Intelligence Bureau, S. M. Dutt kept a close vigilance over the Naga People's Convention and observed the following after the Second Convention which was held at Ungma, in 1958. He noted-

So far as the hard core hostiles are concerned, particularly the top leaders- they are undoubtedly the real national heroes of the Nagas whatever a non- Naga

¹⁰³ Baruah, 'Confronting Constructionism: Ending India's Naga War', p. 327. The Naga National Council was organised as a federation of several tribal councils under a single banner. It was formed in February 1946.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Nag, 'Nehru and the Nagas' p. 52.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Historians from North East India, primarily Nagaland have offered detailed accounts on the formation of Nagaland. For further details consult the following: Horam, *Naga Insurgency*; Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*; Iralu, *Nagaland and India*.

may think of them. They have got their pride, prestige, spirit of sacrifice- particularly the question of face which is almost a question of life and death with most of the mongoloid people as with the Nagas.¹⁰⁸

He further stated that, 'Phizo did succeed in bringing about a unique unity among the Nagas through years of sustained indoctrination for complete independence'.¹⁰⁹ Several suggestions were made regarding the solution of the Naga question? But he said that, the Naga rebellion has presented 'a vital test for the country and how it comes out of it will have a great bearing on the happy integration of the vast number of tribes into the body politic of India'.¹¹⁰ He also noted that 'the movement around the making of Nagaland has led to the emergence of a strong sense of nationalist consciousness and identity formations'.¹¹¹

From Hydari agreement in 1947 to the State of Nagaland Act in 1962, legal and extra legal battles were fought between the Union of India and the political fronts of the Nagas. Three underground political organisations working in Nagaland were identified namely: The Naga National Council, The Federal Government of Nagaland and the Federal Army. The Central government declared the activities of these organisations as 'illegal' and responded by passing several acts- Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act of 1953, Assam Disturbed Area Act 1955, The Armed Forces Special Powers Regulations 1958, The Armed Forces (Assam, Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance, 1958 and the Nagaland Security Regulation, 1962.¹¹² With the coming of these acts, an internal war followed between the Indian Army and the underground political fronts.¹¹³ The Naga People's Convention was an outcome of the series of conflicts which led to much bloodshed. A series of meetings were held, and the affairs of Nagaland were discussed. The first Naga People's Convention was held on 22nd August 1957 at Kohima was attended by 1765 delegates. It stated-¹¹⁴

Being deeply grieved by the killings and the widespread sufferings caused by-

- a. Burning of houses and granaries.
- b. Destruction of crops.
- c. Grouping of villages

¹⁰⁸ Chief Minister's Secretariat (hereafter CMS), ASA, Home Confidential, File No. C 210/ 58, 1958.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Government of Nagaland, *The Nagaland Code, Vol. 1 and 2*. The Code provides a detailed overview of the Acts and Rules imposed on the people of the Hills from 1866 to 1970.

¹¹³ For details about the atrocities committed by Indian Army see chapter 2 of Iralu's book- *Nagaland and India*.

¹¹⁴ CMS, ASA, Home Confidential, File No. C 210/58, 1958.

- d. Restriction of freedom of movement and speech.
- e. Forced labour without payment.
- f. The resultant diseases and hunger,

We, a convention of the Naga people, drawn from every tribe and area of the territories now known as the Naga Hills district of Assam and the Teunsang Frontier Division of the NEFA, having met in Kohima on the 22nd August, 1957 in search of a solution to end the infinite sufferings and bloodshed, do hereby resolve as follows-

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

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

3. In order to create the conditions necessary for a political settlement, the following immediate change as an interim measure is essential. The present Naga hills district of Assam and Teunsang frontier division of NEFA along with the reserved forests transferred out of the Naga Hills district after the reforms of 1921, should be constituted into a single administrative unit, under the External Affairs Ministry of the Government of India through the Governor of Assam acting in his discretion as the agent of the President of India, so as to ensure with our (active) help, a genuine, general amnesty, speedy end of hostilities and relief to suffering.

4. We strongly urge the government to implement the above proposal immediately as we, on our part pledge ourselves,

A) To actively work together to end hostilities so that the army and police can be withdrawn and the villages de-grouped;

B) To try by all means in our power to heal old feuds so that all of us, both those now underground and those over ground may work together for the good of our land and the free development of our people according to our own traditions.

5. We appeal to our country-men in arms to give up the cult of violence.

6. The convention asks for the prayers of all men of goodwill, both underground and overground and in government services for the achievement of a lasting and honourable peace.

Sd/- Jasokie,
Secretary,
Naga People's Convention,
23.8.57.

Sd/ - Dr. Imkong Liba Ao,
President,
Naga People's Convention
23.8.57.

Two more conventions followed. The second convention was held at Ungma from 21st to 23rd May, 1958 which was attended by 2705 delegates and the following resolution was passed.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

- 1) This convention reaffirms the decisions of the Naga people's convention at Kohima and expresses satisfaction that since the creation of the new administrative unit under the external affairs ministry, government of India there has been cessation of armed conflicts despite sporadic instances of raids by some irresponsible underground parties.
- 2) The convention strongly condemns all acts of violence, dacoity, theft, intimidation, false impersonation, false propaganda, imposition of fines and closing down of schools in certain areas.
- 3) This convention requests the government to extend the period of amnesty and appeals to all those who are still underground come overground availing themselves of the offer of amnesty.
- 4) A liaison committee consisting of the following members shall be appointed to explore possibilities for an agreed solution of the Naga problems. The findings of this committee shall be placed before the select committee within 3 months for consideration in a meeting to be convened at such time and place as may be fixed hereafter.

In the third session of the Naga People's Convention held at Mokokchung from 22nd to 26th October 1959, sixteen points were passed after fully deliberating on the various recommendations of sub-committees. These sixteen points formed the basis of negotiation with the Government of India for the final Naga Political settlement.¹¹⁶ As per the recommendations it was decided that the territories known as Naga Hills-Teunsang Area would be known as Nagaland, and it was placed under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India.¹¹⁷ In a special resolution passed at the third session of the Naga People's convention held at Mokokchung, it was requested by the administration to consider the release of the Naga Political Prisoners, to extend general pardon to the underground people coming underground and to relax the military patrolling, operations and other restrictions to enable free contact between over-ground and underground people during the amnesty period. The convention also appealed to all underground Nagas to stop all sorts of violent activities and invited them to come over-ground and participate fully in the running of the new government of Nagaland.¹¹⁸

The state kept a vigilant eye on the developments which were taking place and kept surveillance on the activities of the leaders. Phizo was seen as a separatist leader

¹¹⁶ Resolution adopted at the Naga People's Convention Meeting. ASA, CMS, Home Confidential, Record- B, File No. 210/1958.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Special Resolutions passed at the third session of the Naga People's convention held at Mokokchung dated 22nd- 26th October 1959.

'who infused separatist psychology in the Nagas, who not only launched an armed guerrilla rebellion but elevated it to the status of the fight for Naga National liberation'.¹¹⁹ The best approach to curtail the above rebellion was to look for a political solution because every such guerrilla rebellion invariably had been for the attainment of certain political objective.¹²⁰ It further stated that, 'India could not obviously give independence to the Nagas but had to concede a suitable political settlement within the Indian Union and it was necessary to sell this idea to the majority of the Nagas for their acceptance'.¹²¹ The 'selling of idea' meant breaking the movement, creating factions and integrating Nagaland into the Indian Union. The Kohima Convention was seen as a development which created the first political division among the Nagas in regard to their ultimate political objectives and after 9 months the Ungma convention was seen as a reinforcement of the political division.¹²² The policy that was adopted by the Government of India was directed towards gradual political isolation of the 'extremists' from the majority of the Nagas and implementation of measures for their 'emotional integration into the body-politic of India'.¹²³

The post colonial state therefore proceeded with the idea of unification and integration of Nagaland within the Indian Union. While from 1947 onwards the Nagas refused to obey Delhi, refused to pay taxes, India on the other hand claimed the Nagas as Indians.¹²⁴ However Nagaland was constituted as a fully fledged state on 1st December 1963 by an Act of the Parliament called the State of Nagaland Act, 1962.¹²⁵ But with the question of integration came the question of boundary of the newly constituted state. While the Indian state proceeded hastily in integrating Nagaland, it left the question of borders unresolved.¹²⁶ The Naga People's Convention agreed conditionally to the terms and conditions set by the Indian Union, which is quite clear from the special resolution passed in the first convention. It clearly stated that by 'political settlement' it meant a 'satisfactory political

¹¹⁹ A Review of the Second Naga People's Convention held at Ungma from May 21 to 23, By Deputy Director, S.I.B, 1958. CMS, ASA, Home Confidential, Record - B, File No- 210/1958.

¹²⁰ ASA, CMS, Home Confidential, Record - B, File No- 210/1958

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Horam, *Naga Insurgency*, p. 79.

¹²⁵ Bhattacharyya, *The Troubled Border*, p. 1, also see, Elwin's, section titled 'Sixteenth State' in his book, *Nagaland*.

¹²⁶ The integration was done at the instance of the then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru who persuaded the delegation of the Naga People that the state must be created first and after Nagaland becomes a state, it should be possible to redraw and redefine its boundaries including the retransfer of reserved forests. For details see, *Untold Story About Nagaland*.

settlement within the Indian Union'.¹²⁷ On the questions over the border between the Union and the State, it passed another resolution, which stated the following.¹²⁸

If the government expresses inability to take up the question of re-transfer of the forest immediately, the delegates are empowered to agree to the immediate constitution of a separate administrative unit under the central government comprising of the Naga Hills district and the Tuensang Frontier Division of NEFA without prejudice to our claim for the forest which will be again agitated at the time of entering into negotiation for a political settlement. This supplementary resolution has been passed in view of the extreme urgency of change in the administrative set up.

The question over the border areas remained unresolved. Borders are therefore the entry point through which the state in practice can be understood. The state in theory chooses to narrate itself by bargaining with the 'dissenters' in the public sphere.¹²⁹ It presents a picture of negotiation, peace and conflict resolution, the state in theory therefore tries to act according to the wills and wishes of its subject. But when one tries to understand the state through its peripheries one gets a very violent picture. Here the state is armed with all military tactics, the state is visible in uniform, parades, flag march, round of shootings, naming of places as sectors A, B, C, D, E, F. these are the mechanisms through which the post-colonial state attempted to regulate mobility of the people.¹³⁰ The emergence of Nagaland as an Independent state of Indian Union was celebrated by the Indian state as a victory of nation making, but the political fronts operating in Nagaland saw the arrangements as a betrayal to their cause of Independent nation.¹³¹ Borders are therefore the buffer zones through which the tensions of the nation and the state are manifested. It also helps us in understanding the vexed political settlement, and brings into question the very idea of nations as a peaceful and 'stable' body of co-existence.¹³² An

¹²⁷ CMS, ASA, Home Confidential, Record- B, File No- 210/1958. For details refer to the section- Special Resolution passed by the First Naga People's Convention Meeting held at Kohima.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ The peace talks and conventions with the 'separatist political fronts' are the mechanisms through which the state has been attempting to arrive at solutions.

¹³⁰ 'What has triggered clashes at the Nagaland-Assam border?' The Economic Times, 21st August, 2014. The CRPF, Assam Police, Nagaland Police and the army continuously patrol the areas, and stage Flag march, The area in conflict is named as Sector A, B, C,D, E, F. Also see, *The Sentinel*, 22nd August, 2014. For a detailed discussion of militarised society in Nagaland, see, Kikon, 'Engaging Naga Nationalism'.

¹³¹ While Elwin's, *Nagaland*, is a celebration of integration of Nagaland into the geopolitical of India. On the contrary- Iralu's book, *Nagaland and India* and Horam's, *Naga Insurgency* presents a picture of betrayal, humiliation practiced by the Indian state, which led to the dissection of Nagaland.

¹³² The idea of a stable nation was propounded by J. Stalin. He wrote that, 'A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture, like every historical phenomenon it is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end'. For details see, Stalin, *Works, Vol. 2, 1907-1913*, pp. 251-252.

example below would suffice. In the year 1966 the Chief of the Russa Naga pointed out that 'the portion of land between Ladoigarh and Tiok River which is known as Tiru and Dabbo in the Upper ridges belonged to him'.¹³³ To strengthen his point he added that 'his clansmen had been enjoying the forest products of those areas and realising taxes from those who have been possessing lands even from the times of the Ahom Kings'.¹³⁴ The claim of the Naga Chief led the Chief Minister of Assam to conduct enquiries. Files were opened, maps revisited. A Conference was hosted by the Chief Minister of Assam in his Assembly chamber to decide on the claim.¹³⁵ The Russa Chief openly gave out his mind before the Conference stating that, 'he would be happy to receive a share of the revenue from the Government of Assam'.¹³⁶ The claims by the Naga Chief were seen as 'encroachment' and it was decided that local people were to be settled on the border areas opposite to areas encroached by Nagas within reserved forests.¹³⁷ Each of the M.L.A was ordered 'to persuade tough people for settlement in each section of the reserves and only those people were to be selected who under no circumstance would leave the area and go back'.¹³⁸ D. Hazarika was appointed for Doyang Reserve, S. Bordoloi for the Kakodonga Reserve, T. Chetia for the Geleki and Tiru Hills Reserve and T. Gogoi was made responsible for the settlements at the Desoi Valley and Desoi Reserve.¹³⁹ The Chief Minister also stressed that 'lands should be given to tough people for cultivation and homestead, the land to be awarded was 15 *bighas* to each family'.¹⁴⁰ The state of Assam tried to appropriate the border areas by settling 'tough people', in the process preference was given to 'landless peasants' principally 'ex-tea garden' workers and 'Muslim peasants'. Assam chose the mechanism of populating the 'disputed areas'.

Border in Flames

'The border dispute' noted Sushanta Talukdar, 'has been continuing since the first clash in 1968 when Nagaland police attacked Assamese villagers at the Doyang forest reserve'.¹⁴¹ Another incidence took place at Rengma forest reserve of Karbi-Anglong on January 5, 1979. The worst clash occurred on June 4, 1985, when over 100 people died in firing between Assam and Nagaland police at Merapani.¹⁴² Skirmishes, raids and abductions are quite common in the villages bordering

¹³³ ASA, CMS, File No. 299/66, 1966.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* The Conference was held on 5th April, 1966.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Talukdar, 'Tension Along Assam Nagaland Border', *The Hindu*, 3rd April, 2005.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

Nagaland.¹⁴³ The skirmishes are understood as a long stand rivalry between Naga and Assamese- primarily plains tribal- settlers over the possession of rich cultivable land.¹⁴⁴ Narrating the skirmishes around the border Udayon Misra wrote the following-

Armed raids and forced harvesting of crops by Nagas has been a common occurrence. In 1956 the Uriamghat Reserve Office and the Uriamghat Bazaar were looted by armed Nagas who abducted a forest official and set several lorries on fire. In 1957 villages in the Chungajan- Naojan area were raided and the Naojan Railway station was attacked. The following year a forest contractor was abducted. In 1964 an Assamese Gaonbura's son was killed. In 1965 armed Nagas looted the Doyang Reserve Office and abducted a senior forest official. In 1974 there was a raid in the Geleki Reserve of Golaghat in which a forest official was killed...on January 5-6, 1979 a section of Naga village chiefs along with the newly emerging group of Naga landholders carried out the raid in the hope of dispossessing the non-Naga settler and occupying their land...First hand reports speak of the entire population of atleast two villages being wiped out and according to a police source in Assam, at least 800 bodies have so far been recovered.¹⁴⁵

The Government of Nagaland stated that it has been projected in an 'unfavourable light' in the national press hence the truth of Nagaland remains unknown to the people.¹⁴⁶ The book *Untold Story about Merapani* provides a detailed account of the aggression practiced by Assam Police who constructed check posts, burnt down houses and fired incessantly. It stated that there were 53 Assam Police posts in the disputed border areas which were in violation of the agreements between the two states.¹⁴⁷ In this context the role of print media and intelligentsia deserves special scrutiny. The print media of Assam has incessantly depicted the Nagas as 'marauders', 'hostiles' and 'armed raiders'.¹⁴⁸ D. N. Bezboruah a veteran journalist of *The Sentinel* wrote that 'Naga Marauders were shooting at our people and were setting their homesteads on fire'. J. P. Rajkhowa called it an 'attack by the heavily armed Naga terrorist'.¹⁴⁹ 'These conflicts, noted Bezboruah 'have gone on for decades and the neighbouring states of Assam have annexed Assam's territory

¹⁴³ Misra, 'After the Raid', p. 499.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 499-500.

¹⁴⁶ Government of Nagaland, *Untold Story About Merapani*, p. 1

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-20.

¹⁴⁸ *The Sentinel*, 24th August 2014.

¹⁴⁹ Rajkhowa, 'Order NIA Probe into Raiding of Assamese Villages by Naga Terrorists', *The Sentinel*, 24th August, 2014.

illegally. Of a total of 86886.12 hectares of Assam's land forcibly annexed by the neighbouring states, Nagaland accounts for 66241 hectares'.¹⁵⁰

On 13th August 2014, *The Sentinel* reported, 'Marauding Naga rebels raid Assam villages, 2 killed, several injured; over 40 house torched. The armed Naga miscreants were armed with weapons like 12 bore guns'.¹⁵¹ *The Assam Tribune* reported that Naga attack leave 11000 homeless. The firing, stabbing and arson by Naga miscreants in Chetiagaon, Romanbasti Jahajibasti, Majgaon and nearby hamlets in Uriamghat displaced more than 11000 villagers, while the number of deceased was confirmed at 10 by government officials.¹⁵² While the press of Assam was busy portraying a picture of arson, raid and mayhem by the Nagas, the press in Nagaland reported the following-

The recent violence and arson in Ralan area have created lot of misconceptions and misgivings about the Lothas inhabiting the area. To set the record straight, the issue here is one of tenancy problem and not border problem as perceived especially by the Assamese media. It may be recalled that the temporary *Adivasi* settlements in Ralan area have been the ancestral land of the Lotha Nagas villages under Ralan area cultivated rapeseed & mustard and other crops in these areas since time immemorial. However, by the 1970s some *Adivasis* came into this area as labourers. They remained as tenants paying taxes to the landlords. Gradually this group swelled into numbers and before the Ralan area people could react, they started building villages and stopped paying taxes to the Lotha landlords. The problem compounded when the *Adivasis* of the area harboured the terrorist organisation AANLA some years back and started to threaten the peace loving people of the area. It reached intolerable heights when these emboldened *Adivasis* backed by AALNA /Maoist group blank fired indiscriminately well within the village premises of Tontangolanrhu last month. The Ralan area people only reacted when the *Adivasis* went too far by surrounding Ronsuyan village on 12th August 2014 and managed to burn few houses of the village located adjacent to CRPF camp...As for the people of Ralan area, we are law abiding citizens of India and we are simply honouring article 371 A of the Indian Constitution whereby we Nagas have been given absolute rights over our land and natural resources. And since our traditional lands have been under threat from the Maoist *Adivasis*, we were compelled to take whatever actions were necessary.¹⁵³

To the Naga newspapers it was the '*maoist adivasis*' who were carrying out atrocities on the Naga people.¹⁵⁴ A press note issued by the *Naga Hoho* demanded that the

¹⁵⁰ Bezboruah, 'State Fighting its Own People', *The Sentinel*, 24th August, 2014.

¹⁵¹ *The Sentinel*, 13th August 2014.

¹⁵² *The Assam Tribune*, 18th August 2014.

¹⁵³ 'Tenants- Landowners Conflicts in Ralan Area', *The Morung Express*, 23rd August, 2014.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Also see, 'Adivasi-Problem in Ralan Area', *The Morung Express*, 13th August, 2014.

Assam government should stop 'pushing immigrants to the border areas and not protect those immigrants'.¹⁵⁵ On 9th August 2014 People's dialogue on border issue between Assam and Nagaland was organised by United Naga Tribes Association of Border Areas and they considered their demand as 'legitimate'. The dialogue adopted the following resolutions vis-a vis the border-¹⁵⁶

1. Demand that the point No. 12 of the 16 point agreement made between Government of India and Naga People's Convention regarding the inclusion of all Naga areas under Nagaland State and subsequent resolutions passed by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly for Geo- Political integration of Naga People be implemented in letter and in spirit.

2. The purpose of formation of the Border affairs Department be re-defined and make responsible to work for the welfare of the Naga villages in the border areas.

3. All the bilateral and tripartite agreements made between Assam and Nagaland be reviewed and settle the border dispute on the basis of historical facts.

4. The government of Nagaland must immediately set up Border Guards in every border villages to protect the people and its land.

5. All the recognised villages of the government of Nagaland must be protected by the Government of Nagaland and settlement of the Naga people should not be allowed to be disturbed by outsiders. Henceforth, the Naga People shall work together irrespective of tribal or other organisational affiliations in matter of reclaiming and protecting our land.

The media houses of both the states have been presenting their own version of 'truth', however it is on the basis of these versions that public sentiment is aroused. The resolutions adopted by the 'People's dialogue' ascertains the fact that borders are sites of politics through which the fire of nationalism is ignited and patriots generated. The sentiments of people are garnered around the ideas of 'our land and our people in danger'. It also unfolds the picture of nationalism turning 'elitist' and 'chauvinist', whereby the difference between 'ours' and 'theirs' is strictly exhibited and concretely maintained. While for Assam it is the Nagas who are 'raiders' and 'miscreants', for Nagaland the *adivasis* are narrated as 'intruders' and 'illegal occupants'.

¹⁵⁵ 'Organisations Condemn August 12 Ralan Incident', *The Morung Express*, 13th August, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ 'Nagas are demanding their legitimate property', *The Morung Express*, 9th August, 2014.

The Government of India appointed several Commissions to enquire into the border affairs.¹⁵⁷ In a public memorandum submitted to the Local Commission enquiring into the Assam-Nagaland Border Dispute, the following was written-¹⁵⁸

1. Assam Nagaland border dispute is unilaterally created by the Government of Nagaland and the Naga people as well. There is no justification of their claims.

2. The historical evidences from the Kachari and Ahom regime proved that the plain areas are never entitled to the Nagas or Nagaland.

3. Notwithstanding the fact that some plain areas were attached to Naga Hills District in the Initial stage in 1866, it lasted up to 1903 only. Later on, the boundary of this district was clearly defined by the British govt. vide the notification dated 25th November 1925.

4. While creating the Nagaland state in 1963 by dint of the state of Nagaland Act- 1962, the boundary which was demarcated in 1925 was univocally recognised and constitutionally ratified.

5. The claims of the Nagaland government over the reserved forests within the territory of Assam are constitutionally illegal. The encroachment of the Naga people in the reserved forests goes against the law of the land. The government notification issued by the government of Assam regarding the formation of the Reserved forest namely Diphu, South Nambor, Rengma and Doyang Reserved forests way back in the Nineteenth century prove beyond doubt that these Reserved forests belong to the state of Assam.

The 'constitutional rights' of Assam over the 'disputed lands' finds repetition in the public memorandum. It stated that the 'constitutional boundary' was to be recognised as final and binding, all illegal construction whatsoever carried out by the Nagaland government were to be removed, all forms of encroachments by the Nagas within the 'constitutional boundary' of Assam were to be evicted, the 'disputed are status' in the Reserved forests bordering Nagaland were to be nullified, neutral forces were to be withdrawn and the territorial rights of Assam was to be established.¹⁵⁹ Those arguing the view point of Assam have been consistent in narrating that there is a 'constitutional boundary between Assam and Nagaland defined by the State of Nagaland Act 1962' and Nagaland has consistently

¹⁵⁷ The Government of India appointed *Sundaram Commission* in 1971 and *Shastri Commission* in 1985. The Supreme Court of India appointed a Local Commission in 2007 to enquire and establish the rightful claim.

¹⁵⁸ Public Memorandum Submitted to the Local Commission on Assam- Nagaland Dispute (constituted by the Supreme Court of India). The memorandum was submitted with the title- Facts about Assam- Nagaland Border Dispute, 2007.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

violated the norms of the boundary and disrespected the constitution.¹⁶⁰ The claims over the notified territory which is around 4974.16 sq. km along the entire Assam-Nagaland border which runs about 434 kms are narrated as illegal, historically and traditionally unjustified, and factually wrong.¹⁶¹

The Government of Nagaland submitted a memorandum to Sundaram Commission on 10th September 1971, which raised questions over the distribution of resources-

What state in the country has more land for cultivation than Assam? Which state has more natural resources than the rich Assam valley? Which state in India has so much oil flowing, so much tea gardens, so much coal? Yet the land belonging to Nagas, which had been illegally taken away by a foreign power, are not being freely distributed by Assam not to the indigenous people- not even to the citizens of India- in many cases -but the Naga cultivators who have reclaimed these lands with the sweat of their brows, have been denied their possession. Kakadanga Reserve Forests and Doyang Reserve Forests are example to this point. We are sure that the Government of India does not want this state of affairs to continue in our border today.¹⁶²

The above questions bring forth the fact that politics of border is driven by the idea of claim and counter claim of natural resources. Nagaland clearly states this by asking questions such as which state in India has so much of oil flowing, so much tea gardens, so much coal? Assam is projected as a state abundant with natural resources and Nagaland is projected as a territory with scarcity, whose territories were illegally taken by the 'foreign power'. It further stated that Nagaland should be awarded the rightful place in the country, and the territory illegally taken away from them should be returned with immediate effect.¹⁶³ *The 16 Point Memorandum* is a point of reference for those arguing for Nagaland. The section 12 and 13 of the memorandum stated that the forests and other areas transferred out of Naga area should be returned to the Nagas, and the tribes inhabiting the areas contiguous to the present Nagaland be allowed to join if they so desire.¹⁶⁴ The Government of Nagaland has been repeatedly emphasising on Article 3 and 4 of the constitution, which concerns with the procedures for the transfer of areas from one state to another.¹⁶⁵ Interestingly constitution is reference point for both the parties, while

¹⁶⁰ Bezboruah and Kashyap's article, referred earlier.

¹⁶¹ For details see, *Facts about Assam Nagaland Border Dispute*.

¹⁶² *A Brief Note on the Background of the Nagaland/Assam Border Issue*, forwarded to K.V.K Sundaram, I.C.S, Adviser, Ministry of Home Affairs for Nagaland/ Assam Border. Submitted by R. Khathing, Chief Secretary Nagaland, 10th September, 1971.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Assam stresses on the need to respect the 'constitutional boundary'¹⁶⁶ and therefore argues for a 'fixed territory', Nagaland cites the provisions of the constitution to claims its 'rightful share'.¹⁶⁷ The conclusion is therefore sharp and clear, while for Assam, the foothills and forest reserves are a matter of pride and its separation symbolises mutilation of the geo-political body, for Nagaland, it is the reclaiming of their 'historical territory'.¹⁶⁸

The politics around the border has led to numerous writings and enquiries by the social scientists, and members of civil and political society. While Hiren Gohain makes us believe that there is an 'ulterior motive' of 'a new ruthless class of contractors and wheeler-dealers' from Nagaland behind the attack.¹⁶⁹ He also states that they wish to 'gain access to the forest wealth, the rice fields and mineral wealth like oil', located in Assam.¹⁷⁰ Udayon Misra calls it a 'vexed issue', which should be resolved with a 'joint civil society initiative'.¹⁷¹ In an interview given to the *First Post*, Chandan Sharma a professor of Sociology at Tezpur University presented a picture of 'aggressive Nagaland'. He said that the Centre had appointed Commissions which had ruled in favour of Assam. But Nagaland rejected the recommendations of both these panels and started 'behaving aggressively' after the state was formed, 'the Nagas are seeking historical boundary but there is no evidence to prove it'.¹⁷² On 20th August 2007 the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) submitted a memorandum

¹⁶⁶ On 25th November 1925, a notification appeared in the *Assam Gazette* which defined the Boundary between the Naga Hills and Sibsagar district. After a gap of 10 years, in 1935 it was pointed out that the notification was incomplete as regards the district boundary from boundary pillar No. 15 at the southernmost corner of the Naginijan Tea Estate to the so called Kampungia Naga path from Lirumen village. The particular place where the notification seems obscure is from where the Teok stream crosses the boundary of the Naginijan Tea Estate to the Ashichtenenam ridge. The Sub divisional officer of Mokokchung too pointed out that the district boundary requires to be clearly demarcated on the ground. He also considered it desirable that the area immediately to the north of the district boundary to the foot of the hills should be constituted a reserved forest, as the 1st addition to the Tiru Hills reserve for political reasons. ASA, Revenue Department, Revenue- A, File Nos. 1-8, September 1936.

¹⁶⁷ Kashyap, 'Explained: Assam vs. Nagaland'.

¹⁶⁸ The reserved forests have been classed under four categories by the *Committee of Border affairs of Nagaland*, which they argue as their historical territory. The first category includes the Langting- Mupa Reserve forest and Grung-ming Reserve forest which is believed to be transferred from Naga territory to Cachar. The Second includes the forest reserves namely- Namboor reserve forest, Upper Daigurung Reserve forest, Lower Daigurung Reserve forest, Kaliani Reserve forest, Mikir hills reserve forest, Diphu reserve forest, Rengma reserve forest. The eight reserve forest is believed to be transferred to the adjoining districts of Assam between 1901 to 1903. The third includes the following- Daldali Reserve forest, Dhansiri Reserve forest, Langting Mupa reserve forest, Lumding Reserve forest, Desema reserve forest, Kaki reserve forest, Geleki reserve forest, Tiru reserve forest and Kakadanga reserve forest. The Nagas claim that these reserve forests were transferred to Assam from the old Naga Hills. The fourth includes the Desoi valley Reserve forests, Desoi Reserve forest, Doyang reserve forest. These forests are said to have been transferred in 1924, 1892 and 1903 respectively. For further details of the claims see, *A Brief Account on Historical Sequences of Nagaland Assam Border Affairs*.

¹⁶⁹ Gohain, 'Violent Borders: Killings in Nagaland-Assam', p. 3283.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Misra, 'Assam-Nagaland Border Violence', p. 18.

¹⁷² Dowerah, 'How Assam Nagaland border dispute became a people versus history problem'.

before the Local Commission. It came down heavily on Nagaland and stated that their facts were 'historically distorted'. It said that every year the Naga chiefs with large revenue came down to the Ahom capital to pay tribute. It was then only the Nagas would enjoy products of the *khats* (land). Unless they came and paid tribute in kind to the Ahom kings, the Naga chiefs were not entitled to enjoy the *khat* and fishing lake. A refractory chief was not allowed to come down and thus he forfeited the products of the *khats*.¹⁷³ The narration around the border is full of the imagery of dissection of territory, Assam states that Dimapur was the capital of Kachari kingdom till 16th century and it was under the pressure of the centre that the territory was transferred to Nagaland. Several works of history are cited to counter the claims of Nagaland.¹⁷⁴ Territory well defined has been one of the principal characteristics of the claims of nationhood. It is the politics over the geo-political body that the nationalism has thrived. The geo-political body is attributed a human form and segregating it is seen as an act of violence on the body, the idea of pride and memory are therefore invoked to claim the body in totality.

While Nagas narrate themselves as 'independent' who have been continuously raiding Assam since medieval times, the Assamese narrate themselves as the rulers of both the hills and the plains and regard the Nagas as 'tribute paying tribes'. History is narrated either for or against the claim, trade, economic ties, mobility, materiality and practices find no place in the narration. The 'historical truth' is attempted to suit the political reality and goals of the conflicting states. The politics around the border therefore unfolds a picture of the impossibility of the nation.

Conclusion

The knowledge through which the colonial state attempted to govern the population was aimed at constructing the identity of the 'loyal subject' which was based on a unitary understanding of law, people and customs.¹⁷⁵ However the knowledge which was gathered had fissures, which is quite evident from the resistance offered by Nagas. The identity manufactured by the state through its tools of governmentality was instrumental in the manufacturing of the citizens/subjects and the outsider. The narrative of subjects was based on the idea of difference, the Nagas who were carriers of *daos* and spears were hunters and represented the outsider. The

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Public Memorandum Submitted to the Local Commission on Assam- Nagaland Border Dispute*. The memorandum presents a 'historical account' of the conflict and by citing works of history denies the claims of Nagaland. It stated that 'the Nagas are known as hilly tribes and there is no record that Naga had been living in the plain area'. They practiced shifting cultivation and had 'no knowledge' of water cultivation of plain area. The constitution of India also recognises them as hills tribe. By citing these instances they argued that, 'the Naga Claim upon the plain area of Assam is groundless'.

¹⁷⁵ For details on the idea of imposition of unitary sovereignty see, Robb, 'The Colonial State and Constructions of Indian Identity: An Example on the Northeast Frontier in the 1880s'.

'we' constituted the core, which stood for the following- the 'civilised', the missionary, the bureaucrat, the 'modern', the 'assamese', the 'developed' and to sum up the 'we' constituted the state. 'Them' on the other hand stood for the 'brute', the 'violent', the savage, the naked and to sum up it included those who fell outside the purview of the state. The Nagas who were mapped as the 'savage child' graduated as the 'untamed subjects' of history. While the colonial state chose to name the Nagas as 'thieves' and 'raiders', the post- colonial state called them 'extremists'. In the process both the colonial and the post- colonial state ended up imposing multiple identities to the people. The people from the hills became the Nagas and the people from the plains became Assamese. Identity was linked to geography, people were sedentarised. In the process the networks of communication were disrupted, and with the coming of inner line permits, closing of *dwards*, the binaries of hills and plains were preserved. It is only through fluid borders; one can imagine the politics of bargain. However the idea of fixed border has gripped the imagination of both the states. The civil society, the media, the political parties, the police, the army, the bureaucracy all jump into the conflicted terrain and turn the border affairs into a circus.¹⁷⁶ Borders have successfully brought the 'imagined community' together, and any assault on the border is seen as an assault on the people, land and the territory.¹⁷⁷ People are counted as 'ours' and 'theirs'. Identities turn rigid. 'Nagas' turn more 'Nagas', and 'Assamese' turn more 'Assamese'. Under such politically and emotionally charged circumstances, history and 'historical truth' attain political symbols, 'truth', turns multiple, 'facts' are continuously altered, and a new narrative is constructed around the geography.¹⁷⁸ The idea that territories could overlap and identities were much porous finds no space in the political vocabulary of modern statecraft which seems to be diseased by unitary notion of sovereignty and territoriality. With the coming of the boundary, the imagination around the nation changes, and history and people are seen in the contexts of boundaries. Nagas are turned into 'outsiders', 'raiders', 'marauders' and 'encroachers'. *Adivasis* are narrated as 'intruders' and 'encroachers'. The territory gets rigid, and turns into a no-entry zone, this is border, where the hills get separated from the plains.

¹⁷⁶ Representatives of eight organisations submitted three memorandums to Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and the Chief Minister of Assam, demanding a 'permanent solution' to the Assam-Nagaland Boundary problem. The organisations submitted a four point charter which included the following demands- a. permanent solution to the Boundary Problem, b. ensure the safety of lives and property of the people living along the border areas, c. a visit by a ministry team to the area on a stock-taking situation, d. immediate withdrawal of CRPF posted as neutral force and deployment of any other security forces along with Assam Battalion on the Border. The eight organisations from Assam included, All Assam Students Union (AASU), All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), All Gorkha Students Union, All Rabha Students Union, Chutia Jati Satro Sangtha, Rabha Jatiyo Parishad, Border Co- Ordination Committee and All Adivasi Students Association. For details see, *The Telegraph*, 27th August, 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Both the Civil Society of Assam and Nagaland issued Memorandums, and diverse political fronts came together to resolve the border issue.

¹⁷⁸ The intelligentsia, media and government of both the states, narrated their own version of truths, the examples have been cited above.

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