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A Clash of Worldviews: The Impact of Modern Western Notion of Progress on Indigenous Naga Culture

Abstract

The term "progress" is a modern Western notion that life is always improving and advancing toward an ideal state. It is a vital modern concept which underlies geographic explorations and scientific and technological inventions as well as the desire to harness nature in order to increase human beings' ease and comfort. With the advent of Western colonization and to the great detriment of the colonized, the notion of progress began to perniciously and pervasively permeate across cultures.

During the classical colonial period, Western anthropologists, sociologists and others had hypothesized, or at least ardently bought into the notion, that human beings, culturally speaking, progressed from animism, to polytheism, to monotheism, and maybe beyond, to atheism. Animism, the designated religion of Indigenous Peoples, was considered the most primitive and savage form of cultural practices among human beings. Likewise, cultural evolution theorists claim that societies start out in a *primitive* state and gradually become more *civilized* over time. They determined that the culture and technology of the West illustrated the most advanced progress as opposed to indigenous culture which represented the most backward and primitive form of existing cultures.

The interaction between the Nagas and the West, beginning with British military conquest, followed by American missionary intrusion of Naga soil, has resulted in the decimation of Naga culture. Consequences are still being felt in the lack of sense of direction and confusion among Nagas today. And as other indigenous peoples whose recent history is characterized by the traumatic cultural disruption caused by colonial interference, the Nagas have long engaged in self-shame, self-negation and self-sabotage.

Well before there was a United Kingdom or United States of America Naga culture was thriving. However, when the Euro-Americans colonizers, ethnographers and missionaries, with their notion of unilinear progress and cultural evolution, came into contact with the Naga culture they had no appreciation for it. Accordingly, they stereotyped and demonized the Nagas and their culture and were determined to impose Western values thereby precipitating the demise of Naga culture. Euro-American colonialism, with its wholesale imposition of new political, religious, intellectual and cultural values, is responsible for the gradual demise of Naga culture, and it is almost a cliché to assert that since the colonial contact, the long evolved Naga traditional values are being replaced by Western values.

Document Type

Dissertation

Degree Name

Ph.D.

Department

Religious and Theological Studies

First Advisor

George E. Tinker, Ph.D.

Keywords

Colonialism, Indigenous, Nagas, Progress, Proselytization, Worldviews

Subject Categories

Asian History | Cultural History | Ethnic Studies | Social and Cultural Anthropology

Publication Statement

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A CLASH OF WORLDVIEWS:
THE IMPACT OF MODERN WESTERN NOTION OF PROGRESS
ON INDIGENOUS NAGA CULTURE

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver and
the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Tezenlo Thong

June 2009

Denver, Colorado

Advisor: George E. “Tink” Tinker

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ABSTRACT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Shame and honor comprise crucial elements in my culture. My personal action has ramification on my family, friends and community, because I am not only a child of my biological parents but also of my community. As such, my misbehavior brings shame to my community. Conversely, if I accomplish something worthy I bring honor to my community as well. So, not only is the individual's accomplishment shared but also the shame of misdeed. Whatever I do affects the whole tapestry of my community; on the other hand, any accomplishment is the result of the weaving of individual threads of the tapestry, that is, the community. As I come to the end of my studies at the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology, I owe a sense of profound gratitude to the tapestry of my life, the community of family, friends and teachers.

I thank my professors and dissertation committee members for their academic insight, support and challenge. The members of my advisory committee, Richard Clemmer-Smith, E. Thomas "Tom" Rowe and George E. "Tink" Tinker, have been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration. I am profoundly grateful for their prompt and incisive critique of my work. I express my special thanks to my advisor, Prof. Tink, who has taught and advised me from the very beginning of the program to now and has been a source of 'enlightenment' all along. Also, I owe a sense of profound gratefulness to my friend Eric Larson for offering his painstaking and invaluable service of editing and critiquing my work.

INTRODUCTION

*The ethos of modernity was born of a clash with the other, and the resulting global projection incorporated otherness to social, political, and cultural self-identity. Thinking about relations between self and other, between representatives of highly divergent societies, surfaced in tandem with the encounter that occasioned it.*¹

Contemporary Nagas are a transnational indigenous people of about forty different tribes, numbering approximately three million people. They occupy a landlocked mountainous region, formerly known as “the Naga Hills,” bounded by India in the Southwest, China in the North and Myanmar in the East.² Politically Nagas live in a number of colonially segmented regions within two nation-states, India and Myanmar. The Nagas in India alone live in four different states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. In Myanmar, they inhabit the provinces of Sagaing and Kachin. With the exception of the state of Nagaland, where the Nagas are predominant majority, the Naga population in all other states and provinces is a marginalized minority. More than two centuries of colonization, first by the United Kingdom and then by India and Myanmar, has caused the displacement of the Nagas in these geographical locations.³

¹Terry Cochran, *Twilight of the Literary: Figures of Thought in the Age of Print* (London: Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 135.

²In this dissertation, I use third person pronouns, such as ‘they,’ ‘their’ and ‘them,’ with reference to my people, the Nagas. However, I am a Naga, born and raised in Nagaland, and a product or victim of the social transformation of the very culture that I am writing about. So, beside the insights gained through my interviews with Naga elders during the course of my research for this dissertation, I also drew out of my existential experience and reality as a Naga.

³The marginalized slogan, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us,” is aptly applicable to the Nagas in their colonially segmented plight.

The present political circumstance and territorial segmentation of the Nagas is a direct result of British colonization. “The war that afflicts the Naga Hills today,” argues Marcus Franke, “and which has spread to the whole of what is called India’s North-East, may be understood as the continuation of the imperial conquest begun by the British.”⁴ So, besides political independence, reunification or integration of the Naga ancestral land has been the vain attempt of the Nagas for more than half a century. For logistical convenience the dissertation will be limited in its scope to the Nagas in the state of Nagaland. However, the impact of modernization occurred in almost a similar fashion in all Naga inhabited areas in slightly varying time periods.

Traditionally Nagas were self-sufficient, autonomous and did not have any extensive contact with the world beyond their immediate neighbors, but their culture was thriving well before there was a United Kingdom or United States of America. However, when the Euro-American colonizers, ethnographers and missionaries, with their notion of unilinear progress and cultural evolution, came into contact with the Naga culture they had no appreciation for it. Accordingly, they stereotyped and demonized the Nagas and their culture and were determined to impose Western values thereby precipitating the demise of Naga culture. Obviously, the worldviews of the two cultures were worlds apart, causing a clash between the two.

What is a worldview?

Every culture and society operates from a particular worldview, whether or not that worldview exists consciously. And this worldview determines the way individuals perceive and relate to one another and the world around them. “The worldview of a group

⁴Franke, “Wars without End: The Case of the Naga Hills,” *Diogenes* 53, no. 4 (Nov. 2006): 1.

of people,” wrote Doug Hewitt, “underlies every aspect of their life – their language, social system, religious beliefs, even the way they go about their daily life.”⁵ As such, the importance of worldview cannot be overstated, because one’s worldview becomes one’s view of reality and inevitably influences “one’s perceiving, thinking, knowing and doing.”⁶

There is no Naga word equivalent for English ‘worldview’. The word that comes closest to worldview is *kahhang yeng*, which can be translated ‘the rule/law of life.’⁷ This term is also used to refer to culture. *Kahhang yeng* is also used in conjunction with *abami*, meaning *ancestor*. Thus, for traditional Nagas *abami kahhang yeng* (ancestral rule/way of life) provided the basis for perceiving, thinking, knowing and doing. So, if the ancestral way of living is forgotten or wiped out the people lose the basis of their worldview and confusion sinks in.

Nigerian writer Ogbu Kalu observed that traditional myths serve as “the vehicles of worldviews” and “to construct how and why things are the way they are.”⁸ Worldviews, he said, “are embedded in the people’s experience and then expressed or reenacted in their cultures.” Most importantly, indigenous peoples’ worldviews, which serve as the corner-stone for customs, social norms and traditional laws, “are stored in

⁵Hewitt, “A Clash Of Worldviews: Experiences From Teaching Aboriginal Students,” *Theory Into Practice* 39, no. 2 (2000): 111.

⁶ Ken Funk, “What Is A Worldview” (March 21, 2001), <http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/worldview.html> (accessed April 5, 2007).

⁷I belong to Rengma Naga tribe, which is one of the forty-five (or so) Naga tribes. Most of the Naga words or terms I use in the dissertation come from my native Rengma Naga language.

⁸Kalu, “The Sacred Egg: Worldview, Ecology, and Development in West Africa,” in *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*, ed. John A. Grim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 2001), 228.

proverbs and folk myths.”⁹ Consequently, the loss of abami kahhang yeng is the cause for disorientation for contemporary Nagas.

In the West, ‘worldview’ is a translation from the German, *Weltanschauung*, originating and popularized in the context of German Idealism and Romanticism. Although first used by Immanuel Kant, he did so only in passing. Wilhelm Dilthey is believed to be the first to use the term as a major focus. Subsequently, other philosophers, like Ludwig Wittgentein and Francis Schaeffer, have popularized the concept.¹⁰

Michael Kearney rightly noted that the theory of “world view” and its conceptual framework is a product of Western cultural anthropology. In his book, *World View*, Kearney mentions that in the literature of American cultural anthropology, a “*world view*” is the investigation of “the ways in which different peoples think about themselves, about their environments, space, [and] time...”¹¹ It is a “set of images and assumptions about the world.”¹² The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines *worldview* as a “... contemplation of the world; [a] view of life” In other words, it is an intellectual perception of the world.¹³ And because a worldview is an intellectual perception, image or assumption, it is subjective. No culture can claim objectivity with regard to its worldview.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰See David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002); James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Paul A Marshall, Sander Griffieon and Richard J. Mouw, eds., *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science* (Lanham; New York: University Press of America, 1989).

¹¹Kearney, *World View* (Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp, 1984), 1.

¹²Ibid., 10.

¹³Funk, “What is a Worldview?”

Clash of worldviews

A worldview necessarily exists in every culture as a conduit for looking at and perceiving reality. It is a given thing in any culture and no culture that is not imbued with it exists. Alfred North Whitehead argues that in any culture “assumptions appear so obvious that people do not know that they are assuming because no other way of putting things have occurred to them.”¹⁴ It is shaped and determined by the milieu of a world in which it exists. Wilhelm Dilthey rightly maintains that “World views develop under different conditions, climate, races, nationalities determined by history and through political organization, the time-bound confines of epochs and eras.”¹⁵ Life itself, Dilthey further argues, is the ultimate cause of any worldview. And because life experiences are contrastingly numerous, originating from “the totality of our psychological existence,”¹⁶ they generate “a multiplicity of growth of world views.”¹⁷

As such, it is crucial to note that, first, multiplicity of worldviews exists and they differ from one culture to another; second, because of this multiplicity, any claim on superiority of one worldview to another is not only contentious and erroneous but dangerous. For instance, “In Europe, for well over a thousand years, all ideas – scientific and other – that did not reflect the Christian worldview were considered heresies and outlawed wherever possible.”¹⁸ The notion that the European Christian worldview was superior did not end in Europe, but went on to spread and affect almost the entire world.

¹⁴Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 49.

¹⁵Dilthey, *Dilthey's Philosophy of Existence: An Introduction to Weltanschauungslehre*, trans. with Introduction, William Kluback and Martin Weinbaum (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), 27.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁸ Sahtouris, *Earthdance: Living Systems in Evolution* (1999), <http://www.ratical.com/LifeWeb/Erthdnce/erthdnce.html> (accessed April 6, 2007).

Because worldviews are culturally contextual, they differ from one culture to another. Following Darwin's theory of evolution or 'the survival of the fittest' the industrialized Euro-American worldview is predicated largely on biological evolution – the notion that every living creature competes to survive; thus, the fittest in the competition passes the test and survives to grow up.¹⁹ Elisabet Sahtouris claims that when Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection of the fittest appeared, industrial age in England was well under way, and the theory was well received. The rich industrialists in England, in particular, adopted the evolutionary theory as a part of their worldview and "took Darwin's theory as evidence that their way of life – industrial competition – was the most natural and the surest way of human progress."²⁰

In contrast, the traditional indigenous worldview calls for harmony and cooperation, not competition, within the ecosystem. The question that is often posed in such a conflicting situation, then, is, "Which worldview comports with reality?" When such opposing worldviews meet, a clash of interests, viewpoints and priorities occur, resulting sometimes in violence and destruction. Hewitt argues that, unlike the Western worldview, "the Aboriginal worldview accepts that survival depends on cooperation and coexistence with the forces of nature rather than expecting to manipulate and control them."²¹

¹⁹ Some scholars have argued that "Social Darwinism" should be relabeled "biological Spencerism" because of the fact that Darwin borrowed his "survival of the fittest" concept from the historian/sociologist Herbert Spencer. See Valerie A. Haines, "Spencer, Darwin and the Question of Reciprocal Influence," in *Critical Assessments, Critical Assessments of Leading Sociologists*, ed. John Offer (New York; London: Routledge, 2000), 37.

²⁰Sahtouris, *Earthdance* (see Chapter 14).

²¹Hewitt, "A Clash Of Worldviews." Also, see Tinker, "American Indians and Liberation: Harmony and Balance," in *Liberation in World Traditions*, ed. Miguel de la Torre (Baylor University Press, 2007).

Creation, according to Naga ‘tribal theologian’ Wati Longchar, is central to the Nagas and other tribal peoples’ spirituality.²² Similarly, Tinker has argued that the consciousness of being one with nature is the spiritual foundation for indigenous peoples.²³ The absence of the concept of anthropocentrism in traditional Naga belief is crucial for understanding their worldview. Naga mythology of creation, for example, is inundated with accounts of cooperation among human beings, animals, birds and insects. Also, the Nagas, like many other indigenous peoples, refer to the earth as the ‘mother’ that provides sustenance. Oral narratives such as this and others serve as the foundation that undergirds their worldview and practical relationship with creation and other living beings.

The interface between the worldviews of Euro-American world and indigenous peoples, beginning with the era of European colonization and continuing today in the form of globalization, has not simply created a clash but brought enormous destruction to the latter culturally, psychologically, politically and physically. Speaking on the experience of colonization in North America, Anne Poonwassie and Ann Charter argued that most of the native peoples’ social, cultural, economic and political structures and perspectives “were gradually eroded or replaced through structural and cultural colonization.”²⁴ In general, John Bodley lamented that “industrial civilization is now completing the process of transformation and absorption or extermination of the world’s

²²Longchar, “A Critique of the Christian Theology of Creation,” in *Doing Theology with Tribal Resources: Context and Perspective*, ed. Wati Longchar and Larry David (Jorhat, Assam: Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College, 1999), 70.

²³Tinker, “The Integrity of Creation: Restoring Trinitarian Balance,” *The Ecumenical Review* 41, no. 4 (October 1989): 535.

²⁴Poonwassie and Charter, “Aboriginal Worldview of Healing: Inclusion, Blending, and Bridging,” in *Integrating Traditional Healing Practices Into Counseling and Psychotherapy*, ed. Roy Moody and William West (London; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 16-7.

tribal peoples and cultures that politically organized states have been carrying out for 6,000 years.”²⁵

Also, worldviews may not necessary be accurate or consistent.²⁶ James Sire puts a worldview as a set of “assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false.”²⁷ Thus, it is possible to have faulty images or worldviews. Irrespective of true or not, the worldview people hold is an important aspect of the reality that influences and defines their existence.²⁸ Besides, no worldview is impervious or static. Rather, worldview changes or takes new shapes as a result of exchange of information and/or new discoveries, especially today. Writing in the 1920s, William Kay Wallace asserted that scientific discovery had caused a shift in attitude toward religious worldview in the Western world. He argued that “[i]ndustrialism is the most significant social factor in modern life. Whether we like it or not, a new outlook of life is in the making that differs fundamentally from the accepted religious interpretation of the universe.”²⁹ Worldviews evolve, especially in modern days, with “the variations of life, the succession of eras, the changes in science, and the variability of the mind of nations and of individuals.”³⁰

Worldviews also can be influenced, replaced or imposed upon, albeit, not in its entirety at once. Kearney argued that few peoples create their own history and culture entirely by themselves and acknowledges the fact that asymmetries of power and wealth

²⁵Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 3rd ed. (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1990), 1. Bodley uses the terms “tribal” and “indigenous” peoples interchangeably and holds that the tribal peoples who have survived the onslaught of organized states have come to redefine themselves as “indigenous peoples” and have, to a certain degree, succeeded to retain their distinctive features.

²⁶Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 19, 20.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 1.

²⁹Wallace, *The Scientific World View* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928), v.

³⁰Dilthey, *Dilthey's Philosophy*, 28-29.

among interacting societies offer undue advantages to the powerful and wealthy to influence and change the less powerful and wealthy.³¹ Undoubtedly, this is a modernist claim, wholly predicated on the Euro-American worldview. This was not the experience of the Nagas or most other indigenous peoples in their pre-colonial time, i.e., before the onslaught of colonial invasion and occupation. Sander Griffioen contends that a unity of worldview at a global level “could be attained only if it were imposed on society by force,” but he maintains that any such “attempts to achieve unity can only be terrorist.”³²

In instances where a people’s worldview is undermined, changed or imposed upon, especially when done rapidly or by force, the people experience not only cultural disruption, but also a sense cultural dislocation and trauma. With regard to the plight of the Nagas under the British administration, Henry Balfour noted, “... an overdose of civilization is likely to have disastrous effect. Being incapable of assimilation in large doses it usually induces a state, to put it mildly, of mental indigestion, which may easily lead to worse conditions.”³³ Indigenous cultural views, no less the Nagas’, have been dismissed, stereotyped and demonized for much of the century since the Western colonization. As a result, today, much of the worldviews of indigenous peoples have been skewed, altered or obliterated by the dominant cultural view, especially the Modern Western worldview, which in turn has been greatly influenced by modern science and technology and the concept and practice of democracy and globalization.

³¹Kearney, *World View*, 6.

³²Griffioen, “Introduction,” in *Stained Glass*, 12.

³³Balfour, however, firmly believed that a gradual transformation of the Nagas would have beneficial results: “A higher culture may be introduced to the backward races provided that the assimilative process is a gradual one spread over a prolonged period of time. Civilization is like arsenic - an admirable tonic if administered in small, successive doses, which can act cumulatively with beneficial results.” Balfour, “Presidential Address: The Welfare of Primitive Peoples,” *Folklore* 34, no. 1 (Mar. 31, 1923): 17.

Statement of thesis and description of scope

The difference between the worldviews of indigenous Nagas and Euro-Americans cannot be overemphasized, and I will argue that Euro-American colonialism, with its wholesale imposition of new political, religious, intellectual and cultural values, is responsible for the gradual demise of Naga culture. It is almost a cliché to assert that since the colonial contact, the long evolved Naga traditional values are being replaced by Western or foreign values. Special attention will be given to the impact of the modern Western notion of progress on the Nagas, their culture and traditional values, for progress is the underlying narrative that informed the misadventure of Euro-American colonial enterprises along with the racism, genocide and other human tragedies, perpetrated by the dominant Whites on indigenous peoples.

The interaction between Nagas and the West, beginning with British military conquest followed by American missionary intrusion of Naga soil, has resulted in the decimation of traditional Naga culture. Consequences are still being felt in the lack of sense of direction and confusion among Nagas today. Michael Salzman argued that “cultural worldviews imbue the universe with meaning, order, predictability and permanence” and inform us what nature is, how to relate it and to other human beings. As such, when a culture or cultural worldview is destroyed, a people’s self-esteem is shattered and confusion sinks in.³⁴ This is an incontrovertible historical fact and has been the fate of many peoples throughout the world. Before proceeding any further, however, I must state clearly that I do not make any claim of the superiority of Naga or any indigenous culture over Western culture. To make such a claim is to allow oneself be

³⁴Michael Salzman, “Cultural Trauma and Recovery: Perspective on Terror Management Theory,” *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* 44, no. 2 (April 2001): 3.

sucked in to the vortex of the colonial mentality of negating the Other and to invalidate the attempt to refute colonial narratives.

While my primary focus will be on the Nagas, I will also draw insights from similar experiences of indigenous peoples throughout the world because while they are necessarily diverse they share common experiences of subjugation, ethnocide, genocide, marginalization and militarization by Western powers.³⁵ It should be noted that the imposition of the ideologies of progress on Naga culture has generated changes in all aspects of Naga life. However, I will not discuss in detail the existential realities of the Nagas concerning their present political and economic circumstances. Rather, my focus will be limited to Western influence on traditional values, ways of thinking and the breakdown and radical restructuring of social and culture arrangements, which began with the intrusion of the British government and military, followed by the missionary projects of the American Baptist Church.

Rationale for pursuing thesis

During the classical colonial period, Western anthropologists, sociologists and others had hypothesized, or at least ardently bought into the notion, that human beings, culturally speaking, “progressed” from animism, to polytheism, to monotheism, and maybe beyond, to atheism.³⁶ Animism, the designated religion of Indigenous Peoples,

³⁵Bodley’s *Tribal Peoples and Development Issues: A Global Overview* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1988) carefully delineates the common features of tribal or indigenous peoples around the globe and shows how these similar heritages was quickly wiped out by the intrusion of external state governments.

³⁶Smart claims that theories like these are no longer thought to be valid, because they “reflect the assumption of Western culture that it has achieved the highest stage of development and achievement – a possibly arrogant value judgment rather than a scientific diagnosis.” Smart, *Worldviews*, 13. This may be true in some academic circles; however, belief in the superiority of Western forms of government,

was considered the most primitive and savage form of cultural practices among human beings. Likewise, cultural evolution theorists claim that societies start out in a *primitive* state and gradually become more *civilized* over time. They determined that the culture and technology of the West illustrated the most advanced progress as opposed to indigenous culture which represented the most backward and primitive form of existing cultures.

Western science and indigenous knowledge are often thought to be in conflict or at least incompatible. Western science is generally considered rational, objective, systematic and superior whereas indigenous knowledge is dismissed as shallow, irrational, superstitious and primitive. As a consequent, as John Briggs observed, whereas Western knowledge is “part of the whole notion of modernity, indigenous knowledge is part of a residual, traditional and backward way of life....”³⁷

From the beginning of Western colonial and missionary invasions in the early nineteen thirties, the threads of the fabric of Naga culture have been gradually pulled out one after another, thereby severely weakening Naga society. Put another way, the Naga society has been shattered by the onslaught of modern Western culture. Indeed, Naga culture and values have been negated; so the notion that they are deficient persists. The Nagas were made to believe that they must abandon and reject traditional practices, such as folk tales, music, myths, dance, ornaments and festivals in order to put on the ‘garb’ of Western Christianity.

economics and technology persists. The push to spread Western concepts and practices of capitalism, democracy, freedom and globalization are being fervently undertaken around the world.

³⁷ Briggs, “The Use of Indigenous Knowledge in Development: Problems and Challenges,” *Progress in Development Studies* 5, no. 2 (April 2005): 102.

The demise of these traditional practices is tantamount to burning or otherwise obliterating their historical books or documents, because these are the conduit through which non-literate societies preserved and treasured experiences and culture, all of which is passed on orally. This is one of the reasons why many Naga youngsters do not know their past. The exception is the lie perpetrated by the West that their ancestors were ‘blood thirsty headhunters’ and ‘war-mongers.’ As other indigenous peoples whose recent history is characterized by the traumatic cultural disruption caused by colonial interference, the Nagas have long engaged in self-shame, self-negation and self-sabotage. For example, when in Indian cities, many Naga youngsters deliberately hide their true identity and pretend to be visitors from Japan, South Korea, Singapore or Hong Kong (China). This is also done in part to avoid being discriminated against by the dominant Hindus who consider ‘tribal’ peoples as ‘outcastes.’ The popular Hindu worldview excludes tribal peoples from the caste structure, terming them as outcastes.

Modern scientific culture has the tendency to conceive anything natural or traditional as primitive, backward or lacking in civilized features. Unfortunately, the Nagas have come to uncritically accept this binary construction. The idea that indigenous culture is deficient, backward or primitive was fabricated to colonize the mind in order to generate ‘civilization,’ conversion and change. More importantly, Nagas are unconcerned, if not ambivalent, about the fact that their cultural foundation has been gradually ruined and the values that gave meaning to their existence have been demonized. Consequently, no serious efforts are being made to recover or revive their traditional values. The people are left with a discordant mixture of values, dominated by Western influence.

In this absence of Naga cultural knowledge and perspective that could shape their perception of the world or value judgments and provide meaning to their existence, young Nagas tend to ape that which is dazzling or highly hyped, such as Hollywood, celebrity or hippie culture. Mimicking such fantasized culture is costly, because it comes at the expense of one's own culture, identity and values of origin.³⁸ Mimicry creates homogeneity which leads us to the same mold of culture, that is, the dominant culture.

In light of the realities of contemporary Naga life, this dissertation is an attempt to discern ways to think and act outside the normative Western framework and to foster an awareness for the urgent need to reconstitute Naga spirit and restore self-esteem. Ideally, this project will constitute beginning steps in an effort to recover and reclaim the fading Naga culture in order to live it today and hopefully leave it behind for tomorrow.

Statement of proposed title

The term “progress” is a modern Western notion that life is always improving and advancing toward an ideal state. It is a vital modern concept which underlies geographic explorations and scientific and technological inventions as well as to harness nature in order to increase human beings' ease and comfort. The term was coined and attained high political and religious value in the West and is often used interchangeably with development, civilization, modernization, westernization or industrialization. With the advent of Western colonization and to the great detriment of the colonized cultures, the

³⁸Mimicry might be used for positive effects for the colonized and the oppressed if they are able to use it to ‘beat the colonizers at their games,’ for example, education. In what sounds like a strategy for positive mimicry, Clemmer wrote, “Paradoxically, Hopi Traditionalism requires intimate familiarity with non-traditional law, economy, politics, industrial technology, and progress in order to better oppose them and fit them into a traditionalist interpretation.” Richard Clemmer, *Roads in the Sky: The Hopi Indians in the Century of Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 306; also see Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (1984): 125-33.

notion of progress began to perniciously and pervasively permeate across cultures. The colonizers believed that “their civilization had attained the highest possible level of human existence and cultivated capacities which all men qua men ought to develop, they had no doubt that it was desirable.”³⁹ As for the colonized, they accepted the notion of progress as an inevitable force pushing them towards the colonizers’ vision of civilization or as a paradigm of sameness, modeled by and after their conquerors.

There is no denying that the notion of progress is responsible for the launching of European explorations and colonization of other races and cultures.⁴⁰ Coming out of the Medieval Age, a period which is referred to by some as the “Dark Age” (or more appropriately, the European Dark Age)⁴¹ and characterized by unprecedented corruption within the Church in Europe, divisions, wars, bloodshed, violence, etc., it was the period called the “Enlightenment” in Europe that boosted European self-confidence, and consequently the notion of progress became increasingly popular. Today, the notion of progress is a hallmark of Western civilization.⁴² This worldview not only advocates and strives to assure that technology provides continuous development and improvement in the West, but it also holds that the non-Western world should advance or improve as quickly as possible to catch up with the West.⁴³ “Thus, a Western definition and standard

³⁹ Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi’s Political Philosophy: Critical Examination* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 1.

⁴⁰ Vandana Shiva, “Development as a New Project of Western Patriarchy,” in *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, ed. Irene Diamond and Gloria Ferman Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 193.

⁴¹ Critics and non-Western scholars have rightly argued that terms such as the “Dark Age” and “Enlightenment” are purely European in origin and concept and cannot be applied indiscriminately outside of the continental history and culture, albeit, its impacts have been felt worldwide.

⁴² Eileen Leonard, *Women, Technology and the Myth of Progress* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Upper Saddle River, 2003), 175.

⁴³ Clemmer, *Roads in the Sky*, 9.

of progress through technology is viewed as a universal standard, not culture bound, implying the superiority of Western civilization.”⁴⁴

In modern culture, science is closely associated with progress, especially in the Western world. “Scientism,” Huston Smith argued, is “the bedrock of the modern worldview.”⁴⁵ Giovanni Monastra observed that “Science is seen as the unique, true tool of progress, and progress is the landscape in which science can act with a specific and exact aim.”⁴⁶ Technology, then, is the most obvious manifestation and outcome of science or, as Hans Jonas puts it, “the dominant symbol of progress, at the least its most visible external measure.”⁴⁷ Eileen Leonard concurred that the blending of technology and progress is particularly apparent in the United States and concluded that “progress is America’s destiny, and technology is the method and the evidence.”⁴⁸ From the perspective of the indigenous peoples, progress can be interpreted as contriving or inventing new technologies or machines and becoming enslaved by them.⁴⁹ So what is viewed as progress by one culture could be seen by another as regression, enslavement or gradual extermination, at worst.

August Comte (1789-1857), the ‘father’ of sociology, has no doubt that “the progressive march of civilization follows a natural and unavoidable course....”⁵⁰ Comte’s

⁴⁴Leonard, *Women, Technology and the Myth*, 175.

⁴⁵Smith, “Scientism: The Bedrock of the Modern Worldview,” in *Science and the Myth of Progress*, ed. Mehrdad M. Zarandi (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, Inc., 2003).

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, ix.

⁴⁷Hans Jonas, “Reflection on Technology, Progress, and Utopia,” *Social Research* 48 (Autumn 1981): 412.

⁴⁸Leonard, *Women, Technology and the Myth*, 176.

⁴⁹Herbert Marcuse talks about “economic freedom” as a freedom from “false needs,” “which perpetuates toils, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice.” Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966; 1964), 4-5.

⁵⁰Comte, “The Progress of Civilization Through Three States,” in *Social Change: Sources, Patterns, and Consequences*, ed. Amitai Etzioni and Eva Etzioni (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1964), 15.

confident assertion could be challenged by indigenous peoples because a notion of progress or cultural evolution, comparable to the Western notion, is absent in indigenous thinking. Manuel Negwer reported that the conclusion drawn at the symposium on “The Idea of Progress in Different Cultures” was “that the Western notion of progress had no equivalence in the language and mentality of the indigenous peoples....”⁵¹ For indigenous Nagas, if an idea of progress existed, it was understood to mean a relative improvement in harvest, food supplies, the number of domesticated animals, or the recovery from illness or some other negative situation. The concept of a ‘giant leap’ or drastic change was absent until after a period of interaction with the West. Traditionally, the Nagas understood their society or culture as static. Tradition was revered as sacred, strictly observed and meticulously handed down from one generation to another.

Writing about Aboriginal peoples of Australia Veronica Strang argues that “...traditional Aboriginal cosmology was predicated on the assumption that, following the example of the ancestral beings, people would live in the same place in the same way for ever.”⁵² This notion of living “in the same place in the same way for ever” regulates the way indigenous peoples live out their daily lives and the way they envision and plan their future. Beyond merely observing the tradition, traditional Nagas have within their culture certain underlying philosophies or reasons for maintaining culture at a static or slow pace.

⁵¹The symposium was organized by the Bolivia branch of the German Society for Technological Co-operation and the La Paz Goethe Institute from the 7th to the 9th of May, 2004, <http://www.goethe.de/ins/vb/prj/fort/2004/paz/res/en142274.htm> (accessed March 24, 2004).

⁵² Strang, *Uncommon Ground: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Values* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1997), 89

Limitations and caveats

With the hope of dispelling misunderstanding and to bring about clarity, a few caveats are in order. First, I have maintained extensive quotations throughout the dissertation to let people or writers from different perspectives speak for themselves. I also have kept the original spellings in the quoted passages, especially from colonial and missionary literature on the Nagas. It is popularly assumed in the Western academy that the written work from the experience of and by the marginalized is at best subjective. To be objective one has to be able to amply annotate and cite from the dominant literature. So, the liberal use of quotations is also done with the object of answering people who may ask, “With what evidence can you support such a broad contention?”⁵³

Second, no culture is static; all are dynamic. However, there is a difference between change coming about from within and change being forced from without. A culture that evolves naturally relative to the milieu in which it exists is gradual. Such adaptation is from within and is initiated by the people within the culture. Cultural change from inside is done out of necessity and is not traumatic. However, when one culture supplants another, it results in obliteration or demise. The result is very dramatic and drastic that social and psychological upheaval may result. The cultural change among the Nagas in the wake of colonization and missionization was externally imposed and never welcomed by the people who experienced it. Consequently, it was traumatic.

Third, the present cultural and social state of the Nagas is the result of a long colonial period of mutation, including the period after the White people left the Naga homeland. However, it is incontrovertible that the ‘seed of change’ was sown by the

⁵³This is a direct quote taken from the Joint Ph.D. committee’s response to my dissertation proposal.

process of colonization and missionization and is being fanned by the currents of modern globalization, which Faye Harrison argued is “neocolonialism in its structure and dynamic.”⁵⁴

Despite the attempt to transform the Nagas by Euro-Americans and the influence of the forces of globalization, it may be mentioned that remnants of Naga cultural values and practices still exist; otherwise, reclaiming the past would be an impossible task. The degree of residual values and practices varies from the educated Naga to the non-educated Naga, from one living in a village to the other living in a town/city and between the older Naga and the younger Naga. The Naga culture is likely to be more manifest in the life of one who is not educated, older and living in a village located in a remote location. However, as the older generation of Nagas fades away the hope of reclaiming the culture is also fading away fast. For example, Ms. Layo Tep was until recently the only person from Nsunyu village who could play *adugu*, a traditional stringed musical instrument. I had the privilege of watching and listening to her play the instrument in December 2007. She died a few months later, and with her demise an aspect of the Naga tradition too is lost.

Also, in my interviews I found that memories of most Naga elders’ have been fading fast, because they have not been telling the oral narratives for years. For example, an elder would start a story and soon admitted that he did not remember it anymore for not engaging in story-telling for so many years. So, reclaiming the past needs to be done soon, because time is of the essence.

⁵⁴Harrison, “Anthropology as an Agent of Transformation: Introductory Comments and Queries,” in *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Toward an Anthropology for Liberation*, ed. Faye Harrison (Arlington, VA: Association of Black Anthropologists, [AAA], 1997), 1.

Fourth, some Western readers may find it upsetting because nothing positive is mentioned regarding either British colonization or American missionization, particularly those who expect to read from a native Naga of the positive contributions of American Baptist missionaries. Indeed, they may feel a sense of disappointment, even betrayal. Works discussing positive contributions already exist, and anyone wishing to read such material will have no difficulty finding it. This dissertation focuses on the ‘shadow’ side of the interaction between the two cultures.

Finally, and relating to the above, it has often been asserted by Western Christians and Nagas alike that Nagas lived in ‘deep darkness’ until the light of Christianity ‘dawned’ on them. This is but one example of the binary comparisons made: Christianity represents ‘light’ and Nagas religious practice stands for ‘darkness’. In speaking of the Nagas, E.W. Clark, a pioneer American missionary to the Nagas, once said, “...over all these ranges of hills hung the black pall of heathen, barbaric darkness....The softening twilight of Christianity is here. Soon the broad daylight with its transforming power will reveal a Christianized people.”⁵⁵ In November 1997, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the advent of Christianity in Nagaland, S.C. Jamir, then Chief Minister of Nagaland and one of the most prominent Naga political leaders, reminded the people by saying, “The little Naga world presented almost one unbroken scene of midnight darkness on all sides. A remedy was urgently needed to save them. In the fullness of God’s own time, the Light of heaven appeared on the scene to save the Nagas.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵Mary M. Clark, *A Corner in India* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 168. In this book, Clark recounts her missionary enterprise with her husband Mr. E.W. Clark in the Naga Hills.

⁵⁶Wendy Ryan, “12,000 profess faith in Nagaland at strife-laden 125th anniversary,” *Baptist Press*, Dec. 10, 1997, <http://www.baptistpress.net/bpnews.asp?ID=4586> (accessed March 30, 2007).

The belief that Christianity transformed the Nagas from their state of 'barbarism' to 'civilization' is deeply entrenched; so much so that no negative repercussion seemed to have occurred. As a result, a persuasive introduction may be necessary. However, suffice it for now to mention that a shadow cannot exist in darkness. A shadow is formed only when light appears. So it is simply appropriate to discuss the appearance of 'shadows' when the 'light' came to the Nagas, for where there is light, there is always a shadow.

Hegel is quoted to have once said that "[w]e learn from history that we do not learn from history."⁵⁷ In order to learn from the past, we need to critically examine the 'shadow side' of history. And an inquiry into the shadow side of any missionary activity should be understood as a healthy exercise if we are to learn from the past mistakes and avoid repeating them in the future. The Church cannot deny the 'shadow' side or negative impacts of its missionary activity on cultures at the periphery. A discourse on Christian mission limited only to positive aspects is one-sided, prejudiced and cannot be farther from truth.

⁵⁷Bernard Shaw, *Heartbreak House* (London: Constable, 1931), 30.

CHAPTER ONE: THE NOTION OF PROGRESS IN PERSPECTIVE

*Will all nations one day attain that state of civilization which the most enlightened, the freest and the least burdened by prejudices, such as the French and the Anglo-Americans, have attained already? Will the vast gulf that separates these peoples from the slavery of nations under the rule of monarchs, from the barbarism of African tribes, from the ignorance of savages, little by little disappear?*⁵⁸

Charles Beard begins his introduction to J. B. Bury's *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry Into Its Origin and Growth* by observing that "the world is largely ruled by ideas, true and false."⁵⁹ In this chapter I will argue that the notion of progress is a pervasive modern idea which has assumed global proportions and has come to rule human thought not only in the West but across the world.⁶⁰ For traditional Nagas, progress understood as rapid change and often disruptive as well as destructive to social structure was something to be feared and diligently guarded against when the West intruded their world. However, due to unrelenting efforts by British colonial agents and American missionaries, the 'pervasive modern idea' began to gradually engulf the Nagas. As one missionary noted below the helpless attempt of the Nagas in resisting the conquering force:

We have from the beginning tried our best to keep the new custom from gaining a foothold in our country, but we might as well try to stop the sun and moon from rising....Now we are surrounded. Then the whole tribe is surrounded with the

⁵⁸Marie Jean Antoine de Condorcet (1743-1794), *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, trans. June Barraclough (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1955); <http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/sketch.html> (accessed April 20, 2007). As articulated in this quote, Condorcet's concept of progress is considered by many as a classic example of the notion of progress.

⁵⁹Beard, "Introduction," in J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry Into Its Origin and Growth* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1932), ix.

⁶⁰I will be using the words "idea" and "notion" interchangeably with reference to progress.

White men's religion....If we are to continue as leaders of the people, we ought to become Christians ourselves....⁶¹

Robert Nisbet, in his *History of the Idea of Progress*, observed that “no single idea has been more important than, perhaps as important as, the idea of progress in Western civilization.”⁶² Likewise, Beard predicted that of all the ideas that have given shape and substance in both private and public discourse, “none is more significant or likely to exert more influence in the future than the concept of progress.”⁶³ Similarly, Richard Norgaard argued that the “idea of progress has been the key to change – personal, economic, institutional, and political – in the Western and westernized world.”⁶⁴

The notion of progress “certainly is a metanarrative,”⁶⁵ which not only informs most dominant narratives, but it is also essential to Western inspired worldviews. This progress oriented worldview permeates all aspects of life and “raises virtually all of the fundamental intellectual issues of our time.”⁶⁶ We cannot agree more with Earnest Lee Tuveson who observes that the word ‘progress’ has come to serve as “a criterion of all activity.”⁶⁷ Accordingly then this discussion would be incomplete and even unhelpful if the focus was restricted to the influence of progress on only one or two aspects of life.

For colonized peoples, no less the Nagas, a narrow focus would be problematic especially because colonialism and the notion of progress are inextricably intertwined – and, not least, because colonialism itself is multi-faceted. Colonialism is, in part, an

⁶¹*Baptist Missionary Magazine* (Sept. 1905), 359

⁶²Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1980), 4.

⁶³Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, xi.

⁶⁴Norgaard, *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Co-evolutionary Revisioning of the Future* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 49.

⁶⁵Bruce Mazlish, “Progress: A Historical and Critical Perspective,” in *Progress: Fact or Illusion?* ed. Leo Marx and Bruce Mazlish (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 27.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁷Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1949), 1.

offshoot of the notion of progress, as Norgaard has rightly argued: “Belief in progress provided the justification for Westerners to expand the geographical domain of modernity.”⁶⁸ At the same time, colonialism served as the conduit that carried and delivered the notion of progress from the West to the colonized world with “the assumption that Western style of progress was possible for all.”⁶⁹ As Crawford Young rightly observed, “The idea of progress, after its birth in the West, was carried to the Third World in the baggage trains of imperial conquest beginning in the fifteenth century.”⁷⁰ The ideology of progress then served to promote “violent aggression by justifying colonialism through claims that Western civilization is the epitome of all that is desirable.”⁷¹ Therefore, as regards colonized peoples, any critical analysis of the impact of the notion of progress must necessarily address all aspects of life.

Progress as an idea or theory that became an ideology of the dominant culture and as such was imposed on other cultures beginning with the colonialism is historically specific. Bruce Mazlish and Leo Marx argue that “the idea of progress is a protean concept” which “can be, at one and the same time, a philosophy of history, an ideology serving the interests of different social groups, and a millennial-like faith.”⁷² Rosemary Radford Ruether has argued that during the modern era of Western colonialism this idea of progress was “imperialistically imposed on the rest of the world” and is now being sold “to colonized peoples as ‘development.’”⁷³

⁶⁸Norgaard, *Development Betrayed*, 52.

⁶⁹Shiva, “Development as a New Project,” 190.

⁷⁰Young, “The Idea of Progress in the Third World,” in *Progress and Its Discontent*, ed. Gabriel Almond, Marvin Chodorow and Roy Pearce (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1982), 87.

⁷¹Leonard, *Women, Technology and the Myth of Progress*, 180.

⁷²Mazlish and Marx, “Introduction,” in *Progress*, 6.

⁷³ Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 174, 199.

Speaking from a “Third World” perspective Galal Amin maintains that the idea of progress is “one of the myths of the modern age” and is “widespread, almost as if it were a part of the air we breathe.”⁷⁴ He further maintains that this very idea “seeps into us through the school curriculum when we are young, we gulp it down in books and in media, and it is force-fed to us in political speeches and development plans.”⁷⁵ The result, accordingly to Jamaican sociologist Orlando Patterson is, “To be a leader or technocrat in any Third World society is, whatever one’s ideological position, at the very least, to be wholly committed to the idea of progress.”⁷⁶ Similarly, Tu Weiming contends that “the most formidable defenders of [progressive Enlightenment] values are not necessarily found in Paris, London, or New York; they are more likely to be found in Beijing, Moscow, or New Delhi.”⁷⁷ Like any other westernized people today, the Nagas laud and rate highly the leader who generates the biggest change or bring about the greatest measure of ‘progress’ – that is, westernization, industrialization, modernization, development or technological improvement.

⁷⁴Amin, *The Illusion of Progress in the Arab World*, trans. David Wilmsen (Cairo; New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2006), 1.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Almond, Chodorow and Pearce, *Progress and Its Discontents*, 83.

⁷⁷Weiming, “Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality,” in *When Worlds Converge: What Science and religion Tell Us about the Story of the Universe and Our Place in It*, ed. Clifford Matthews, Mary Tucker and Philip Hefner (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2002), 236.

What is the notion of progress?

Before proceeding to examine the meaning of progress, it is necessary to interject here that the focus of criticism of the notion of progress in this dissertation lies in the *idealization of progress* or *progress as an ideology of a dominant paradigm* that was and is being imposed on the cultures at the periphery. Because of its widespread use and seemingly obvious connotation, the term ‘progress’ has become commonsense and its legitimacy is assumed in everyday discourse. Put another way, “most hold it unconsciously and therefore unquestionably.”⁷⁸ Nonetheless, “when progress is analyzed closely,” as Timo Airaksinen sums it up well, “it becomes elusive in its meaning, application, and moral evaluation.”⁷⁹

In scholarly discourse, progress always evokes passionate views and equally passionate questions. Some of these are: What constitute progress?⁸⁰ Is it anthropogenic or cosmogenic?⁸¹ Has humanity made progress or in what way(s) can we claim that humanity has made progress?⁸² Is progress morally neutral? Does the claim of progress

⁷⁸Pollard, *The Idea of Progress: History and Society* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1968), x.

⁷⁹Timo Airaksinen, review of the *Progress and Its Discontents*, Almond, Chodorow and Pearce, *Isis* 74, no. 3 (September 1983): 422.

⁸⁰The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), an agency of the United Nations, uses three indicators to measure the progress or backwardness of countries around the world: 1) per capita income, 2) life expectancy, and 3) the level of education. Just as it is for measuring poverty levels, which is determined in dollar value, the practice of measuring human development according to per capita income is biased in favor of Western culture. Likewise, the level of education is also decided Western and therefore does not take into consideration diverse traditional and cultural ways of teaching and knowing. For further discussion on this issue see: “Development” (chap. 3) in Amin, *The Illusion of Progress*, 31ff.

⁸¹Accordingly to Charles Van Doren, *anthropogenic progress* holds that progress is individualistic or personal rather than cosmic or universal. Progress is “in what he is, in what he does, in what he learns.” *Cosmogenic progress*, on the other hand, refers to the belief that “the source of progress is in the cosmos,” and that “progress is of Providence.” In other words, it is the cosmic principle that causes progressive changes. Van Doren, *The Idea of Progress* (New York; London: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), 23.

⁸²Maklin argues that “it is wholly uncontroversial to hold that technological progress has taken place; largely uncontroversial to claim that intellectual and theoretical progress has occurred; somewhat

have a universal or cross-cultural relevance or validity? Is progress material, mental, or both? If it is mental or intellectual, could the ascendancy of individualism be considered progress? If it is material, can the invention of technologies that makes life 'easier' but also damage the environment and causes danger to life be considered progress? In other words, are we in control of progress or is progress in control of us? James Connelly's conundrum and insightful statement on how progress has come to be perceived remains helpful here:

Progress as a word and as a concept not only has a history but is also central to our understanding of history. Its indefinability, then, creates a tension from which we cannot escape; but absence of a definition is not absence of an articulation of the concept in its historical and philosophical senses. ...we discover that, paradoxically, it is something we can neither live with nor without. For, although we cannot finally agree on a precise meaning of progress, or on a criterion of progress, or on whether it occurs (or has occurred), or on whether it is inevitable (or even possible or impossible), we continue to speak of progress and constantly invoke its name. Our attitude to it is often ambiguous: sometimes we speak of it as something to regret, sometimes as something we hope to achieve.... Progress is held to be a good thing and yet it seems to be a feature of the modern human condition that we are alienated from it.⁸³

In addition to the difficulty defining progress, another essential question remains whether human beings have made progress. Mazlish has addressed this question by identifying three perspectives on progress. One is from Baudelaire who in 1855 spoke of progress as a "grotesque" and "fashionable" idea which has "flowered on the soil of modern fatuity" and which humanity should be "anxious to avoid like the very devil."⁸⁴ This view represents one end of the spectrum. Mazlish uses Peter Medawar as an

controversial to say that aesthetic or artistic progress has taken place; and highly controversial to assert that moral progress has occurred." Ruth Macklin, "Moral Progress," *Ethics* 87, no. 4 (July 1977): 370.

⁸³Connelly, "A Time for Change?" *History and Theory* 43 (October 2004): 411. Echoing this example of a tendency to confusion, Marcuse contends that two contradictory hypotheses vacillate in Western society. First, "that advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future" and second, "that forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode the society." Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, ix.

⁸⁴Quoted in Mazlish and Marx, *Progress*, 27.

example of the opposite perspective. In praise of progress, Medawar wrote, “To deride the hope of progress is the ultimate fatuity, the last word in poverty of spirit and meanness of mind.”⁸⁵ Leaving the decision as to which “fatuity” to choose to the reader, Mazlish proposes “immoderate moderation” in critiquing the idea of progress. David Brown argues that this middle position is not “blindly against progress, but against blind progress.”⁸⁶

T.N. Madan has observed that in the old Latin word *‘progressus’* meant “advance in any, whichever, direction” and “was a neutral concept.”⁸⁷ He noted further, “The idea that progress was not merely movement but advance towards a better state of affairs emerged only in the seventeenth century.”⁸⁸ In the scholarly literature on the notion of progress, most scholars hold to the dictum advanced by Bury almost a century ago as the standard definition for the ideas of progress. Bury wrote:

This idea [of progress] means that civilization has moved, is moving, and will move in a desirable direction.... It is based on the interpretation of history which regards [human beings] as slowly advancing – *pedetentim propredientes* – in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this progress will continue indefinitely. And it implies that, as a condition of general happiness will ultimately be enjoyed, which will justify the whole process of civilization; for otherwise, the direction would not be desirable.⁸⁹

In a similar vein, Nisbet defines progress as

the idea that mankind has slowly, gradually, and continuously advanced from an original condition of cultural deprivation, ignorance, and insecurity to constantly

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Brown, “Forward,” in *Learning to Listen to the Land*, ed. Bill Willers (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1991), xiii.

⁸⁷Madan, “Progress, Religion, Rationality: The Importance of Cultural Differences,” *Goethe-Institut*, <http://www.goethe.de/ins/vb/prj/fort/fur/tma/enindex.htm> (accessed May 25, 2007).

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Bury, *Idea of Progress*, 2, 5.

higher levels of civilization, and that such advancement will, with only occasional setbacks, continue through the present into future.⁹⁰

Both Bury and Nisbet's definitions remain broad, and understandably so. David Spadafora rightly argues that "although there is only *one* idea of progress, there is a *multitude* of possible *expressions* of the idea," which he also calls the "doctrines of progress"⁹¹ (emphasis added). In *The Idea of Progress*, Charles Van Doren has listed these various "expressions of progress," such as *industrial* progress, *social* progress, *economic* progress, *intellectual* progress, *technological* progress and *moral* progress.⁹² For most contemporary Nagas, progress means tangible and quantitative advancement driven by possessive materialism and accumulation. The above varied expressions or doctrines, containing diffuse connotations and ambiguities, precipitate multiple understandings and applications in modern human history. Moreover, due to its close relationship with Western colonization, progress is often understood to be synonymous with westernization.⁹³ Progress is identified also with industrialization, modern technology,⁹⁴ development,⁹⁵ modernization⁹⁶ and civilization.⁹⁷

⁹⁰Nisbet, *History of the Idea*, 10. The book is lauded by some as a "superb book bound to supersede J. B. Bury's classic study, *The Idea of Progress*." See a review of the book by Lewis A. Coser, *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (Autumn, 1982): 506-507.

⁹¹Spadafora, *Idea of Progress in Eighteenth Century Britain* (New Haven; London: University Press, 1990), 7.

⁹²See Part II of the book that addresses most of these expressions. Also see Almond, Chodorow and Pearce's *Progress and Its Discontent*.

⁹³Shiva, "Development as a New Project," 199.

⁹⁴Leonard argues that, especially for Americans, "progress is simply defined as continuous technological development, with the assumption that this is good for most if not all people." *Women, Technology, and the Myth of Progress*, 180.

⁹⁵In his book, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), Walt Rostow presents five stages of economic development, ranking from traditional, preconditions of takeoff, takeoff, drive to maturity and mass consumption. The goal was to reach the high mass consumption economy attained and exemplified by the United States.

⁹⁶See an analysis of the impact of modernization on the Hopi Indians by Clemmer in *Roads in the Sky*. Rostow's model or theory of modernization has been one of the influential concepts in social evolutionism. See especially his classic book, *The Stages of Economic Growth*.

Nisbet maintains that several premises can be found with regard to proliferation of the expressions of progress from antiquity to modern time. One reason for this according to Warren Wagar is that “historians of ideas tend to reflect the prevailing values of their own era.”⁹⁸ By the nineteenth century, the belief in evolutionary process had come to dominate the discourse on progress. “The nineteenth-century gave birth to the dour and oppressive Social Darwinism that saw progress in terms of winners and losers.”⁹⁹ Arising out of the Industrial Revolution era in Europe this ideology provided justification for oppression against and decimation of the indigenous and other ‘weaker’ groups. Finally, Nannerl Keohane concludes that,

In its most robust and purest form, the belief in progress affirms that increase in human knowledge, the establishment of human control over nature, and the perfecting of the moral excellences of the species will guarantee one another, with a concomitant increase in human happiness.¹⁰⁰

Progress: Its origin and development

The origin and development of progress has no place in the discourse on Naga culture, because progress is a Western concept. Incremental or gradual change was not unknown, but progress as it is understood today is one of the colonial legacies and can be understood only in the context of westernization of the Nagas. And because the modern notion of progress is a product of the West,¹⁰¹ we will explore the germination and advancement of the idea by briefly examining the Western intellectual history,

⁹⁷Charles Beard, *A Century of Progress* (New York; London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1933), 3. Also, see Young, “Idea of Progress in the Third World” in *Progress and Its Discontent*, 91.

⁹⁸Wagar, “Modern Views of the Origins of the Idea of Progress,” *Journal of the History of Idea of Progress* 28, no. 1 (January-March, 1967): 55.

⁹⁹Richard Perry, ...*From Time Immemorial: Indigenous Peoples and State Systems* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), 30.

¹⁰⁰Keohane, “The Enlightenment Idea of Progress Revisited,” in *Progress and Its Discontents*, 26.

¹⁰¹Shiva, “Development as a New Project,” 190.

particularly focusing on Western thought about progress.¹⁰² This examination is vital, because it will allow us to explore the matrix in which the notion of progress arose and the ideological company it has since kept; indeed as Hegel suggested, “thought is sociohistorical in essential ways.”¹⁰³

The notion of progress has a long history that developed gradually, with many thinkers and vicissitudes of events giving shape, form and meaning to it. Consequently, its moment of origin cannot be identified with precision. Piotr Szotompa rightly maintains that the notion of progress has “evolved over the centuries, gradually enriching its content and only slowly acquiring its complex contemporary meaning.”¹⁰⁴

In an apparent philosophical frame of mind, Sociologist Szotompa attributes the inception of the notion of progress to the “perennial gap between realities and aspirations, existence and dreams.”¹⁰⁵ He explains,

Perhaps this permanent tension between what people have and what they would like to have, what they are and what they would like to be, is the key to the success of our never satiated, never satisfied, constantly seeking and striving species. The concept of progress alleviates this tension by projecting the hope of a better world into a future, and asserting that its coming is assured, or at least probable. In this way it meets some universal human need, and therefore, in spite of all recent doubts and skepticism, it is perhaps destined to stay with us for a long time to come.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²This examination will be more of an analysis rather than presenting a history of ideas. Also, it will exclude a separate presentation of the idea of progress that emerged in England, France and Scotland at variant time periods.

¹⁰³David S. Owen, *Between Reason and History: Habermas and the Idea of Progress* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 1.

¹⁰⁴Szotompa, *The Sociology of Social Change* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 24.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.* For Fredrick Lugard, this “very discontent is a measure of...progress.” He argues that the colonized people’s unrest and desire for independence is because “we have taught [them] the value of liberty and freedom,” which for centuries they had not known. Although Lugard was referring primarily to political unrest, it may be said that the general unrest and discontent in the colonized world began with the intrusion of the modern Western notion of progress. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1922), 618.

In general, especially in the West and westernized cultures, it is true that modern consumerism and the materialist worldview have transformed human beings into “never satiated, never satisfied, constantly seeking and striving species.” And any culture that does not conform to this materialistic worldview is liable to be labelled backward, uncivilized and primitive. However, as illuminating and insightful as Sztompka’s reflection is, it should be understood that his claim that progress arose to meet “universal human need” is misguided at best, because this claim cannot be applied to the Nagas or other indigenous peoples who knew no idea of progress. His claim’s validity is limited to modern western and westernized cultures where the notion of progress has significant influence. Christopher Lasch argues that it was in the eighteenth century that “insatiable desire, formerly condemned as a source of frustration, unhappiness, and spiritual instability, came to be seen as a powerful stimulus to economic development.”¹⁰⁷

Others, such as William Godwin and Lewis Mumford, have attributed the origins of progress to human beings’ capacity to dream. Godwin asserted that “the capacity to ‘dream’ of progress makes progress.”¹⁰⁸ Mumford’s thoughts expanded on this when he wrote that the “origin derived perhaps from man’s anxiety, the dream took on a positive function – it became the great instrument of anticipation, invention, projection, creative transformation.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 13. Adam Smith, considered the ‘father’ of modern capitalism believed that civilized men and women need more to meet their needs and make them comfortable than the non-civilized, and it is those needs that lead to “improvements in production and a general increase of wealth.” Ibid., 13, 14.

¹⁰⁸Quoted in Van Doren, *The Idea of Progress*, 55.

¹⁰⁹Mumford, *The Transformations of Man* (New York: Harper, 1956), 16.

The Greek influence

While most scholars agree that the notion of progress was an accepted idea during the period of Western colonization, some contend that the concept of progress “was also well known in antiquity, but in an altogether different manner than now.”¹¹⁰ Nisbet’s view is representative of those scholars who hold that the notion of progress can be traced from the Greeks to modern time. In *History of the Idea of Progress*, he was careful to delineate his belief that the idea of degeneration existed concurrently with the idea of progress in the ancient world of Greeks and medieval Christianity. In contrast, Bury has argued that the concept was alien in classical antiquity or the Medieval Age and only emerged in the period commonly referred to as the Enlightenment.

Elisabet Sahtouris traces the origin of the notion of progress back to two opposing schools of thought in the classical Greek world – *mechanic* and *organic* worldviews.¹¹¹ Sahtouris believes that the world would be different today if leading Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras, Parmenides and Plato had understood nature as constituted by organic, living relationships rather than as merely mechanical physics. The other school of philosophers, as represented by Thales, Anaximander and Heraclitus, believed the cosmos was alive. The position of the ‘mechanic’ philosophers, however, preceded that of the ‘organic’ philosophers and became the foundation for Western mechanic worldview up to the present.¹¹²

Later, the mechanistic worldview promoted by Isaac Newton (1643-1727) gave new meaning and expanded scope to the Western worldview in the 1600s. This

¹¹⁰Giovanni Monstra, “Forword,” in *Science and the Myth of Progress*, x.

¹¹¹Sahtouris, *Earthdance*, <http://www.ratical.org/LifeWeb/Erthdnce/> (accessed April 29, 2007).

¹¹²*Ibid.*

mechanistic worldview, according to Richard Hooker, led the *philosophes*¹¹³ to develop the concept of Deism and “would lead Europeans to attempt to explain other areas of phenomena with the same mechanistic model—economics, politics, ethics.”¹¹⁴

The Judeo-Christian influence

Social theorists and philosophers of history believe that two major intellectual traditions were responsible for the rise of the notion of progress in Europe. One is a Judeo-Christian view of history and the other is belief in the advancement of knowledge.¹¹⁵ I will first discuss the significant influence of Christianity on the origin and development of the notion of progress. The influence of Christianity is also significant for the study of the notion of progress among contemporary Nagas, because the Nagas are predominantly Christian and were converted to ‘Western Christianity’ by Americans missionaries.¹¹⁶ Consequently, most Naga Christians closely associate material affluence with Christianity.

According to Lasch, the notion of progress “represents a secular version of the Christian belief in providence.”¹¹⁷ In other words, progress can be said to be largely a religious idea,¹¹⁸ and more specifically an idea of the Christian West. Ernest Lee Tuveson argues that “the germ of a concept of progress is implicit in the nature of the Christian

¹¹³*Philosophes*, which means philosophers in French, represent a diverse group of scholars whose views constituted the eighteenth-century Enlightenment movement in Europe and U.S. For more, see “philosophe,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd ed., ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 697.

¹¹⁴Hooker, “Progress,” <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/PROGRESS.HTM> (accessed May 21, 2007).

¹¹⁵Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 19.

¹¹⁶I use ‘Western Christianity’ because Christianity as practice by Nagas is very Western in its form and content. For example, all the hymns sung in Naga churches are from the West and almost all theological or Christian books read by Naga church leaders and Christians are written by Western writers.

¹¹⁷Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 40.

¹¹⁸Jeffrey Alexander and Piotr Sztompka, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Progress: Movements, Forces, and Ideas at the End of the 20th Century*, ed. Alexander and Sztompka (Boston; London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 1.

religion.”¹¹⁹ So “thanks to its Christian background, the Western world found it easy to imagine history as a ‘process generally moving upwards by series of majestic stages.’”¹²⁰

Conversely, by the eighteenth century Christianity that influenced the rise of the notion of progress in Europe has come to believe that “religion benefited from the gradual improvement in arts and knowledge,” and “those who found the idea of progress to fit the case of the science and arts could easily apply it to the subject of religion.”¹²¹ It was held by some that God “‘would allow science to become the means to bring about a new paradise on earth’”¹²² and that divine inspiration was possible through science as much as through religion.¹²³ Having understood so, eschatological aims and pursuits dictated science.¹²⁴ Considering the symbiotic correlation between the idea of progress and Christianity, Hooker believes that Christian eschatology underlies “the ultimate origin of the concept” of progress.¹²⁵

While there are several elements believed to have had significant influence on the notion of progress, a couple of the most crucial ones will be considered in the following pages with first being the unilinear view of history. The Western Christian view, as was popularized by Augustine (354-430 CE), presupposes a unilinear history. In fact, Maurice Godlier argues that the notion of history as a linear continuation of a biological evolution “propelled man to the summit of nature and Western man to the summit of history,” which did much to exacerbate racism, subordination, exploitation and contempt for the

¹¹⁹Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia*, 6.

¹²⁰Lasch, *True and Only Heaven*, 40.

¹²¹Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 102-3.

¹²²Alexander Webster is quoted in *ibid.*, 110.

¹²³Mazlish, “Progress: A History and Critical Perspective,” 29.

¹²⁴Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 110.

¹²⁵Hooker, “Progress” (<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/PROGRESS.HTM>).

colonized culture.¹²⁶ “To Augustine, history takes its course, not in cycles, but along a line. That line has a most definite beginning, the Creation, and a most definite end, the Judgement.”¹²⁷

By the Medieval Age, the Church’s theology has come to affirm the past as leading to a future desirable goal of salvation.¹²⁸ Time was now thought of as not only linear, but as non-reversible, “proceeding from the events in *Genesis* to the axial moment of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection and from that point on to the final consummation at the end of the time-line and of time itself.”¹²⁹ This notion of linear history also “presupposes the unidirectionality and irreversibility of history,”¹³⁰ presupposes a “teleological movement of history”¹³¹ towards an end-point and also informs the assumption that civilized human beings can move forward, but not backward.¹³² Charles van Doren calls it “irreversible ameliorative change.”¹³³

As Aleksandar Janca and Clothilde Bullen rightly noted, “Perception of time differs across cultures” and “...inevitably has an influence on people’s understanding of life, their values and attitudes towards daily routines.”¹³⁴ They argued that indigenous

¹²⁶Maurice Godlier, *The Mental and the Material: Thought Economy and Society*, trans. Martin Thom (Norfolk: Verso, 1986), 3.

¹²⁷Mommsen, “St. Augustine and the Christians Idea of Progress,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12, no. 3 (June 1951): 355. *City of God* includes Augustine’s attempt to refute the prevailing belief that history was cyclical, which was held not only by non-Christians philosophers, but also by prominent Christian theologians, one of whom was Origin. Augustine wrote, “Those ‘false cycles which were discovered by false and deceitful sages...can be avoided in the sound doctrine, through the path of straight road (*tramite recti itineris*)” [*City of God*, 12, 14 B.–C. N.J. Ibid. 355.

¹²⁸Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 85.

¹²⁹Wagar, “Modern Views,” 65.

¹³⁰Connely, “A Time for Progress?” 414.

¹³¹Giuseppe Tassone, *A Study of the Idea of Progress in Nietzsche, Heidegger and Critical Theory* (Lewiston; Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 1.

¹³²Connely, “A Time for Change?” 414.

¹³³Doren, *The Idea of Progress*, 7.

¹³⁴Janca and Bullen, “The Aboriginal concept of time and its mental health implications,” *Australasian Psychiatry* 11 (Supplement 2003): 40, 41.

peoples as well as some non-indigenous cultures do not perceive time as linear. Rightly so, the linear and unidirectional conception of time, which has come to dominate the cosmovision of contemporary Nagas, was foreign to traditional Nagas. Tinker has rightly argued that “indigenous traditions are spatially based rather than temporally based.”¹³⁵ In contrast, he argues, “[t]he Euro-Western world has a two-millinia history of trajectory shifting decidedly away from the rootedness in spatiality and toward an ever-increasing awareness of temporality.”¹³⁶ The traditional Naga cultural construction of time or their human experience of time in their specific geographical location differs greatly from the linear concept of time in Western thought. Time was not so much about succession of chronological years, months or weeks, but thought of as a series of events experienced in one’s personal life as well as through the life of the community which goes back generations before.

A couple of things may be mentioned here with regard to the traditional Naga concept of time. The first thing to note is that the traditional Naga cosmovision of time was backward looking rather than forward looking. However, this does not mean that the concept of future was absent; what it means is that the future does not determine the present as much as does the past. Unlike modern culture that is future oriented and emphatically underscores planning for the future, change, innovation, progress or development, indigenous Naga cosmovision was past oriented.¹³⁷ For Nagas, the reference point of decision-making and action for the present was the tradition and the

¹³⁵Tinker, “American Indian Religious Identity and Advanced Colonial Malignancy,” in *Religion and social policy*, ed. Paula D. Nesbitt (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 60.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷In speaking of the Andes cultures, Constantin Barloewen argued that the “modern industrial cultures of the West set their sights less on the past than on the future,” which is the opposite of the Andes cultures. See Barloewen, *Cultural History and Modernity in Latin America* (Oxford; New York: Berghahn Books, 1995), 6-7.

lifestyle of the ancestors. Change, innovation or progress was understood as deviation from tradition and tantamount to destruction or dismantling of social structure. To be socially useful and constructive was, therefore, to follow the age-old tradition with precision and exactitude.

This was true of many non-Western cultures. With regard to African cultures, John Mbiti wrote, “*Actual time* is therefore what is present and what is past. It moves ‘backward’ rather than ‘forward’; and people set their minds not on future things, but chiefly on what has taken place.”¹³⁸ The past is ahead and the future behind, which indicates a reverse of the past-present-future linear concept of time.

The other thing to be noted is that as oppose to the linear and chronological concept, the traditional Nagas perceived of time as cyclical. The traditional year consisted of a cycle of eleven lunar months that revolved around agricultural activities. The modern conception of time as succession of years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds, however, has come to dominate the thought and activity of the Nagas today, even among those who have had no modern education and continue to engage in agricultural activities. With regard to Western conception of time, Tinker made the following observation: “From notions of progress, to the casual revelation that ‘time is money,’ from the sacred hour on Sunday morning and the seven-day cycle of work, play, and spiritual obligation, to the philosophical and scientific inquiry of the West, time always reigns supreme.”¹³⁹ For traditional Nagas, time was understood as “a composition of events” (to use Mbiti’s words), and their world was not ruled by the clock. As such, as

¹³⁸Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London; Nairobi: Heinemann, 1985), 17.

¹³⁹ Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 95.

it is with the Aboriginal people in Australia, “time is perceived in relation to the socially sanctioned importance of events and is most often identified by stages in life or historic relevance of events.”¹⁴⁰

A second element crucial to the notion of progress in Judeo-Christian tradition is its overt anthropocentrism and more specifically the belief that human beings are mandated by God to have dominion over nature.¹⁴¹ Keohane asserts that in all the different expressions of the idea of progress “an anthropocentric perspective allows the affirmation that progress is occurring.”¹⁴² In the Western Christian tradition, “[h]uman beings are placed hierarchically between God and Nature, with dominion over the latter.”¹⁴³ As oppose to traditional Naga cosmology that is deeply rooted in nature, this presumed Judeo-Christian cosmological schema presents a vision of “God who is no longer located in Nature, but in a ‘far away’ Heaven,”¹⁴⁴ “Nature [was then] put at the service of progress.”¹⁴⁵ And it was thought that nature was not only made to serve, but was happy to serve human beings. Nature “receives the dominion of [human beings] as meekly as the ass on which the Saviour rode.”¹⁴⁶

In 1855 against the backdrop of the industrial revolution in Western Europe, and with the second phase of colonization well underway, Victor Hugo declared, “Progress is

¹⁴⁰Janca and Bullen, “The Aboriginal concept of time,” 41.

¹⁴¹Keohane, “The Enlightenment of Progress,” 27.

¹⁴²Ibid., 38.

¹⁴³Strang, *Uncommon Ground*, 264.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Richard White, “The Nature of Progress: Progress and the Environment,” in *Progress*, ed. Marx and Mazlish, 123.

¹⁴⁶Ralph Waldo Emerson is quoted in *ibid.*, 124.

the footsteps of God himself.”¹⁴⁷ The idea being that progress in the form of the human conquest and manipulation of nature and other human beings in unprecedented manner is divinely sanctioned and enabled. “It certifies that human conquest of nature is divinely blessed” and “teaches us to think of control and power as the proper ends of knowledge.”¹⁴⁸ For John Locke, “reason was man’s natural, highest and unique faculty” and only humans had reason.¹⁴⁹ And this unique divinely endowed ability enables human beings to define and control the natural and social worlds. By the late 1800s Western thought was dominated by the notion that the “civilized [person who has] conquered the forces of nature and compelled them to serve him” was superior to the people who “hear with trembling the roar of the wild animals and see the products of their toils destroyed by them”.¹⁵⁰ Joseph Priestly, the English optimist, had no doubt that,

[t]he human power will, in fact be enlarged; nature, including both its materials and its laws, will be more at our command; men will make their situation in this world abundantly more easy and comfortable; they will probably prolong their existence in it, and will grow daily more happy, each in himself, and more able (and I believe more disposed) to communicate happiness to others. Thus whatever was the beginning of this world, the end will be glorious and paradisiacal beyond what our imaginations can now conceive.¹⁵¹

The issue of anthropocentrism and dominion over nature by human beings has been a topic of much debate in the past few decades in the West, particularly as human beings begin to feel the inevitable consequences of their harmful disregard of the earth. As a result, there is a greater awareness of human responsibility towards nature than it

¹⁴⁷ Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the term ‘Post-Colonialism,’” *Social Text* 31, no. 32 (Spring 1992): 85. Also see “INTRODUCTION: Postcolonialism and the Angel of Progress,” in McClintock, *The Imperial Leather* (New York; London: Routledge, 1995), 10.

¹⁴⁸ Keohane, “The Enlightenment of Progress,” 27.

¹⁴⁹ Bhikhu Parekh, “Liberalism and Colonialism: A Critique of Locke and Mill,” in *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power*, ed. Jan Pieterse and Bhilhu Parekh (London; New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1995), 83.

¹⁵⁰ Franz Boas claimed that this statement reflects the status quo of his days which he in fact opposed. Boas, *The Mind of the Primitive Man* (New York: McMillan, 1911), 1.

¹⁵¹ Ira Brown is quoted in Pollard, *The Idea of Progress*, 70.

has been in the past. There is a general consensus especially among indigenous scholars that culturally indigenous peoples have been more environmentally responsible or conscious than the industrialized West.

A close look at the cultural practices and worldviews of indigenous Nagas will indicate that the traditional Nagas had a closer and healthier connection with the earth than their contemporary counterparts who utilize or deplete natural resources for want of progress. Here I will mention briefly the role of Naga myths or oral narratives in the understanding of their relationship with nature. Wati Longchar argued that in the Naga worldview, the land not only holds together the clan, village and tribe, but “also unites the Supreme Being, spirits, ancestors and creation as one family.”¹⁵² There is an oral narrative among the Rengma Nagas that the spirit, human being and tiger once belonged to the same mother.¹⁵³ However, conflict arose among the three and the mother was killed, which also resulted in a permanent hostility among the three. In the myth, the human represents humanity; the spirit signifies extraterrestrial beings; the tiger represents the animal and plant kingdom; and the mother symbolizes the ‘mother’ earth.¹⁵⁴ The death of the mother resulted in chaos, alienation and disharmony. Besides, most Naga tribes have oral narratives that claim that their first progenitors ‘evolved’ or came out of the ‘belly of the earth,’ a rock or a hole in a mountain. Multitude of examples like these can be cited, but suffice it to say that the Naga mythical narratives served as a basis for balance and harmony and to spiritually and emotionally connect the Nagas to nature and other beings.

¹⁵²A. Wati Longchar, “Dancing with the Land: Significance of Land for Doing Tribal Theology,” in *Doing Theology with Tribal Resources: Context and Perspective*, ed. A. Wati Longchar and Larry E. Davis (Jorhat, Assam: Tribal Study Center, ETC, 1999), 123.

¹⁵³Wati Longchar has this myth told among the Ao Nagas in a slightly different version. Longchar, *The Tribal Religious Traditions in North East India: An Introduction* (Jorhat, Assam: Eastern Theological College, 2000), 106.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

The Enlightenment influence

While claims have been made that the notion of progress can be traced centuries in recorded history, nothing equivalent to the Modern Western notion of progress existed before the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁵ Mazlish notes that during the seventeenth century “a number of streams began to flow together, merging into a mighty river overflowing all of Western thought.”¹⁵⁶ One of these streams was what has been called the scientific revolution. Leading scientists of this period which includes Newton and Descartes, thought that science was progressive. The second consisted of political revolutions. The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia ostensibly brought an ‘end’ to a century of religious wars and gave hope for progress, peace and freedom. The vision of the millenarians constitutes the third stream. The prevailing thought of this period was that “divine inspiration would manifest itself as much in science as in religion” and, as such, “providence now took on the face of Progress.”¹⁵⁷

The general consensus among scholars is that with contributions from Turgot, Kant, Hegel, Condorcet and others the notion of progress “passed into general currency during the Enlightenment.”¹⁵⁸ Hooker has concluded that, “the key term that defines the character of the Enlightenment and the European Enlightenment heritage is the notion of progress....”¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Tu Weiming underscored the connection between the Enlightenment and the notion of progress when he stated,

The Enlightenment mentality underlies the rise of modern West as the most dynamic and transformative ideology in human history. Virtually all major spheres of interest characteristic of the modern age are indebted to or intertwined

¹⁵⁵Mazlish, “Progress: A Historical and Critical Perspective,” in *Progress: Fact or Illusion?*, 29.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸Wagar, “Modern Views,” 56-7.

¹⁵⁹Hooker, “Progress” (<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/PROGRESS.HTM>).

with this mentality: science and technology, industrial capitalism, market economy, democratic polity, mass communication, research universities, civil and military bureaucracies, and professional organizations.¹⁶⁰

Consequently, as Julian Kunnie argued, “One continent’s Enlightenment is the rest of the world’s enslavement and subjugation.”¹⁶¹ In view of this, Pat Dudgeon and John Fielder have argued that “...it is white myths of progress and development that need to be confronted and/or resisted, for although modernity may have been beneficial to western society, it has gone hand-in-hand with repression and exploitation.”¹⁶² Deeply entrenched in the notion of progress and fanned by the global culture of possessive materialism and consumerism, it remains to be seen whether the contemporary Nagas can muster enough wisdom and strength to resist the myths of progress and reclaim and adopt their past.

An important development which merits emphasis here is that during the Enlightenment period the notion of progress “became a surrogate religion, a secular faith: Progress, spelled upper case, replaced Providence.”¹⁶³ Pollard concurs that progress as “the modern religion, or the modern substitute for religion” during this period is “not most unjustly so.”¹⁶⁴ Nisbet has argued that the Enlightenment secularized the millenarianism of Judeo-Christian thought into a Golden Age firmly rooted on earth. Thus, as Gertrude Himmelfarb has argued, although the Enlightenment thinkers set out with an aim to liberate human beings “from the forces of darkness” such as religion,

¹⁶⁰Weiming, “Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality,” in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 2004), 316.

¹⁶¹Kunnie, “The Future of our World: Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Philosophies, and the Preservation of Mother Earth,” in *Religion and Global Culture: New Terrain in the Study of Religion and the Work of Charles H. Long*, ed. Jennifer Reid (Lanham; Boulder: Lexington Books, 2003), 126.

¹⁶²Dudgeon and Fielder, “Third Spaces within Tertiary Places: Indigenous Australian Studies,” *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 16 (2006): 398.

¹⁶³Almond, Chodorow and Pearce, *Progress and Its Discontent*, ix.

¹⁶⁴Pollard, *The Idea of Progress*, x.

superstition, convention and authority, they succeeded only in “creating a new ‘age of faith’ under the guise of an ‘age of reason.’”¹⁶⁵

Even when Christianity was being seriously confronted during the Enlightenment era, as Spadafora has argued, the Christian idea of progress could not be eradicated from the thoughts of European thinkers. Christian ideas of teleology, eschatology and redemption remained deeply engrained in the intellectual culture, and “...what could not be extirpated...could be and eventually was secularized, largely by philosophes.”¹⁶⁶

Spadafora aptly states:

Through one general agency or another, ranging from social discontents to anti-Christian polemics to general opposition to supernaturalism, the men of Enlightenment shifted the perceived goal of history from otherworldly salvation to continual betterment of temporary life in prosperity, and they locate the supposed source of positive change in reasoning, perfectible men rather than in divine providence or the returned Christ.¹⁶⁷

Likewise, Wagar offers the following observation:

In place of a heaven outside of time, the *philosophes* offered the idea of the perfectibility of man on earth. In place of providence and the atonement, they offered the concerted efforts of mankind itself. In place of the judgment of God, they offered the opinion of posterity. The same feelings, the same hopes, the same yearnings were called forth as in the apparently discredited faith of the Middle Ages, for the simple reason that the *philosophes* were not far removed in spirit and purpose from their medieval forerunners.¹⁶⁸

In sum, having perceived history as a creation of human action rather than as guided by a cosmic principle or divine will, the future of humanity was now considered “featureless,”¹⁶⁹ that is that human beings could actually manipulate the processes of

¹⁶⁵ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The New History and the Old: Critical Essays and Reappraisals*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 197.

¹⁶⁶ Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 105.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Wagar, “Modern Views,” 63.

¹⁶⁹ Arthur Penty argues that to the believers in progress “the future is featureless.” For further discussion, see Penty, *The Gauntlet: A Challenge to the Myth of Progress* (Norfolk, VA: HIS Press, 2003), 27ff.

history “to produce a history that is better than the present.”¹⁷⁰ Accordingly then, human beings were no longer “the passive victims of history but its masters,”¹⁷¹ and hence the Enlightenment view of history.

Contemporary variant of the notion of progress

Barring some inconsequential voices of criticism, the belief in a continuously progressing history, also referred to as Enlightenment project, that emerged with the success of Western science was sustained thru the eighteenth century by secularism and rationalism and was then reinforced by evolutionary ideas in the nineteenth century.¹⁷² However, disastrous global events, such as the unparalleled catastrophic consequences of scientific and technological inventions brought about by the first and second World Wars, the “Great Depression,” the genocide in Europe and the first explosion of the nuclear bomb in Hiroshima, finally shattered the Modern Western notion of progress. Today, one could argue that traditional notions of progress such as the Marxist vision of *Utopia* (or a classless society)¹⁷³ or Condorcet’s notion of “continual progress of mankind toward perfection”¹⁷⁴ may have no currency. However, it would be a mistake to presume that the Modern Western progressivist or evolutionary assumption has had no impact or consequences on relations between and among nation-states in the twenty-first century.

Leo Marx stated it well when he wrote,

¹⁷⁰Hooker, “Progress” (<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/PROGRESS.HTM>).

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Elizabteh Herdman, “The Illusion of Progress in Nursing,” *Nursing Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (March 2001).

¹⁷³In *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Electric Book Co., 2001), Marx saw history as “the history of class struggles” and the goal was to achieve “the end of history,” when class struggles would become a thing of the past and true communism and a perpetually peaceful, prosperous and harmonious existence could be realized, 8.

¹⁷⁴Condorcet’s idea of progress, delineated in the *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, is considered by some scholars as a representative of the Enlightenment notion of progress.

Although the belief in progress has waned since it won all but universal credence within the culture of modernity, it would be wrong to imply that it has disappeared. Indeed, the Enlightenment sense of history as a record of continuous improvement has retained some of its hold on the general public and on many, perhaps most, intellectuals with a secular cast of mind; this is especially true, no doubt, of scientists, engineers, and other professionals with technical skills. Granted that today's increasingly contested, amorphous idea of Progress no longer elicits anything like the enthusiasm of intellectuals that it once did, it nonetheless continues – if not for lack of a compelling alternative – to shape their thinking.¹⁷⁵

Although not espoused by everyone in the West, a variant or nuanced form of the notion of progress remains deeply embedded in Western epistemology, i.e., the notion that the West is the role model for an ideal society or the belief in Western “ethnocentric civilizations” as containing “worldcentric ideals.”¹⁷⁶ Elizabeth Herdman argues that “the view of the West as the ideal society is ethnocentric,” and yet, “the notion that all societies must emulate Western ways is universal.”¹⁷⁷ Francis Fukuyama's idea of “the end of history” which holds that Western liberal democracy is the last best evolutionary idea for ordering human society represents well this modern Western view.¹⁷⁸ And so, as Pollard has rightly argued, “its character, and its assumptions, have changed with time, and so has the influence exerted by it, but at present it is riding high, affecting the social

¹⁷⁵Leo Marx, “The Domination of Nature and the Redefinition of Progress,” in *Progress: Fact or Illusion?* 210-11.

¹⁷⁶Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2000), 115.

¹⁷⁷Herdman, “The Illusion of Progress,” 4.

¹⁷⁸In his controversial article, “The End of History?” which was later expanded to a book entitled, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Fukuyama stated that “what we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” See *The National Interest* (Summer 1989), 2.

Fukuyama's vision of “the end of history” is considered by some to be one of the modern utopian fictions; for discussion of this critique see Peter Firchow, *Modern Utopian Fictions: From H. G. Wells to Iris Murdoch* (Catholic University of America Press, 2007). For a broader critique of Fukuyama, see Robert Merry, *Sand of Empire: Missionary Zeal, American Foreign Policy, and the Hazards of Global Ambition* (New York; London: Simon & Schuster, 2005), where he has argued that “the Idea of Progress lay at the heart of Fukuyama's End of History notions,” xiii.

attitudes and social actions of all of us.¹⁷⁹” William Easterly offers a comparison between the views of a nineteenth-century socialist utopian Robert Owen and twenty-first-century Western planner Jeffrey Sachs to illustrate that “utopia is making a comeback today.”¹⁸⁰ Both men or ideologues strongly believe that perpetual global progress and peace remain attainable through the help of science and technology.

This nuanced Modern Western Notion of Progress, evolving through the vicissitudes of historical events in the West in particular and in the world in general, gave rise to the notion that the West is the role model or ideal society that the rest of the world should emulate in order to attain a state of progress or civilization. Richard Clemmer has noted that this Western ethnocentric cultural worldview came to assert that “progressing was something that industrial nations considered themselves to be doing automatically and something that non-industrialized nations were supposed to try to be doing.”¹⁸¹ It holds that the non-Western world should advance or improve rapidly to catch up with the West. “Thus, a Western definition and standard of progress...is viewed as a universal standard, not culture bound, implying the superiority of Western civilization.”¹⁸²

Pollard has persuasively argued that rather than fading away the notion of progress was revived early in the post-World War II period.¹⁸³ He believes that a

¹⁷⁹Pollard, *The Idea of Progress*, x.

¹⁸⁰Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006).

¹⁸¹Clemmer, *Roads in the Sky*, 9.

¹⁸²Leonard, *Women, Technology and the Myth of Progress*, 175.

¹⁸³Wagar, on the other hand, believes that a revival of the belief in progress began in the 1960s. He attributed the revival to “progress in social sciences, the new charismatic politics of the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, de Gaulle, Castro, and Che Guevara.” Wagar, *Good Tidings: The Belief in Progress from Darwin to Marcuse* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), 243.

seemingly “more hopeful reality” after the war and “the mental habits [of the West] which it necessarily engenders” caused the return of optimism.¹⁸⁴ He asserted that

the second war greatly stimulated a revival of belief in the idea of the Enlightenment, and at its end, some curve of material prosperity, technical innovation and social peace such as had not even conceived possible in the 1930s. Men, perhaps fortunately, easily forget the ill, and take the good for granted, and with striking speed, the former belief in progress was disinterred, refurbished, and began to shine forth as if it had never been in any danger.”¹⁸⁵

Also during this time, as Arturo Escobar has rightly observed, two globally significant developments occurred. One was “the ‘discovery’ of mass poverty in Asia, Africa, and Latin America,”¹⁸⁶ which Sachs argued was based on “the result of a comparative statistical operation,”¹⁸⁷ i.e., the World Bank’s undertaking in the 1940s that characterized any country with an annual per capita income of less than the comparative value of US \$100 as poor. The ‘discovery’ of mass poverty on entire continents then led to “the globalization of poverty entailed by the construction of two-thirds of the world as poor after 1945.”¹⁸⁸

The other was “the rapid globalization of U. S. domination as a world power.”¹⁸⁹ Arguing that “economic size and power are connected,”¹⁹⁰ Patrick O’Brien has mentioned that the devastation of global scale following World War II provided the

¹⁸⁴Pollard, *The Idea of Progress*, 183. Christopher Lasch has a different opinion. He argues that, “after World War II, the idea of progress came back into favor,” not because human situations had improved but “because [Western] men and women found themselves unable to get along without it.” Lasch, “The Idea of Progress in Our Time,” in Steven Goldman, *Science, Technology, and Social Progress* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1989), 230-31.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 21.

¹⁸⁷Jeffrey Sachs, “The Archaeology of the Development Idea,” *Interculture* 23, no. 4: 1-37.

¹⁸⁸Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 23.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹⁰“The Pax Britannica and American Hegemony: Precedent, Antecedent or Just Another History?” in *Two Hegemonies: Britain 1846-1914 and the United States 1941-2001*, ed. Patrick O’Brien and Armand Clesse (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2002), 28.

United States with an opportunity not only to use its economic prosperity and dominance to supply “the capital goods, skills, technologies, food and raw materials required for recovery” of global economy, but also to create “conditionality” that “could easily be attached by American governments to the terms of the loans, credits, Marshall and other forms of aid....”¹⁹¹ As a global hegemonic superpower,¹⁹² concomitantly, the United States assumed the major responsibility for the ‘development’ and progress of the newly conceived ‘Third World’ countries. The implementation of Bretton Woods plans and projects in 1945, which was to become a form or instrument of “neo-colonialism,”¹⁹³ coincided with the beginning of the end of colonialism.¹⁹⁴ So, one might argue that where *Pax Britannica* ended, *Pax Americana* began.¹⁹⁵ Harry S. Truman’s presidential address

¹⁹¹Ibid., 38.

¹⁹²Contrary to a popular belief that World War II destroyed the multipolar balance of power and “ushered in the age of Soviet-American bipolarity,” Joseph Nye has argued that the post-World War II was an age of American hegemony (See Nye’s *Bound to Lead: The Truth about Bias and the News* [Basic Books, 2004; reprint edition], 69). Nye has cited several reasons for this belief: the Soviets were no match for US in economy and military strength and had suffered a much higher rate of casualty during the War; also, US has military presence in Europe and other parts of the world, especially in Asia. Likewise, Edward Haley sees the current Bush administration’s abandonment of allied solidarity and unilateral decision to attack Iraq as a symptom of continuing U.S. hegemony. See Haley, *Strategies of Dominance: The Misdirection of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 196-7.

¹⁹³The term “neo-colonialism” was coined by “Third World” leaders who rightly argued that achievement of constitutional independence and sovereignty did not guarantee freedom to the newly constituted nation-states. The view that the end of political colonialism did not end economic colonialism is well argued by the first Prime Minister of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah in his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1966). Also see B.C. Smith, *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

¹⁹⁴Benjamin Hopenhayn and Alejandro Vanoli have argued that the Bretton Woods monetary agreements “established a new monetary regime, based on the economic and financial power of the USA” and marked the period of transition from Pax Britannica to Pax Americana. See “Capital Flows in the Twentieth Century: From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana” in *Globalization Under Hegemony: The Changing World Economy*, ed. Jomo K.S. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 131-163.

¹⁹⁵Chalmers Johnson has equated American military bases (737 bases around the world as of 2005) with colonies and asserted, “Once upon a time, you could trace the spread of imperialism by counting up colonies. America’s colony is the military base....” See Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of American Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 138. Also, see the following for a similar argument: Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism Without Colonies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003) and Mark T. Gilderhus, “Forming an Informal Empire Without Colonies: U.S.-Latin American Relations,” *Latin American Research Review*, 40, no. 3 (2005): 312-325.

clearly indicates the beginning of a new era of ‘developmentalization’ of the Third World.

In his speech, Truman declared:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people. . . . I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. . . . What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing. . . . Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.¹⁹⁶

More than half a century later, George W. Bush stated,

We will use our position of unparalleled strength and influence to build an atmosphere of international order and openness in which progress and liberty can flourish in many nations. A peaceful world of growing freedom serves American long-term interests, reflects, enduring American ideals and unites American’s allies.... We seek a just peace...where repression, resentment and poverty are replaced with hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade. The United States...will promote...the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity – the rule of law...private property, free speech and equal justice.... The United States welcomes its responsibility to lead in this great mission.¹⁹⁷

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have provided a nuanced understanding of “empire” in their book entitled *Empire* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2000). Their understanding of empire is not a sovereign nation-state, but “a new form of global sovereignty” that is completely different from “imperialism.” Whereas imperialism was “an extension of the sovereignty of European nation-states beyond their own boundaries,” an empire “is a *decentered* and *detrterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers” (p. xii). Thus understood, they believe that U.S. occupies a privileged position in empire, but does not constitute an imperialist.

¹⁹⁶“Inaugural Address of Harry S. Truman” (Thursday, January 20, 1949), *The Avalon Project at Yale Law School*, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/truman.htm> (accessed May 22, 2007).

¹⁹⁷Quoted in David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4-5. Haley calls this attitude “American exceptionalism: no other nation has the capability or is morally qualified to lead” (Haley, *Strategies of Dominance*, 9). This notion of American exceptionalism or unilateral assumption of “responsibility to lead in this great mission” is being seen increasingly as a source of global polarization among cultures and nations and is antithetical to the global peace and harmony the U.S. government claims to so deeply desire and seek to promote. Bush’s words echo similar historical statements made by other U.S. political leader. Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his first inaugural address on 20 January 1953, declared, “Destiny has laid upon our country the responsibility of the free world’s leadership.” Quoted in Trevor B. McCrisken, “Exceptionalism,” in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Alexander DeConde, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; Farmington Hills: Thomson Gale, 2002), 69.

The speeches above carefully highlighted the core aim of the “Enlightenment project,” which was the “development of rational, humanitarian and secular world, free from disease, poverty and exploitation.”¹⁹⁸ Merry believes that the US foreign policy and its *universal* outlook is what “goes by the name of the ‘Idea of Progress,’ and it is a distinctly Western concept.”¹⁹⁹ The contemporary idea of progress finds its expression in concepts and practices such as free trade, individual’s rights, freedom of speech, democracy, industrialization, development and rule of law. The political and economic powers of the West unquestionably believe that these ‘progressive’ ideas are not restricted or limited by culture or context, but are inherently desirable by all people and cultures.

Of these, the most frequently invoked word and most popularly applied is “development,” which undeniably represents most fittingly the notion of progress in contemporary Western foreign policy toward the so-called under-developed Third World countries.²⁰⁰ “Development is the successor to what earlier generations of Europeans called Progress.”²⁰¹ This belief in progress, then, “facilitated Western and westernized patterns of development for several centuries throughout much of the world” and that it “would transform the lives of even the most ‘obdurate’ landlord and peasant in the most

¹⁹⁸Herdman, “The Illusion of Progress,” 4.

¹⁹⁹Merry, *Sands of Empire*, xi.

²⁰⁰Madan believes that the notions of “modernization” and “development” essentially replaced the notion of progress “in the early years of the second half of the twentieth century, but these too, particularly modernization, have run into problems conceptually and operationally.” See “Progress, Religion Rationality,” *Goethe-Institut*, 1. Similarly, Ruether has observed that the Western scientific and technological progress is now being sold to “the colonized peoples as ‘development.’” See *Gaia and God*, 174.

²⁰¹V.G. Kiernan, *Imperialism and Its Contradictions*, edited and introduced by Harvey J. Kaye. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

‘backward’ reaches of the globe.”²⁰² Similarly, Richard King argues that “evolution gradually became glossed as progress, later to be supplemented by notions of development and modernization.”²⁰³

This ‘progressive’ agenda or Enlightenment project, according to Bruce and Marx, was set in motion by certain eighteenth-century thinkers such as Turgot, Condorcet, Priestly, Paine, Jefferson and Franklin, “aimed at nothing less than the creation of a new kind of universal culture.”²⁰⁴ They further argued that the desire to create a universal culture proceeded from the fact that “in the period between 1776 and 1914, the chief European and American elites [i.e., the architects of the Enlightenment project] saw the world from the perspective of their belief in progress.”²⁰⁵ It may be concluded then that, although some scholars argue that the idea of progress, having undermined by the discourse on crisis, “seems to have declined in the twentieth century,”²⁰⁶ it remains doubtful that it truly has. It has only metamorphosed and taken a new concept and applications.²⁰⁷

The independence of India after World War II also served to amplify the desire for ‘progress’ and materialism among the Nagas, especially among the educated. As the Naga political movement for freedom intensified, the Government of India (GOI)

²⁰²Norgaard, *Development Betrayed*, 1.

²⁰³King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Culture and Histories in the Contemporary United States* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 31-32.

²⁰⁴Bruce and Marx, *Progress*, 1.

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*

²⁰⁶Sztompka, *Sociology of Social Change*, 33.

²⁰⁷McCracken has argued that the vision to establish “a political society built on new, progressive ideas,” which would eventually enable the United States to become “the embodiment of universal values based on the rights of all humankind—freedom, equality, and justice for all,” remained deeply entrenched in the thought of the framers of the Constitution in 1787. He has forcefully argued how the notion of American exceptionalism has shaped and determined US government’s foreign policy and its role from the very beginning to date. See “Exceptionalism,” in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 63-80.

adopted a ‘carrot and stick’ approach. As a part of this approach and with the aim to pacify the Nagas, GOI began to pour in money for ‘development’. However, as money was poured into a people that had known very little or nothing about trade, Indian traders also began to follow the money and dominated trade and siphoned it away from the Nagas. To this day, traders from Indian communities almost completely dominate business in the Naga Hills, especially in Nagaland. Consequently, what is supposed to be the ‘Naga money’ meant for ‘progress’ does not change hand or circulate among the Nagas. The moment a Naga state government employee receives her monthly salary and purchases grocery, the money she receives from Indian government goes into the hand of a non-Naga trader.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Lenice Martin argues that one of the main reasons for perpetual poverty among African Americans is the lack of dollar circulation within the African American community. Martin wrote, “The Jewish dollar circulates almost 10 times within the Jewish community before it reaches the outside. The Asian dollar circulates almost 6 times within the Asian community before it reaches the outside. The White dollar, well that is self-explanatory. The African-American dollar does not even circulate one time within its own community.” Martin, “Where is the Black Dollar Going?” <http://www.blackseek.com/vertest/articles/hughes3.html> (accessed Sept. 12, 2008).

CHAPTER TWO: THE NOTION OF PROGRESS - ITS APPLICATION AND RAMIFICATIONS

*The Enlightenment heritage and its modernizing impact of democracy, free markets, and individualism, now possess an almost universal appeal. But its disastrous consequences should encourage us to think and restructure it.*²⁰⁹

Today the notion of progress, as we have discussed in the preceding chapter, is insidiously pervasive not only in Western culture but also in most if not all non-Western cultures. One consequence is that, colonized peoples all over the world share one indelible experience: “they all received the death kiss of ‘Western values.’”²¹⁰ Consequently, this “death kiss” resulted in both physical extermination as well as a demise of the culture of the colonized. With regard to indigenous peoples John Bodley wrote, “Progress led to an unprecedented assault on the world’s [indigenous] peoples and their resources.”²¹¹

In this chapter, I will examine the impact of the notion of progress particularly on the Nagas, but also indigenous peoples in general. I will then argue that this impact has in fact been deadly both literally and figuratively. Specific attention will be given to three early inventions, which are often considered as “tangible proofs”²¹² of the idea of progress. These are the *printing press*, *gunpowder* and the *compass*, for these are “not

²⁰⁹Tu Weiming, “Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality,” 231.

²¹⁰M. Junaid Alam, “An Anti-Civilizational War? America and Israel on the Frontline of Colonialism,” *Counterpunch* (March 10, 2004), <http://www.counterpunch.org/alam03102004.html> (accessed June 1, 2007).

²¹¹Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 4-5.

²¹²Pollard, *Idea of Progress*, 16.

merely tools; they contain the essential ideas of Baconian Progress, and...are metaphors that are instrumental to the aim of [progress].”²¹³ The transformative effects of these inventions are described well by Turnbull and Ipwich:

From the idea of the printing press has been created far more effective tools of inscription: the etching of images and impressions including political, religious and economic ideologies into the minds of young and old. From the idea of gunpowder has been created far more effective tools that harness the power latent in nature: the forcible separation of atomic particles and the unprecedented release of energy. From the idea of the compass has been created far more effective tools of guidance: from weapons systems to systems of surveillance.²¹⁴

This chapter will consist of a discussion on how the results of ‘progress’ were – and are being used – by ‘industrialized’ or ‘technologically advanced’ West to gain power and dominion over the colonized – and, more importantly, an analysis on the effects of the inventions on the colonized indigenous peoples and their cultures. I do not claim that these inventions led to or caused colonization, but that they facilitated colonization.²¹⁵

The invention of gunpowder and the compass will illustrate, but not exclusively, the more tangible aspects of progress, which became colonial instruments to physically, politically and economically control the colonized. In the colonization of the Nagas, for example, the gun enabled a handful of British officers to effectively control the Naga Hills. The printing press represents the intellectual aspect of progress and the way colonial literature served the purpose of the colonizers in disavowing and dispossessing the colonized people of their history, culture and land. Again, the portrayal of the Nagas

²¹³David Turnbull and Arts Ipwich, “Causal Layered Analysis as Pedagogy in Studies of Science and Technology,” *Journal of Futures Studies* (February 2006): 51.

²¹⁴Ibid.

²¹⁵For a discussion on the causes of colonization, see “The Causes of Colonization” (chap. 2) in Algie Martin Simons, *Social Forces in American History* (Lawrence, KS: Carrrie Books, 2003). Also see Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, vol. 2: *The Wheels of Commerce* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

as ‘wild headhunters’ in colonial literature has effectively become the shorthand for traditional Nagas. The first two inventions remained useful for the process of physical *colonization*, while the latter was and is helpful largely for the process of *colonialism*.²¹⁶ Thus, in this chapter, the reference to these ‘proofs of progress’ is literal as well as metaphorical.

In modern Western and westernized cultures, ‘progress’ in technology is considered one of the surest signs of human progress. The view that technology is inseparable from and synonymous with progress remains deeply imbedded in the culture.²¹⁷ Van Doren argues that “the word ‘progress’ as it is used in ordinary speech usually means little more than technological progress.”²¹⁸ As such, as Albert Teich has noted, in modern culture “technology is more than just machines. It is a pervasive complex system whose cultural, social, political, and intellectual elements are manifest in virtually every aspect of our lives.”²¹⁹ Underscoring the inevitability as well as the menace of technology in modern Western culture, Neil Postman terms technology as “technopoly,” which is “a state of culture” and, at the same time, “a state of mind.” By this he means that “the culture seeks its authorization in technology, finds its satisfactions

²¹⁶Gaston Leduc has defined colonization and colonialism distinctively. “Colonization,” he argues, “strictly speaking, exists in actual fact and in law as the result of a process which places a society situated in a certain territory (the so called colony) in a state of subordination to another society;” whereas, colonialism “strictly speaking, is an idea which derives more from the domain of theory and doctrine...expressing a certain frame of mind.” Leduc, “The Economic Balance Sheet of Colonialism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 1 (Jan., 1969): 37.

²¹⁷See Nathan Sosenberg, *Inside the Black Box: Technology and Economics* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²¹⁸Van Doren, *The Idea of Progress*, 340.

²¹⁹Albert H. Teich, ed., *Technology and the Future*, 8th ed. (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997), 1.

in technology, and takes its orders from technology.”²²⁰ Similarly, reminiscent of the Enlightenment ideology of progress, Turnbull and Ipwich have observed aptly that

the assumed datum of Baconian science, applied to society, is that through determining the causes of human need and then commanding nature to supply the requisite resources, the whole system being rigorously maintained and applied, there will necessarily be improvements made in the living conditions of humans. Technology causes progress. The future will necessarily be made better through science and technology. This is the ‘received’ worldview of science and technology.²²¹

The general consensus among scholars is that the invention of printing, gunpowder and compass marked an epoch-making event in technological progress in human history. Pollard has referred to these inventions as the first “tangible proofs” of the idea of progress.²²² In fact, except for these inventions, the Medieval Age in Europe was seen by the advocates of progress as “The Dark Age” and as having no sign of progress by the Enlightenment philosophers in the later centuries.²²³ Francis Bacon, considered by many as the “champion of modern science,”²²⁴ argued in the seventeenth-century that the invention of printing, gunpowder and the compass “changed the appearance and state of the whole world.” He has asserted that

...we should notice the force, effect, and consequences of inventions, which are nowhere more conspicuous than in those three which were unknown to the ancients; namely, printing, gunpowder, and the compass. For these three have

²²⁰Postman, “Technopoly: The Broken Defenses” in *Technology and the Future*, 13.

²²¹Turnbull and Ipwich, “Causal Layered Analysis, 55. Also, Turnbull and Ipwich have argued that “[s]cience is indistinguishable from technology.” The duo further argues that the belief that science is “the search for truth, and technology the utilization of that truth” is grossly misunderstood, because “[w]ithout technology, there could be no science as exists today” (see p. 50).

Underscoring a mutually sustaining function between science and colonialism, Kavita Philip argues that “science was a central pillar of colonialism, but the converse holds too: colonialism was central to the history of nineteenth-century science.” She further claims that a study of the history of Western science would be “incomplete without an account of the ways in which science...was constituted in relation to the enterprise of colonialism,” Philip, *Civilizing Natures: Race, Resources, and Modernity in Colonial South India* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 3.

²²²Pollard, *Idea of Progress*, 16.

²²³Van Doren, *The Idea of Progress*, 49.

²²⁴ “Francis Bacon (1561-1626),” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/b/bacon.htm>.

changed the appearance and state of the whole world: first in literature, then in warfare, and lastly in navigation; and innumerable changes have been thence derived, so that no empire, sect, or star, appears to have exercised a greater power and influence on human affairs than these mechanical discoveries.²²⁵

To be sure, none of these inventions were contrived and conceived with their usefulness for colonial projects as their goals. Nonetheless, the facts that “their worldwide effects began to spread”²²⁶ from Europe, and they were essential to the process and structures of every colonial project is incontrovertible.²²⁷ It may be noted here that printing, gunpowder and compass, among many others, were first invented by the Chinese centuries before the inception of the European exploration.²²⁸ However, despite the technological accomplishments, China remained socially unchanged for centuries, and these inventions did not lead to Chinese dominance over the world.²²⁹ When these technologies entered the Western World they began to generate unprecedented changes, such as trade and economic expansion, exploration and colonization, empire-building, etc., which further laid the foundations for the Industrial Revolution in Europe.²³⁰ Thus, for the industrialized or technological advanced nations,

²²⁵Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning and Novum Organum* (New York: The Colonial Press, 1900), 366.

²²⁶Rosenberg, *Inside the Black Box*, 245.

²²⁷In addition to guns, writing and maritime technology, Jared Diamond argues that steel weapons, horses, infectious diseases, and the centralized political organization enabled Europeans to conquer other societies, especially in the New World. See his book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The fates of Human Societies* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 80-81.

²²⁸Xinli Wu, “The Potential for Technology Education in People’s Republic of China,” *Journal of Technology Education* 3, no. 1: 1. Also see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, 7 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1954-2004), where he has argued that many of the Chinese inventions were transferred later to the Western world.

²²⁹Diamond sees Chinese “racial” diffusion and dominance in East Asia, but only in the form of gradual or evolutionary spread, rather than by violent and revolutionary process. See his chapter on “How China Became Chinese: The History of East Asia,” in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 322-333. Joanna Waley-Cohen concurs that “in general, [Chinese] rulers encouraged migration as a means both to relieve pressure on the land and to repopulate relatively empty regions.” Waley-Cohen, “Expansion and Colonization in Early Modern Chinese History,” *History Compass* 2, no. 1 (Jan. 2004): 2.

²³⁰Francis Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print,” *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (Feb., 1993): 231.

from the very inception, “the tools of science are not merely used at the behest of an arcane pursuit of knowledge; they are tools of power.”²³¹ And so, in the light of “the unpredictable consequences of technological change,” Teich queries, “Undoubtedly, we are seeing great technological progress. But is it human progress?”²³²

Invention of printing and its role in colonialism

Reading and writing have been powerful tools for social, religious and political monopoly in the hand of the privileged few from antiquity to date. Stanley Diamond argued that the advent of writing made it possible “to use words for political manipulation and control of others.”²³³ Similarly, Glenn Morris asserts that “power is also exercised by influential social actors who can construct or reconfigure perceptions of reality through the deliberate and methodical imposition of semantic rules and practices.”²³⁴ Thus, says Jonathan Draper, “the connection between the emergence of the great empires and the emergence of written texts...is not accidental but integral” because “the building of empire requires carefully compiled records, laws, genealogies, means of communication, and propaganda.”²³⁵

Citing South Africa as a case in point, Draper argues that “the relationship between text and hegemony is particularly clear, since the subjugated peoples had an

²³¹Turnbull and Ipwich, “Causal Layered Analysis as Pedagogy,” 51.

²³²Teich, *Technology and the Future*, vii.

²³³Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1974), 4.

²³⁴Morris, “Vine Deloria, Jr., and the Development of a Decolonizing Critique of Indigenous Peoples and International Relations,” in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*, ed. Richard Grounds, George Tinker and David Wilkins (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 119.

²³⁵Draper, *Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Antiquity* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 1.

entirely oral culture.”²³⁶ The pre-colonial Nagas had a non-literate and oral culture, and in the colonization of the Nagas, the British and the Americans both disparaged the Nagas for the absence of reading and writing in their culture.

Jared Diamond sees a direct link between printing and colonization. Subsequent to the first explorers ‘discovery’ of the New World, “letter and pamphlets [about the voyages and conquests] supplied both the motivation and necessary detailed sailing directions.”²³⁷ Cristobal de Mena’s account of Pizarro’s exploits of the Inca Empire, which became a best-seller and was rapidly translated into other European languages, and other such “information, coming back to Spain from Columbus’s voyages and from Cortes’s conquest of Mexico, sent Spaniards pouring into the New World.”²³⁸

Among other effects, the invention of the printing press transformed modes of communication by generating “a revolution in the transmission of knowledge.”²³⁹ Steven Rowan rightly argues that “...the advent of print precipitated a profound shift from an aural-oral and tactile culture to one that communicated visually, through mosaics of meaning displayed and read from a page.”²⁴⁰ It gradually “reduced dependence on oral systems of transmission, until they mere traces in our language and our values....”²⁴¹ As a

²³⁶Ibid. 3; also see Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 1.

²³⁷Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 78-9.

²³⁸Ibid. Similarly, Cook’s accounts, charts and instructions paved the way for other Europeans to colonized Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand). See Erik Olssen and Michael Reilly, “Early Contacts Between Two Worlds,” in *Ki Te Whaiao: An Introduction to Maori Culture and Society*, ed. Tania M. Kaai et al. (Auckland, NZ: Pearson/Longman, 2004), 141-150.

²³⁹Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change,” 231.

²⁴⁰Steven Rowan, “Jurists and the Printing Press in Germany: The First Century,” in *Print Culture in the Renaissance: Essays on the Advent of Printing in Europe*, ed. Gerald Tyson and Sylvia Waganheim (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 74.

²⁴¹Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change,” 231.

result, as Robinson lamentfully puts it, “[k]nowledge became less warm, less personal, less immediate and more cold, more abstract, more intellectual.”²⁴²

Without exception, the notion of progress was applied to every aspect of European culture and history, which was then understood to be the history of all humankind. Applying this progressive view to the history of literature, some European writers divided “human” history into successive periods on the basis of the discovery of writing tools. In 1471, Guillaume Fichet determined history could be partitioned into three distinct periods: antiquity when the *calamus* or reed pen was used, the Middle Ages when the *penna* or quill pen was used and the Modern Age which used *aereae litterae* or print.²⁴³ According to this perspective, then the Modern Age began with the emergence of the printing press, and any culture that has not achieved the stage of printing is still backward. Colonized by this concept, contemporary Nagas divide Naga tribes into two categories: ‘advanced’ and ‘backward’. The ‘backward’ tribes are those who received Christianity and education later than the ‘advanced’ tribes and are therefore likely to have a lower rate of literacy.

Five centuries later, Walter Ong divided history into periods characterized by orality, writing, printing, and electronic communication,²⁴⁴ which reflects the Enlightenment idea of progressive improvement from backwardness to developed. In this linear view of history, the period of orality is always seen as the earliest as well as the most backward stage. For Lewis Morgan, humanity did not reach the status of civilization

²⁴²Ibid.

²⁴³D. H. Green, “Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies,” *Speculum* 65, no. 2 (Apr., 1990): 267.

²⁴⁴Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London; New York: Methuen, 1982), 2-3.

until the invention of phonetic alphabet and writing. Morgan considered human history to consist of seven stages based on “technological” inventions; the last stage being “the status of civilization,” beginning with the invention of a phonetic alphabet and writing.²⁴⁵

This hierarchical structure and progressive view of the history of “human civilization” ignores and negates non-literate cultures while affirming and favoring the literate culture, because human civilization, according to this view, began with the invention of writing. By the sixteenth-century, according to Jack Lynch, the notion that linguistic progress in English literature was a mark of civilized progress began to emerge in Europe.²⁴⁶ By the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, it was thought that “the use of letter is the principle circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages, incapable of knowledge or reflection.”²⁴⁷

Rosalind Thomas argues that this kind of view has not changed much; it is expressed only differently today. “We regard higher literacy rates as desirable and lack of literacy a sign of backwardness....” asserts Thomas.²⁴⁸ Following their nineteenth-century predecessors, contemporary political theorists cannot “conceive of liberal democracy without widespread literacy,” because “literacy is seen as essential for civilization and democracy.”²⁴⁹ Accordingly, Western culture has always valued the written culture above the oral one, preferred the written document to oral tradition and

²⁴⁵Morgan’s delineation of other stages of human development can be read from *Ancient society; or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization* (New York, H. Holt and Company, 1877); also, a summary of it can be found in Van Doren’s *Idea of Progress*, 342-43.

²⁴⁶Lynch, *The Age of Elizabeth in the Age of Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 137.

²⁴⁷Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. I (New York: Harper Brothers, 1896), 218.

²⁴⁸Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1.

²⁴⁹*Ibid.*

thought the written source more important than the oral ones, “even when the written sources actually derive from oral communication.”²⁵⁰

Coming into contact with the ‘illiterate’ and ‘savage’ Nagas from a culture that was deeply entrenched in the value of reading and writing, the early attempt by the first Westerners was to introduce the elementary components of Western civilization, namely reading and writing (see chapter 3). As one of the first American Baptist missionaries to the Nagas, S.W. Riverburg, reported his frustration over the non-receptivity of Nagas to the ‘gift’ of reading and writing: “The school work has not been up to my wishes. These savages naturally do not appreciate the value of schools.”²⁵¹ Similarly, W.F. Dowd, another American missionary wrote, “The [Naga] boys and girls are limited in capacity by the inheritance of centuries of savage life, and their progress is slow.”²⁵² Undoubtedly, the Nagas at first showed little or no interest and resisted attempts to “civilize” them.²⁵³ However, after more than a century of being ‘schooled’ in the Western form of education, the Nagas today can boast of a literacy rate higher than the Indian national rate.²⁵⁴ This sudden and very drastic paradigmatic cultural shift has had definite and negative consequences.

²⁵⁰Ibid.

²⁵¹Riverburg, “Naga Mission,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (July 1887; 73rd Annual Report).

²⁵²*BMM* (Jan. 1905), 19.

²⁵³Bodley has noted that most indigenous peoples initially ignored the whites “until they became obnoxious.” Most assumed “that the visitors would soon leave them and they would again be free to pursue their own way of life undisturbed.” Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 18-22. For more on indigenous inhabitants’ reaction to and perception of White people when the two first came into contact with each other, see also Julia Blackburn’s *The White Men: The First Response of Aboriginal Peoples to the White Man* (London: Orbis Publishing Ltd., 1979).

²⁵⁴According to the *Census of India* (2001), the overall literacy rate of India is 65.38% and is 67.11% for Nagaland. In the 1960s, the literacy rate of Nagaland remained at a mere 20% percent, much below the Indian national average.

One of the impacts of the introduction of Western print culture has been the change of attitude and perception towards Naga history and the subsequent neglect and eventual loss of much of it. The transition from an oral to literary culture resulted in the loss of much of the history and tradition of the Nagas. With the imposition of reading and writing, many Nagas came to understand oral traditions as simply stories laden with irrelevant, incoherent and falsely make-up tales. P.H. Moore, an American missionary to the plains people of Assam, in speaking of the tribal people including the Nagas, wrote, “Vague, unreliable and contradictory verbal traditions of their origin will taunt you.”²⁵⁵ Another English writer referred to the Naga tradition as “vague and obscure.”²⁵⁶

Thus, deprived of their history the misconception emerged that Naga history began with American missions and British colonial invasions and anything beyond is conceived as a mere traditional story that cannot be authenticated. This is a typical example of a colonized mentality with the propensity to engage in self-negation. As for example, the writing of a certain Naga church history scholar illustrates the tendency of the colonized mind to engage in self-negation. The Naga writer has argued that “history without a proper [written] source is no better than mere oral tradition or myth. For so long Nagas have lived in oral tradition. In order to have a solid history, we need a good source.”²⁵⁷ Having understood the verbally transmitted knowledge as “mere oral tradition or myth,” the “good source” could only be printed records of the erstwhile colonizers.

²⁵⁵ *BMM* (May 1902), 172.

²⁵⁶ P.D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare* (Bombay; London: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1968), 21.

²⁵⁷ Bendangyabang Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: A Source Material* (Mokokchung, Nagaland: Shalom Ministry, 1998), viii.

Thus, many contemporary Nagas have become infatuated with the written texts of their former colonizers and are disconnected from their own traditions.

The myth that colonized peoples do not have a history previous to colonization is of course one of the sustained colonial legacies that remains embedded in the psyche of both the colonizers and the colonized. Mirroring a popular opinion of the colonial era, Hugh Trevor-Roper has asserted, “Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none. There is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness....”²⁵⁸ Trevor-Troper’s argument is based on his belief that history requires “documentable evidence,” which non-literate African societies did not have before the British invasion.

Diamond has argued that this colonial assumption is false, but has remained profoundly ‘true’ and said that it assumes “that history is a matter of documents. Conventional historians, who live by documents and, therefore, consider them sacrosanct, would deny authentic history to most of the human race for the greater period of time on this planet.”²⁵⁹ Finn Fuglestad too rejects Trevor-Roper’s view on the ground that such perception comes from seeing history as a “linear-evolutionary philosophy that incorporates an ideology of linear progress,” which is fundamentally intertwined with “Western civilization.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965), 9. Trevor-Roper was appointed professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford, the position he held from 1957 to 1980. In its obituary, the University hailed him as “the public face of the History Faculty.” Trevor-Roper cannot be singly faulted, because he was following the likes of G. W. F. Hegel. For Hegel’s view, see his book, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956).

²⁵⁹Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive*, 3.

²⁶⁰Fuglestad, *The Ambiguities of History: The Problem of Ethnocentrism in Historical Writing*. (Oslo: Oslo Academic Press, 2005), 11.

This misconception means that beyond the printed texts the Nagas do not possess any history. Naga's understanding of history is being shaped, informed and altered by the notion of unidirectional and progressive history that constitute all history text books in schools. As an example, most Western writers have hypothesized that Naga ancestors came from China, after having sailed through seas and rivers. This assumption is based on some similarity of cultural practices and items found in both the Chinese and Naga cultures. Most Naga writers writing about Nagas unquestionably follow this theory. No one questions why claim to such migratory connections with Native Americans, Australian Aborigines or Africans are not made when similarities abound. Moreover, in almost every Naga community, there are traditional stories on how their ancestors came about, e.g., from rocks or mountains, and latter scattered to different settlements. But these stories have no prominent place among contemporary Nagas, because they are not found in the printed texts of the colonizers. Thus, for the contemporary Nagas, history means documentations, recorded numbers and famous people who shape it, and orality has no validity or place in it.

The loss of traditional religion further compounded the loss of oral tradition, because for Naga religion is inseparable from their way of life. Indeed, the Nagas could have had no 'way of life' apart from the traditional religion because religion itself was the way of life. Similarly, for Native Americans, "all of existence is spiritual," says Tinker.²⁶¹ Culture and history are informed and shaped by the way people carry out their 'religious' activities. For traditional Nagas, history is not about dates and numbers or chronological records. It is about religious practices, experiences and events.

²⁶¹Tink, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 107.

Another debilitating ramification of the imposition of the print culture was the emergence of colonial portraits of the Nagas, what Albert Memmi described as “the mythical portrait of the colonized.”²⁶² The written Naga history is largely an invention of the colonizer and is rife with prejudices and assumptions. Diamond rightly argues that history, especially during the colonial period, “has always been written by the conqueror.”²⁶³ Written from the conqueror’s perspective, much of modern Naga history has Western “ethnocentric power inherent in [it].”²⁶⁴

One particularly egregious example is the prevalence of the term “headhunting,” when decapitation or beheading would be more accurate (see chapter 5 for an extended discuss). Besides, the term has often been used out of context to evoke exotic and barbaric imagery. Colonial terms and phrases are carefully chosen to convey certain primitive and/or savage characteristics in order to justify the colonial ‘civilizing’ mission. Mary Fuller concurs that “colonial texts had not only to describe what was seen and done but also to defend their projects, before, during, and after the fact.”²⁶⁵ So, “although history has much to teach us, it can also be selectively quoted and used anecdotally to justify interpretations by giving them some *enduring lineage and validity*”²⁶⁶ (emphasis added).

The term “headhunters” remains one of the most well-known and most damaging colonial stereotypes, because in the course of the protracted political and military conflict

²⁶²Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1965), 79.

²⁶³Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive*, 4.

²⁶⁴Gordon M. Sayre. *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 15.

²⁶⁵Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576-1624* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 14.

²⁶⁶Arieh Y. Shalev, Rachel Yehuda and Alexander C. McFarlane, *International Handbook of Human Response to Trauma* (New York; London: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2000), 11-12.

between the Nagas and the Indian government the latter has exploited this very misleading stereotype by using it for its own political gain. In 1955, in response to Naga leaders' call for civil disobedience aiming at political freedom from India, the Government of India took several measures. First, it sent its army to arrest Naga national leaders so as to quash the emerging freedom movement. Second, it declared the Naga Hills a "disturbed area," a designation which remains in place today.²⁶⁷ Third, for fear of opening up its record of human rights violation and inhuman atrocities against the Nagas, Indian government summarily forced all Western citizens to leave Nagaland in 1955 and restrictions on foreigners who wished to enter Nagaland were imposed. This policy also remains in effect. Additionally, for fear of being inundated by mainstream Indians, Naga leaders signed an agreement with Indian government that would require any Indian wishing to visit Nagaland to obtain *Inner Line Permits*.²⁶⁸

Each of these laws served the government of India to publicize the propaganda that portrayed the Nagas as perpetually wild, fierce and dangerous and disseminated the political unrest as a 'law and order problem.' India has always claimed travel restrictions have been put in place for the safety of travelers, particularly foreign nationals. This effectively obscures the true intents of these restrictions. India hopes to conceal from the outside world all its human rights violations and numerous atrocities committed against

²⁶⁷Two acts were instituted to end the Naga uprising: the *Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953* and the *Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955*. They are both termed "Assam" act because Nagaland was then a part of the state of Assam. For a more detailed treatment of these and other developments see Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 48-56.

²⁶⁸In 1873, the British government enacted a law called "Inner Line Regulation" and termed it "a regulation for the peace and government of certain districts." This regulation was enforced in most tribal areas, including the Naga Hills, where restriction of entry without permission from British Government was imposed. See S. K. Barpujari, *The Nagas: The Evolution of their History and Administration (1832-1939)* (Guwahati; Delhi: Spectrum Publication, 2003), 163.

the Nagas following the implementation of the *Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958* (AFSPA).²⁶⁹

The role of colonial literature in disavowing and dispossessing the history, culture and land of the colonized is by no means an experience exclusive to the Nagas.²⁷⁰ In fact, the experience has been and continues to be worse for the colonized natives in the Americas, Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and parts of Africa.²⁷¹ The plethora of colonial laws and imageries is a ‘verbal tool’ that not only created a false perception of the colonized, but also served to justify the colonizer’s civilizing enterprise. As Perry has argued, “the task of rationalizers, then, was to justify the inevitable occurrences of these evils in the quest for greater good.”²⁷² Thus, “the power to take away and replace the elements of ‘savagery’ and of ‘civilization’ is fundamental to colonialism.”²⁷³

In the dispossession of native land and culture in America through rationalization and literature, John Locke, whose philosophy commands a significant influence on modern Western political thought, remains as a towering figure. According James Tully,

²⁶⁹Unlike the two afore-mentioned state acts, this draconian law (AFSPA) was passed by the Parliament of India on September 11, 1958. In both intent and terminology, this act copied British Colonial law called the *Armed Forces (Special Powers) Ordinance*, enacted in 1942 to suppress the Gandhi movement, *Quit India Movement*, to end the British colonial rule in India. Although AFSPA is being enforced in several parts of India today, it was originally promulgated to suppress the Naga freedom movement. For further discussion, see “India: Briefing on the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts, 1958,” *Amnesty International*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa200252005>. For a detailed account of atrocities and human rights violations against the Nagas, see Kaka D. Iralu’s *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears: A Historical Account of the Fifty-Two Year Indo-Naga War and the Story of Those Who Were Never Allowed to Tell It* (Kohima: Kaka D. Iralu, 2003).

²⁷⁰Linda Tihuwai Smith has argued that the West desired, extracted, claimed over indigenous ways of knowing, imagery and product and then rejected the very people who created them. She claims that the term “research” made these acts possible. See Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Nunedin, NZ: University of Otago Press, 1999).

²⁷¹Comparatively worse because on the issue of land ownership the Nagas were not entirely dispossessed or displaced from their ancestral land by the invaders. Dispossession of Naga lands, which I will discuss in chapter 3, did take place, but not nearly as extensively as experienced by some indigenous peoples.

²⁷²Perry, ...*From Time Immemorial*, 26.

²⁷³Syare. *Les Sauvages Américains*, 139.

Locke developed two main concepts in his *Two Treatises* – political society and property. Tully has claimed that the former invalidated the Native American forms of governance and nationhood and the latter dispossessed them of their ancestral land. He writes:

First, Locke defines political society in such a way that Amerindian government does not qualify as a legitimate form of political society. Rather, it is construed as a historically less developed form of European political organization located in the later stages of the ‘state of nature’ and thus not on a par with modern European political formation. Second, Locke defines property in such a way that Amerindian customary land use is not a legitimate type of property. Rather, it is construed as individual-labor based possession and assimilated to an earlier stage of European development in the state of nature, and thus not on equal footing with European property.²⁷⁴

In addition to inventing legal concepts such as “the doctrine of *terra nullius*”²⁷⁵ that provided the legal legitimation for conquest of native peoples and appropriation of their land, the categorical denial of the existence of religion among the colonized was almost uniformly affirmed, the idea of which was, then, widely disseminated through printing. For example, it was claimed “that the Nagas had no religion; that they were highly intelligent and capable of receiving civilization; that with it they would want a religion, and that we might just as well give them our own...thus mutually attaching them to us.”²⁷⁶ Also, in one of his letters before he actually went to the Naga Hills (dated October 5, 1871), E.W. Clark, the first American missionary to come into contact with the Nagas in the present-day Nagaland, commented that Nagas “have some crude and

²⁷⁴ Tully, “Rediscovering America: The Two Treatises and Aboriginal Rights,” in *Locke’s Philosophy: Content and Context*, ed. G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 167.

²⁷⁵ Bodley notes that “In 1889 an Australian legal decision declared Australia to have *territorium nullius* – unoccupied, waste territory, legally free for the taking – when it was annexed by Britain in 1788” (Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 3rd ed.), 60. Similarly, David Ritter argues that the first English colonizers of “Australia” did not need *terra nullius* or any other doctrine to dispossess the Aboriginal land. “Such a doctrinal denial would not have appeared necessary to colonists, because the indigenous inhabitants were seen and defined by the colonists as intrinsically barbarous and without any interest in land.” Ritter, “The ‘Rejection of Terra Nullius’ in Mabo: A Critical Analysis,” *Sydney Law Review* 18, no. 5: 6.

²⁷⁶ James Johnstone, *My Experience in Manipur and the Naga Hills* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co. Ltd., 1896), 43-4.

indefinite conceptions of a Great Spirit, and an evil one; farther than this, they have no religion.”²⁷⁷ Likewise, Clark’s wife Mary had no doubt that “they [Nagas] have no religion.”²⁷⁸

Similarly, the early European explorers reported that Native Americans “have no religion;” they had “only superstitions, which we hope by the grace of God to change into true Religion.”²⁷⁹ When White explorers came into contact with South Africans in the seventeenth-century, they reported that that the latter “live without law and religion, like animals.”²⁸⁰ Indigenous Australians and Pacific Islanders were perceived no differently. Hillary Carey noted that for the settlers, explorers, administrators and others, “the Australian aborigines had nothing which could rightly be called religion. ...missionaries did not class Aboriginal beliefs as religion but considered them to be demonic or pagan in nature.”²⁸¹

For the ‘civilized’ imperial West religion was a major factor in determining a peoples’ stage of civilization.²⁸² Thus, the categorical denial or rejection of the existence of religion had ulterior motives and was accompanied by serious consequences. Carey has argued that the “denial of Aboriginal religion was an essential part of the process by

²⁷⁷ Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland*, 48.

²⁷⁸ *BMM* (1871), 442.

²⁷⁹ Quoted in David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in South Africa* (Charlottesville; London: 1996), 11-12.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁸¹ Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religion* (St. Leonards, NSW: ALLEN & UNWIN, 1996), 26.

²⁸² David Hume claims that “polytheism or idolatry was, and necessarily must have been, the first and most ancient religion of mankind.” He further asserts that “the savage tribes of AMERICA, AFRICA, and ASIA are all idolaters. Not a single exception to this rule....It seems certain, that, according to the natural progress of human thought, the ignorant multitude must first entertain some groveling and familiar notion of superior powers, before they stretch their conception to that perfect Being;” Hume, *The Natural History of Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 1992), 3-6.

which Australia's indigenous people were disappropriated of their land.”²⁸³ Likewise, Chidester writes, “As a subtext to all these denials [Europeans] concluded that people so depraved and bestial as to lack religion had no right to possess such a land and agreed... that it was ‘a great pittie that such creatures as they be should enjoy so sweet a country.’”²⁸⁴

Ultimately, the most horrid consequence of the denial of religion is the basic denial of humanity to the Other, because it was popularly thought that the “brutish savages, which by reason of their godless ignorance, and blasphemous idolatry, are worse than those beasts.”²⁸⁵ Understood as beasts or worse than beasts, it was thought, following Thomas Hobbes, that “to make covenants with brute beasts is impossible.”²⁸⁶ Thus, “when the idea of progress was at its height, ‘primitives’ were regarded as savages, brutal, and heathen, and their disappearance was thought generally to be a good thing.”²⁸⁷

Invention of gunpowder and its role in colonization

Daniel Headrick argues that improved European weapons “dramatically, widened the power-gap between Europeans and non-Western peoples and led directly to the outburst of imperialism.”²⁸⁸ Some scholars have held that the invention of gunpowder represents one of the three “greatest advances of man.”²⁸⁹ Maria Mies contends that the concept of progress “is historically unthinkable without the...development of technology

²⁸³Carey, *Believing in Australia*, 26.

²⁸⁴Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 38.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸⁶Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 14:22 (April 1651).

²⁸⁷Shelly Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 49.

²⁸⁸Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 85.

²⁸⁹Roy S. Wolper, “The Rhetoric of Gunpowder and the Idea of Progress,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31, no. 4 (October-December 1970): 590.

of warfare and conquest,” because “all subsistence technology (for conservation and production of food, clothes and shelter, etc.) henceforth appears to be ‘backward’ in comparison to” the technology of warfare.²⁹⁰

Gunpowder represents violence, decimation and bloodshed perpetuated under the guise of progress and yet justifications for such violence continue apace.²⁹¹ Wolper has noted several justifications for gun by the advocates of progress. The first justification for firearms as a marker of human progress derived from its destructive power where the power for destruction was rationalized as human advancement.²⁹² Thus, it was hypothesized,

As Philosophy is the noblest exercise of Man, so Morality is the fairest part of Philosophy.... The most excellent part of Morality is the Politicks, of which the noblest piece is the Art Military, as Mechaniques are the noblest part of this Art.... Since then the Gun is without dispute the goodliest part of the Mechanicks, it follows that the Gun and its Invention is the goodliest thing of the World.²⁹³

Similarly, in the twentieth century, hailing the first catastrophic nuclear bomb explosion, an editorial in *The New York Times* on 7 August, 1945 heralded “the crowning

²⁹⁰Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (Humanities Press, 1986), 74.

²⁹¹Ideas about weaponry circulated freely until the rise of nation-states, capitalism and the spread of knowledge in printed books. They became secret because “military knowledge had market value in such an environment.” Indeed, “war is one of the chief reasons that states have chosen to support science and technology,” says Alex Roland. Roland, “Science, Technology, and War,” in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 5 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 562.

In the middle of World War II, in 1942, the U.S. government instituted the Manhattan Project with the specific intent of building an atomic bomb. “The project succeeded in three years, at a cost of \$2 billion (equivalent to over \$20 billion today).” Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 242. The nuclear tests by US and its dreadful effects on indigenous inhabitants of Marshall Islands have been well documented by Holly M. Barker in “Fighting Back: Justice, the Marshall Islands and the Neglected Radiation Communities,” in *Life and Death Matters: Human Rights and the Environment at the End of the Millennium*, ed. Barbara Rose Johnston (London: New Delhi: Alta Mira Press, 1997), 290-306.

²⁹²Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation*, 593-4.

²⁹³*Another Collection of Philosophical Conferences of the French Virtuosi upon Questions of All Sorts for the Improving of Natural Knowledg: Made in the Assembly of the Beaux Esprits at Paris by the Most Ingenious Persons of that Nation*, trans. G. Havers and J. Davies (London, 1665), 24-25.

demonstration of Allied technological, scientific and material superiority.” In the same issue, the paper also declared the “atom bomb” was the “result of steady progress.”²⁹⁴

The second justification was that gunpowder would prevent battle because it was believed that its horrific consequent would deter warfare. “But sure it seemes that *God* in his providence had reserved this Engine for these times, that by the cruell force and terrible roaring of it, men might the rather be deterred from assaulting one another in hostile and warlike manner.”²⁹⁵ This is so because war and psychology are deeply intertwined.²⁹⁶ The power of gun provided psychological advantage to the colonizers and led to the defeat of the native psychologically in addition to physical defeat. Diamond believes that in the Spanish conquest of the Incas, guns played only a minor role, but “produce a big psychological effect.”²⁹⁷ Herbert Marcuse argues that industrialized countries “become bigger, better and richer” as they “perpetuate the danger” of war; then, “peace [is] maintained by the constant threat of war.”²⁹⁸

The production of evermore sophisticated weapons not only made it possible for the colonizers to commit acts of mass murder, but also easier to gain control over whole populations and large areas of land. As an example, by the end of the nineteenth-century, Euro-Americans “owned and managed 85 percent of the earth’s surface.”²⁹⁹ The British boasted of how “a couple of Englishmen, a considerable distance apart,” were “able to

²⁹⁴“Atomic Bomb Is Result Of Steady Progress Of Arms From Catapult That Hurlled Rocks,” *New York Times*, Aug 7, 1945: 9.

²⁹⁵Quoted by Wolper in “The Rhetoric of Gunpowder,” 595.

²⁹⁶U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s statement that the US intended to produce “Shock and Awe” in Iraq has been rightly termed by some media as “psy-war”. See Marc Erikson, “So Far, So Odd,” *Asia Times*, March 22, 2003, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EC22Ak01.html (accessed March 6, 2009).

²⁹⁷Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 76.

²⁹⁸Marcuse, *One-Dimension Man: Studies in the Ideology of Industrial Society* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964), ix.

²⁹⁹McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 4.

keep in control the many thousands of natives” in the Naga Hills.³⁰⁰ Similarly, during the British rule in India, “one hundred thousand Englishmen” ruled over “three hundred million” Indians.³⁰¹ Bodley reported that “in Africa in the 1920s, 12,500 Europeans controlled over 15 million natives.”³⁰² A British commander in the Zulu Campaign, claimed that the native Zulus were “hopelessly inferior...in fighting power although numerically stronger.”³⁰³ All these were possible because of the power of weapon. Thus, it may be argued that “the history of imperialism is the history of warfare – of strategy, tactics, and weapons.”³⁰⁴

I will discuss the three primary modes by which indigenous peoples have been disabled by guns: 1) The historical colonial military violence and decimation of the natives; 2) the subsequent accessibility of guns and the corresponding increase in violence among the colonized peoples; and 3) the continued currency of the gun as a symbol of the supremacy of the West.

First, by its very nature, as Frantz Fanon has rightly argued, colonialism is violent and thrives by inflicting violence. “Colonialism is not a thinking machine,” says Fanon, “nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state....”³⁰⁵ Similarly, Aime Cesaire has charged that “Europe is responsible before the human

³⁰⁰Balfour, “Presidential Address,” 19.

³⁰¹Louis Fischer, ed. *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Life, Works, and Ideas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 157.

³⁰²Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 70.

³⁰³*Ibid.*, 45.

³⁰⁴Daniel Headrick, “Imperialism and Technology,” in *Reflections on World Civilization: A Reader*, ed. Ronald Fritze, James Olson and Randy Roberts (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 122. Headrick has also noted that when the French and the British issued their new weapons, the Minie Rifles (issued by French in 1849) and the Enfield (issued by British in 1853), Europe was at peace. So, these improvised guns were used in the colonies first.

³⁰⁵Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 61.

community for the highest heap of corpses in history.”³⁰⁶ The gun remains the symbol of colonial violence. It represents colonial power, warfare, violence and decimation of indigenous peoples. The gun is an effective instrument for facilitating the process of the West’s colonization of the world.³⁰⁷ Bronislaw Malinowski, a well-known anthropologist and a proponent of colonialism, has aptly stated:

Real colonization begins with the establishment of political influence, through the effective demonstration of force. The natives have to be impressed, even cowed, by the unquestionably military superiority of the Europeans. No colonial government can allow the slightest possibility of armed outbreaks, or even of robbery, murder, or assault by the natives on the Whites.³⁰⁸

One of the reasons for unrestrained acts of violence against the colonized natives is, in part, due to misperception. Having initially perceived indigenous inhabitants as animals or, at best, sub-human beings, “it was considered a ‘meritorious’ act to kill an Indian.”³⁰⁹ Similarly, in Africa, “several colonial campaigners compared suppressing Africans with hunting animals.”³¹⁰ E.A.H. Alderson, in his 1900 book on the Shona uprising, reportedly “compared shooting the Shona to ‘chasing the fox, rabbiting from the

³⁰⁶Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972/2000), 45.

³⁰⁷Bunch and Hellemans pointed out that “the Western guns...helped ensure dominance of Europe over Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Oceania.” Bunch and Hellemans, “Gunpowder and Guns in East and West,” in *The History of Science and Technology*, ed. Bryan Bunch and Alexander Hellemans (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2004), 161. They also noted that although gunpowder was invented by the Chinese 500 years before word of it reached Europe, “they [Chinese] did not immediately think of guns.” In contrast, after receiving knowledge of the gunpowder, it took “almost no time...for Europeans to invent guns” (ibid.). Roger Bacon is believed to be the first European to mention gunpowder in his book, *Opus majus* (written in between 1267 and 1268, but not published until 1733); ibid., 126.

³⁰⁸Omafume F. Onoge, “The Counterrevolutionary Tradition in African Studies: The Case of Applied Anthropology,” in *The Politics of Anthropology: From Colonialism to Sexism Toward a View from Below*, ed. Gerrit Huizer and Bruce Mannheim (The Hague; Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 48.

³⁰⁹Quoted in Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 26. Also, from Wellington: “‘I look at the natives as merely superior baboons, and the sooner they are exterminated the better’ – was a common attitude towards the Natives.” John Wellington, *South West Africa and Its Human Issues* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press/The Clarendon Press, 1967), 249; fn. 1.

³¹⁰Philip, *Civilizing Natures*, 18.

bolt holes, shooting snipe and scaring rooks.”³¹¹ A British colonel contemptuously told S.A. Perrine, an American missionary to the Nagas, that “they [Nagas] are worthless – no better than dogs; and I would as soon shoot one down as I would a dog.”³¹²

Between 1832 and 1851, the British military undertook no fewer than ten military expeditions into the Angami Naga territories, inflicting serious damage to and causing much suffering for the Nagas.³¹³ As a common practice, in nearly every expedition, British troops would attack village, set fire houses, killed any Nagas who resisted and force the survivors to flee into the forest.³¹⁴ The mission to pacify the Nagas has meant decades of suffering and loss for the Nagas, and it has been termed “one of the most violent chapters in the history of British conquest of the sub-continent.”³¹⁵ After decades of inflicting this suffering on the Nagas, F. Jenkins wrote, “we shall do far more to civilize them than by acts of retaliation, burning their villages and slaughtering them in battles.”³¹⁶ Jenkins led most of the early attacks on the Nagas and has mentioned the fall

³¹¹Ibid.

³¹²*BMM* (1901), 376-77.

³¹³Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas* (Delhi: Vivek Pub. House, 1974), 76. The period between 1832 and 1880 of the colonial era is often referred to as “the military phase,” because the British Government had no permanent military or administrative base in the Naga Hills. During this period, they launched periodical military ‘expeditions’ into the Naga Hills. The subsequent stage is known as the “administrative phase” (1880-1947) because during this period the British had established their administrative positions in the Hills.

³¹⁴For an extended discussion of the successive invasions during this period, see Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 142ff. and L. Atola Changkiri, *The Angami Nagas and the British, 1832-1947* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications/United Publishers, 1999).

³¹⁵Sanjib Baruah, “Confronting Constructionism: Ending the Naga War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 3 (May 2003): 321-338. Also, see Baruah. *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 98-122.

³¹⁶A.J. Moffat Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, 1854, pp. cxlv-clxii; notes by F. Jenkins. Jenkins was an English Major who later became Commissioner in Assam.

of Kekreemah, an Angami Naga village, as “one of the most bloody battles ever fought in Assam.”³¹⁷

On December 10, 1850, in an effort to capture the village of Konoma, the British government sanctioned five hundred men “with two 3-pounder guns and two mortars.”³¹⁸ This military operation was supported by an additional reinforcement of “150 muskets, two 3-pounders and a mortar, and about 800 friendly Nagas to fight on our side with their spears.”³¹⁹ When Kohima, the headquarters of the British administration in the Naga Hills and the present-day capital of Nagaland, was overrun by the British on February 11, 1851, “over three hundred Nagas were killed and [the British] prestige thoroughly established.”³²⁰ Describing the effect of gun on Nagas in one of their conquests of a Naga village, one English writer wrote:

The guns were fired, which created the utmost consternation, and the enemy fled in every direction, utterly discomfited, leaving 100 slain on the field of battle, including many of their most noted warriors. The loss on our side was two Nagas killed and six wounded, and one camp-follower killed and one wounded: we believe the above estimate of the loss of the enemy to be far under the truth. It is currently reported that about 300 Nagas were killed and wounded upon, this occasion, and doubtless many women and children were murdered by our ruthless barbarian allies..., exterminating young and old.³²¹

Examples of the power or impact of guns could be multiplied indefinitely. However, suffice it to say that in contrast to British invaders who came fully equipped with weapons to conquer, the Nagas had no such weapons. Thus, J.P. Mills, one of the last British colonial administrators, committed a ‘narrative fallacy’ when he claimed that

³¹⁷ See “Military Expeditions to the Angami Naga Hills” in Elwin, *Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, 144.

³¹⁸ Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, clviii.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, clxi.

³²⁰ Johnston, *My Experience in Manipur and the Naga Hills*, 35.

³²¹ Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, clxi.

the Nagas produced their weapons only in a few villages.³²² Mill's assertion is misconstrued, because the Nagas did not possess or develop any instruments specifically designed for warfare. What Mills referred to as "weapons" were spears and *daos* (a Naga machete), which were, and still are, primarily agrarian tools and not weapons.³²³ The spear was the primary tool for hunting, but it was also used to unearth or dig out underground animals, crabs and edible roots. Only adult males were permitted to use it.

The dao, on the other hand, is essential to the daily functioning of Naga life and is used by both men and women, without which a Naga life can not function. Its utility includes, but not restricted to, cutting rope, hair, wood, grass, meat and clearing yard and spaces for cultivation. Having no weapons specifically designed for warfare, therefore, these tools which facilitated the day to day functioning of Naga life became instruments of war when conflict arose, not least in resistance to British's assaults that were aided by deadly and powerful weapons. The following is an example:

...on the 5th February (1851), two heralds came...bearing a challenge from the [Naga] people to come and prove who had the greatest power in these hills, they or our Government...After seeing our muskets and guns, they scornfully declared they did not care for our (choongas) tubes, meaning muskets. 'Your Sipaahees [soldiers] are flesh and blood as well as ourselves, and we will fight with spears...and see who are the best men, and here is a specimen of our weapons,' handing over a handsome spear.³²⁴

Second, guns were not only used to exterminate the natives, but were also sold to the indigenous inhabitants. With the introduction of the basic tools of Western warfare to

³²²Mills, "The Effect on the Naga Tribes of Assam of Their Contact with Western Civilization," in *Tribal Peoples and Development Issues: A Global Overview*, ed. John Bodley (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1988), 71.

³²³R. G. Woodthorpe, who was in the Naga Hills in 1873 and 1875, has described the dao as "the only *agricultural implement* they [Nagas] use." He also observed that the spears were "the only principal weapon of offense" and "the only indigenous [weapon]," further noting that the Nagas had also acquired firearms from the British. See Woodthorpe, "Notes on the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the So-Called Naga Hills, on Our North-East Frontier of India (Part I)," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 11 (1882): 61-2.

³²⁴Elwin, *Nagas in Nineteenth Century*, 142.

indigenous peoples, violence increased rapidly and became deadlier. In his letter to the “Secretary to the Government of Bengal” (dated 24th July 1853), A.J. Moffat Mills wrote, “Captain Butler deprecates our giving muskets to the Nagas...; he says, ‘we have given them muskets, and by our annual tours have taught them the art of war.’”³²⁵ Also, in an effort to fight against the British, Nagas also acquired guns from the Burmese, Bengalis and Kacharis, all of whom had come into contact with the British decades before the Nagas.³²⁶ On the other hand, British government provided guns to Kacharis and Kukis in resettlement areas in order to create a buffer zone against the Nagas. Armed with guns, tension increased and fighting among the ethnic groups became deathlier (see chapter 3).

Similarly, “historians of Africa agree,” as Maxwell Owusu reports, “that the large-scale introduction and effective adoption of European weaponry by Africans, particularly during the early decades of the nineteenth century, created a period of serious political and social disequilibrium.”³²⁷ Those who did not own Western weapons now found themselves subjugated by and at the mercy of their neighbors who already possessed superior western-made weapons. As a result, “African deaths through warfare...surely increased under colonial rule rather than decreased.”³²⁸

In Brazil, too, invading miners not only killed Yanomami, but also traded modern guns “to Yanomami in order to aggravate tensions, conflicts, and violence between

³²⁵Moffat Mills, *Report On Assam*, 49-50.

³²⁶L.W. Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles* (Aizawl, Mizoram: Tribal Research Institute, 1977 [first published in 1929]), 146.

³²⁷Maxwell Owusu, “Colonial and Postcolonial Anthropology of Africa: Scholarship or Sentiment?” in *The Politics of Anthropology*, 148-49.

³²⁸Emery M. Roe, “Lantern on the Stern: Policy Analysis, Historical Research, and Pax Britannica in Africa,” *African Studies Review* 30, no. 1 (March 1987): 46.

villagers and villages.”³²⁹ When Maori lands were invaded by Europeans, the Maoris did almost everything including probable sexual favors in return for European goods. “Groups of young women [were] instructed to ask for gunpowder” from the colonists.³³⁰ The competition for firearms among the Maoris later led to The Musket Wars, “the largest conflict ever fought on New Zealand soil,” which “killed more New Zealanders than World War One.”³³¹ Similarly, when Europeans first came into contact with the natives in New Guinea, “the people had no weapons.”³³² However, soon after the contact, the chiefs were won over and after the chiefs “delivered [their] subjects to the church door...the missionaries met [their] requests for alcohol and firearms.”³³³

Trade of weapons to the non-western world is not a new phenomenon. Carlo Cipolla has made the assertion that as soon as the gun was invented Muslims in the vicinity of Europe acquired it, and it soon spread from North Africa to the Middle East.³³⁴ Ever since, weapons are been manufactured and sold by technologically advanced western nation-states to the non-western world.³³⁵ ‘Under-developed’ and ‘developing’

³²⁹Leslie Sponsel, “The Master Thief: Gold mining and Mercury Contamination in the Amazon” in *Life and Death Matters*, 110.

³³⁰Kaai, *Introduction to Maori*, 145.

³³¹James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 157.

³³²Julian Pettifer and Richard Bradley, *Missionaries* (London: BBC Books, 1990), 44.

³³³*Ibid.*, 32.

³³⁴Cipolla, *Guns, Sails and Empires: Technological Innovation and the Early Phases of European Expansion 1400-1700* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), 90. Cipolla noted that at first Europeans did not want to give away the weapons to the natives for want of supremacy, but eventually did so for money and profit as “there was nothing that cannon could not buy” (p. 110). He has also cited an old Javanese poem that mentions a beautiful princess Tarurogo who was sold to a Dutchman for three pieces of artillery.

³³⁵Six of the seven biggest arms-selling countries are in the West: US, France, Germany, Britain, Russia and Italy, and most of the “third World” countries involved in buying are embroiled in conflict and in exterminating indigenous population, such as India, Pakistan, Israel, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Sudan, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. For further information, see Gideon Burrows, *No-Nonsense Guide to the Arms Trade* (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications; London: Verso, 2002).

Following the decision of Bush’s government in May 2005 on selling sophisticated modern fighter jets to India and Pakistan, an Indian reporter has aptly noted that “by offering nuclear-capable F-16 ‘Falcon’ fighters to Pakistan and the even more advanced F-18 ‘Hornets’ to India, Washington has shown a

countries continue to acquire weapons from the West which serves primarily to enrich and empower the West considerably. As an example, “from 1990-96, Pentagon foreign military, construction, and commercial sales totaled roughly \$80 billion dollars.”³³⁶ As Ronald has rightly argued, “By controlling the sale and distribution of such weapons the United States and other developed nations that support large arms industries could shape war around the world.”³³⁷

Third, guns continue to serve as a symbol of Western supremacy to much of the world. The power of gun enabled Europeans to effectively control almost the entire face of the earth during the colonial period; today, the West continue to dictate and determine the policies and functioning of many ‘Third World’ countries because of their superior military might. According to Victor Hanson, gunpowder has not only remained lethal, but has in fact become more lethal, making “[Euro-Americans] the most deadly soldiers in

cynical readiness to profit from the long-standing rivalry between the nuclear-armed South Asian neighbors.” See Ranjit Devraj, “U.S. Arms Industry Fishing in Troubled South Asian Waters,” *News Center*, Tuesday, March 29, 2005, <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/0329-08.htm> (accessed June 30, 2007).

³³⁶Alan Gilbert, “Innovative Approaches to the Advancement of Democracy and Peace,” in *The Future of Peace in the Twenty-First Century: To Mitigate Domestic Discontents and Harmonize Global Diversity*, ed. Nicholas N. Kittrie, Rodrigo Carazo, James R. Mancham (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2003), 919. Gilbert also has mentioned that the US government employs about 6,500 people, in conjunction with US Embassy official, to sell arms to other countries.

Also, see Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2000), where he has asserted that “arms sales, both domestic and foreign, have become one of the Pentagon’s most important missions” (p. 7). Accordingly, in the aftermath of the “Asian melt-down” in 1997, “Secretary of Defense William Cohen made special trips to Jakarta, Bangkok, and Seoul to cajole the governments of those countries to use increasingly scarce foreign exchange funds to pay the American fighter jets, missiles, warships, and other hardware the Pentagon had sold them before the economic collapse” (p. 6).

³³⁷Ronald, *History of Science and Technology*, 569. Ronald has also argued that by making qualitative improvements to modern weapons, Western nations are able to exact a high price. For instance, the U.S. B-2 stealth bomber costs in excess of \$2 billion in 1997, which is more than the total military budget of most countries of the world.

On a similar subject, Linda Robertson has noted that during World War I, the United States did not have an airplane or air force, “except in the American imagination.” However, it was “the dream of civilized warfare” that “gave birth to the dream that America could design, build, and fly the largest aerial armada in the world and use it to become the arbiter of war and peace.” Robertson, *The Dream of Civilized Warfare: World War I Flying Aces and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), ix.

the history of civilization,”³³⁸ and the potential lethality enhances the power of its possessor. Only those who have the capacity to build the most destructive ‘weapons of mass destruction’ have come to occupy the ‘nuclear powers’ status. For example, “the U.S. defense budget, at \$396.1 billion,” says Haley, “was larger than the combined defense budgets of next 26 countries – 19 times that of Germany, 9.4 times that of China, 6.6 times that of Russia, 283 times that of Iraq.”³³⁹

Most of these nuclear powers consist of erstwhile colonial countries that continue to impose their will on ‘formerly’ colonized nations.³⁴⁰ ‘World peace’ is then “maintained by the constant threat of war.”³⁴¹ Thus, by rendering “the natives militarily harmless,” the West continues to exert “an imperial privilege to monopolise force and demilitarise local communities.”³⁴² As a matter of fact, as Historian A.J.P. Taylor has argued, “the basic tenet for them as Great Powers [is] their ability to wage war.”³⁴³

Invention of magnetic compass and its role in colonization

The invention of the magnetic compass created optimism and euphoria among the advocates of progress. Writing in the 17th century on its utilitarian or missionary value, John Edwards proclaimed:

By the help of this Invention we have the Advantage of propagating the Gospel, and spreading the saving Knowledg of the True God, and of his Son Jesus Christ throughout the World. The Improvement of Navigation may be serviceable to this

³³⁸Hanson, *Carnage and Culture* (Westminster, MD: Doubleday Publishing, 2001), 5.

³³⁹Haley, *Strategies of Dominance*, 13.

³⁴⁰Rob de Wijk called these countries liberal democracies, “mainly Western democracies with democratic institutions and democratic values;” see *The Art of Military Coercion: Why the West’s Military Scarcely Matters* (Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt, 2005), 10.

³⁴¹Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, ix.

³⁴²Ali A. Mazrui, “Changing the Guards from Hindus to Muslims: Collective Third World Security in a Cultural Perspective,” *International Affairs* 57, no. 1 (Winter, 1980-1981): 1-2.

³⁴³Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 29.

great and excellent End; yea, we hope it is partly so already, the New Voyages and Discoveries being a happy Introduction to the Conversion of the Gentile.³⁴⁴

Theologians and religious writers alike “welcomed this divine endorsement of British commercial imperialization” and saw compasses as reminders of “the wisdom of God, and his wonderful Directions and Rule over all things.”³⁴⁵ Also, as the voyages to new territories brought increased wealth which in turn provided more leisure and time to engage in arts and other literary pursuits, it was held that the invention had “expedited the rate of progress and hastened the day when happiness and peace would reign on earth.”³⁴⁶

In the Naga Hills, one of the first colonial projects of the British government was to send survey parties with military expedition teams in order to construct roads or “the political path” as it was called. The extensive road construction made the conquest and occupation of the Naga Hills much easier as P.T. Carnegie noted in his annual report: “...road-making has opened out the hills to an extent not thought of in former days.”³⁴⁷

Although Europeans had learned about a magnetic tendency to point toward the geographic north early, the “compasses became important navigational aids during the sixteenth century.”³⁴⁸ And it was this maritime technology that made European

³⁴⁴John Edwards, *A Compleat History or Survey of all the Dispensations and Methods of Religion II* (London, 1694), 622-23, http://0-eebo.chadwyck.com.bianca.penlib.du.edu/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=V65397 (accessed June 21, 2007). Also quoted in Wolper, *Rhetoric of Gunpowder*, 596.

³⁴⁵Patricia Fara, *Sympathetic Attractions: Magnetic Practices, Beliefs, and Symbolism in the Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 69.

³⁴⁶Merry, *Sands of Empire*, 4.

³⁴⁷*Annual Administration Report of the Naga Hills Political Agency for 1876-77* (Calcutta: Printed at the Foreign Department Press, 1877), 19. Carnegie was Political Officer in charge, Naga Hills. To this day, Nagas continue to use and maintain the British constructed roads as their main ‘highways.’ Some of these roads were expanded during World War II by U.S. army engineers who built Ledo Road, also known as Stilwell Road, that connects Assam with Burma via the Naga Hills. See “Ledo Road,” *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of the U.S. Military*, 2001. *Encyclopedia.com*, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O63-LedoRoad.html> (accessed March 3, 2009).

³⁴⁸Patricia Fara, “Magnetism and Compass,” in *The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. J.L. Heilbron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 481.

expansions to other continents more efficient and rapid. Once new territories were found with the help of the compass, “the momentum of opening up the new land, of experimenting with the new plants and foods, the influence of precious metals, set up an expansion which affected the experience within the whole of society to a point of which the idea of progress could be widely accepted as reasonable.”³⁴⁹ As news of ‘discovery’ of new territories spread across Europe through the print media, the competition for new territories increased. This led the British government to embark on a costly project in its naval expansion in the 17th century as it realized that its ability to trade and defend and acquire overseas territories vitally depended on its naval power. Accordingly, “inventions improving naval power and safety promised a double reward of money and prestige,”³⁵⁰ eventually making Britain the most powerful maritime nation.³⁵¹

It is clear that the use of the compass and the West’s imperial expansion are inseparably intertwined. Patricia Fara has observed that “magnetic phenomena and overseas expansion were bound together in a two-way interaction.”³⁵² While philosophers and cartographers depended on explorers and surveyors to provide them with up-to-date information, the latter needed from the former effective magnetic instruments to safely arrive at and map new territories. It has been rightly said, “La boussole suit toujours le drapeau” (*The compass always follows the Flag*).³⁵³ So, if it is true that the compass played a significant role in maritime and marine travels for the empire, it is also equally true that scientific explorers or surveyors always accompanied the empire’s army.

³⁴⁹Pollard, *Idea of Progress*, 15.

³⁵⁰Fara, *Sympathetic Attractions*, 66.

³⁵¹*Ibid.*

³⁵²*Ibid.*, 91.

³⁵³Gary Dunbar, “‘The Compass Follows the Flag’: The French Scientific Mission to Mexico, 1864-1867,” *Annals of Association of American Geographers* 78, no. 2 (1988): 229.

“Likewise,” writes S.N. Sen, “the imperial needs of the East India Company for military, administrative and economic control of the sub-continent dictated the undertaking of an extensive programme of trigonometrical, topographical, hydrographic, geodetic and geographical surveys.”³⁵⁴ Writing in 1862, L.W. Shakespear, a former colonial army officer wrote, “The next few years saw much escort work to survey and exploration parties in different parts of the Naga Hills....”³⁵⁵ Indeed, so that “these expeditions should be made as useful as possible,” writes R.G. Woodthorpe, survey party always accompanied British military expedition to the Naga Hills. Woodthorpe who conducted such expeditions between 1873 and 1875 added, “We owe a great deal of our information, geographical, ethnological” to the “survey party.”³⁵⁶ The art of mapping not only enabled the British to conquer the Naga Hills, but also to divide and rule and then apportioned the Hills to India and Myanmar. More than half-century after the decolonization, the arbitrary fragmentation of the Naga Hills has been one of the deathliest colonial legacies that the Nagas are still dealing with. A British ‘forest officer’ who used “the relevant survey maps” to solve a boundary dispute with the Nagas wrote as follows:

As usual I went into the matter painstaking with the relevant survey maps and had the actual boundary, which had not been cleared for years, relaid with a theodolite....But when I put it to the Gaon Burras [village elders] and villagers in a meeting, they flatly refused to give it in. In turn they argued that the instrument could be pointed in any direction I wished – which completely flattened me! One old man seized his *dao* [machete] and demonstrated on his skinny throat how he would die rather than give up the land.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴Sen, “The Introduction of Western Science in India During the 18th and the 19th Century,” in *Science, Technology and Culture: A Study of the Cultural Traditions and Institutions of India and Ceylon in Relation to Science and Technology*, edited by Surajit Sinha (New Delhi: India International Center, 1970), 14.

³⁵⁵Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, 142.

³⁵⁶Woodthorpe, *Notes on Wild Tribes*, 57-58.

³⁵⁷Stacey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, 49.

According to Satpal Sangwan, surveys in India were conducted with two primary motives: conquest (building imperialism) and economic exploitation, and scientific surveys including topographic and route surveys facilitated these objectives. “Scientific surveys and imperial crusade thus moved simultaneously.”³⁵⁸ These survey records, argues Fara, were seldom considered to be scientifically neutral and were “closely linked with war, exploration, and trade.”³⁵⁹ Surveys remained crucial for the colonizers, because such activities were the means by which the colonized and their land are conquered, dominated, represented, mapped out, divided, possessed and ruled over.³⁶⁰

In reference to the role of the compass in colonization, Diamond has argued that “technology, in the form of weapons and transport, provides direct means by which certain peoples have expanded their realms and conquered other peoples.”³⁶¹ As an instrument of modern military technology for ‘civilized warfare,’ the compass metaphorically represents precision and laser guided annihilation, at least in theory; practically, however, any misguided obliteration becomes collateral damage.³⁶² Thus, the

³⁵⁸Sangwan, *Science, Technology and Colonialism: An Indian Experience – 1757-1857* (Delhi: Anamika Prakashan, 1991), 28.

³⁵⁹Fara, *Sympathetic Attractions*, 96.

³⁶⁰Veronica Strang has shown the contrasting ways by which Aboriginal people and Europeans map the landscape and concludes that “while European maps commoditize the land as an alienable resource, Aboriginal maps draw relationships between country and people.” She refers to Aboriginal method as “cultural mapping” that take into account “bush lore, traditional land uses, massacres, meeting-places and suchlike,” whereas European mapping employs technology that produces “explicit pictorial depictions of landscape.” Strang, *Uncommon Ground*, 233, 223.

³⁶¹Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 241.

³⁶²“Smart bombs,” which includes precision-guided and laser-guided bombs, have become widely used in the modern US warfare. For instance, Capt. Dave Mercer, commander of the Enterprise-based Carrier Air Wing 8, which dropped the first bombs of the war in Afghanistan, said, “We didn’t just drop bombs. We always had a precise aim point.” Eric Schmitt and James Dao, “Use of Pinpoint Air Power Comes of Age in New War,” *New York Times*, December 24, 2001.

compass represents accuracy of target and elimination, “including genes, the removal of military targets, and the removal of dissidents or unwanted people.”³⁶³

As a technology of travel, it was thought that “the magnetic compass had vanquished forever the perils of international voyage.”³⁶⁴ Fara observes that “practical magnetic expertise lay mainly in the maritime community, in the hands of men admired for their skill as they navigate the oceans to increase England’s trading wealth and international possessions.”³⁶⁵ It is apparent that the compass is representative of the beginning of economic integration at the center and the sociocultural and political disintegration of cultures on the periphery as this technology transformed modes and capacities for transportation and trade. It specifically allowed Europeans to gain access to new territories and resources and to transport these resources home as well as carry military and commercial supplies to newly established colonies.³⁶⁶ In the Naga Hills, the discovery of tea, in particular, motivated a number of British explorations which finally led to the colonization of Nagas. Tea cultivation, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, became a vital revenue generating project for the British in India.

Tinker has rightly marked 1492 as the year that “triggered the ‘Western World’ mythology that has come to dominate the entire globe’s economics, politics, and academics, imposing itself as the natural and unquestionable norm of human

³⁶³Turnbull and Ipwich, “Causal Layered Analysis,” 51.

³⁶⁴Fara, *Sympathetic Attractions*, 69.

³⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 6.

³⁶⁶Cesaire holds that colonialism is “about the looting of products, the looting of raw materials” from the colonized. See *Discourse on Colonialism*, 43. This commonly held view led Fanon to claim that “the wealth of the imperial countries is our wealth too” (p. 102), because “the [Euro-American] opulence is scandalous, for it has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the subsoil of that underdeveloped world. The well-being and the progress of [the West] have been built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races.” Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 96.

existence.”³⁶⁷ Latouche calls this process “westernization,” meaning “the worldwide standardization” of lifestyles and mind;³⁶⁸ also, it is called by some as “Eurocentric diffusionism.”³⁶⁹ That the achieving of “uniformity of lifestyles” and “standardizing of the mind”³⁷⁰ clearly remained the imperial goal is aptly represented by Perry’s view:

When it [i.e., ‘a sense of security never hitherto known’] arrives we shall remember with pride that British ships have carried the torch of law and liberty across the seas to the uttermost corners of the earth,...for the revealing of the world’s distant and hidden treasures, the discovery of her resources, the widening of human intercourse, the leveling up of culture, the overthrow of tyranny and savagery, and the spread of liberty, toleration, and justice. If this, as we believe, should be the verdict of history, the *Pax Britannica* will have given a noble chapter to the annals of human development.³⁷¹

“When applied to economics,” Hooker asserts, “[this view of] progress produces the capitalist theory of economic growth.”³⁷² Similarly, Merry concludes that globalization is one of the “variant strong strains of the Progress idea.”³⁷³ This “capitalist economic system” remains “the primary motivator of modern colonialism.”³⁷⁴ David Korten does not disagree when he draws the conclusion that “economic globalization is a

³⁶⁷Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, vii. Columbus employed the compass in guiding his first voyage: “Columbus noted on his first voyage that the compass changed its deviation from true north as he sailed across the Atlantic.” Bunch and Hellemans, *History of Science and Technology*, 150, 252.

³⁶⁸Serge Latouche, *The Westernization of the World: The Significance, Scope and Limits of the Drive Towards Global Uniformity*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996), 3. Latouche further argues that “the impetus of westernization is terrifying,” because it obliterates “even differences of gender” (p. 4).

³⁶⁹J.M. Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York; London: Guildford Press, 1993), 1. Blaut defines Eurocentric diffusionism as the belief that “the world has a permanent geographical center and a permanent periphery.”

³⁷⁰Latouche, *Westernization of the World*, 3.

³⁷¹Perry, *Pax Britannica*, 11.

³⁷²Hooker, *Progress* (<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/PROGRESS.HTM>).

³⁷³Merry, *Sands of Empire*, xiii. The notion of progress led to the Scottish Enlightenment in the 18th century when Adam Smith wrote his classic book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* that became the foundation for the modern western capitalist economy.

³⁷⁴Richard Franke, “The Effects of Colonialism and Neocolonialism on the Gastronomic Patterns of the Third World,” in *Food and Evolution: Toward a Theory of Human Food Habits*, ed. Marvin Harris and Eric Ross (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), 455.

modern form of...imperial phenomenon.”³⁷⁵ Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* lodged a strong protest on behalf of the economically deprived colonized people when he stated, “For centuries the capitalists have behaved in the underdeveloped world like nothing more than war criminals.”³⁷⁶

To sum up, the roles of printing, gunpowder and compass as facilitators of the projects of colonization are best summarized by Fuller when she wrote:

All these three technologies were instrumental in the European conquest of America: the compass got you there, the gun protected you and functioned as a kind of cultural magic, and printing allowed you to reproduce and disseminate what you had learned, in the form of maps, vocabularies, histories, and so on.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵Davod Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers; Bloomfield, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 2001), 36.

³⁷⁶Fanon, *Wretched of the earth*, 101.

³⁷⁷Fuller, *Voyages in Print*, 1.

CHAPTER THREE: BRITISH COLONIZATION OF NAGAS

*I make no apology for taking the welfare of primitive peoples as the principal theme in my address, since the problem is one with which we are all, as civilized persons, concerned, whether we call ourselves folk-lorists, anthropologists, government officials, missionaries, traders or merely ordinary "men in the street." We all share in the responsibilities arising from our assumption of the right to control the destinies of peoples in a backward state of culture. Our prestige is at stake.*³⁷⁸

Henry Balfour in his presidential address to the British Folklore Society, noted above, stated unambiguously that bringing progress or civilization to "primitive" people was not simply a responsibility but the white person's right as well. Balfour had just returned from a three month visit to the Naga Hills in 1922, and his address was replete with his concerns for the welfare of the "primitive" Nagas.³⁷⁹ One concern was "rescuing a very interesting people from inclusion in the category of 'dwindling populations' and 'moribund races.'"³⁸⁰ Then he reminded his fellow folklorists of their responsibility and

³⁷⁸Balfour, "Presidential Address," 13. Balfour (1863-1939) was the first curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum at the Oxford University.

³⁷⁹Because of its rugged terrain, the British government used the term "Naga Hills" to refer to the Naga inhabited areas. Historically, however, the Nagas also occupied (and still do) plain areas adjacent to Assam, which were annexed to the latter by the imperial government. This annexation, which will be discussed further later, is still the cause for border hostility between the Nagas and Assamese.

³⁸⁰Balfour, "Presidential Address," 21. Balfour's words echo those of Andrew Jackson, who said one hundred years earlier (1829), "[This] just and humane policy...recommended them [the Indians] to quit their possessions on this side of the Mississippi, and go to a country to the west where there is every probability that they will always be free from the mercenary influence of White men, and undisturbed by the local authority of the states: Under such circumstances the General Government can exercise a parental control over their interests and possibly perpetuate their race;" see Clyde Milner et al, ed., *The Oxford History of the American West* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 162.

challenged them saying, “Our conscientious aim is to raise the savage to a higher level... by evolution, not by revolution.”³⁸¹

In this chapter, I will argue that the invasion of the British with the intent to raise “the savage to a higher level” not only caused direct confrontation between the Nagas and the British, but also generated an atmosphere of hostility among the Nagas themselves and between the Nagas and their neighbors. The resulting violence then led the British the excuse to undertake a campaign to pacify the ‘wild’ Nagas. When the Nagas had suffered enormous losses in lives and property and realized that their continuing the war would only bring more suffering, resistance ceased and they submitted, which moved the British to claim that they had pacified the wild and violent ‘headhunters.’³⁸²

The imperial invasion

British invaders understood themselves as agents of progress and thought imperial pacification as essential to promoting progress. As such, any native resistance was seen as ‘barbaric’ violence and an obstacle to advance progress. This has been true not only to the Naga experience but also other colonized peoples, because the dominant culture has always adopted violence as a means of promoting ‘peace’ and ‘progress’. In the pacification of the Bororo Indians in Brazil, the Military Chief Candido Randon “saw the military as the ‘most direct element of progress’...”³⁸³ Similarly, during the

³⁸¹Ibid., 17.

³⁸²A modern British travel agency in London, in an effort to attract tourists to visit Nagaland, describes the Nagas on its website as exemplifying “an exotic society: renowned for their savage resistance to British rule and for their practice of head-taking.” Obviously, this colonial image of Nagas as savage and wild has persisted long after the British Empire has crumbled. See “Nagas and Nature: North East India,” <http://www.the-traveller.co.uk/tourdetails.aspx?tourid=172> (accessed June 3, 2007).

³⁸³Hal Langfur, “Myths of Pacification: Brazilian frontier settlement and the subjugation of the Bororo Indians,” *Journal of Social History* (Summer 1999), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_4_32/ai_55084003/pg_4 (accessed Sept. 15, 2008).

decolonization of Algeria, France saw Algerian ‘terrorism’ as “the principal obstacle to progress” and strongly believed that “pacification preceded progress.”³⁸⁴ Robert Francis Engs also argued that in the postbellum South, the African American experience shows that “pacification and long-term military oversight of black rights were essential to progress....”³⁸⁵ So, the attempt to pacify the ‘wild’ Nagas needs to be critically examined in the light of the notion that pacification was necessary for progress.

In pre-colonized time, conflict did occur among Naga villages, but suzerainty over another village remained minimal and political control amounted to little more than the occasional receipt of tributes or a day’s labor. Economic and administrative integration was unknown. However, the invasion of the British completely changed this traditional scenario. The British invaded and subsequently occupied the Naga Hills for more than a century causing a profoundly traumatic impact on the Nagas. The British occupation of the Naga Hills marked the presence of an imperial power hitherto unforeseen and unimagined in the life of the Nagas. John Butler agreed that the Nagas “had hitherto never encountered a foe equal to contend with them, and in utter ignorance of the effect of fire-arms, they vainly imagined that no party could penetrate through their territory.”³⁸⁶

The English desire to pacify the ‘wild Naga tribes’ necessarily spawned antagonism and violent contact between the British forces and the Nagas, and the British

³⁸⁴James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 58.

³⁸⁵Engs, “The Missing Catalyst: In Response to Essays on Reconstructions That Might Have Been,” *Civil War History* 51, no. 4 (December 2005): 428. Similarly, today, ‘progress’ in Iraq and Afghanistan is believed to hinge on the neutralisation of the ‘insurgency’ and the pacification of the larger restless local populations, and the violent resistance by the local people is interpreted as the main obstacle to the ‘progress’ of Iraq and Afghanistan.

³⁸⁶Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (Delhi: Vivek Publishing Co., 1978), 103-04. Butler is referring here to the first encounter between the Nagas and the British in 1832.

administrators were convinced that the Nagas were themselves responsible for the ‘punitive expeditions’ directed against them. A colonial administrator observed, “It should first be premised that for the annexation of their territory the Nagas are themselves responsible....It was impossible for any civilized power to acquiesce in the perpetual harrying of its border folk.”³⁸⁷ Resonating with this Naga experience, Tinker has aptly pointed out with regard to the colonization of the Native Americans that “when an excuse was needed to legitimize the conquest, including the murders and theft that accompanied it, the aboriginal owners of the land were accused of engaging in uncivilized savagery.”³⁸⁸ In a similar vein, Laura Kunreuther has rightly argued that for the colonizer banning such “uncivilized savagery” was necessary “in order to create ‘full humans.’” She noted as follows:

it is precisely invocations of violence against another...that allowed colonials to distinguish themselves from the people they conquered, to argue that certain people were *not* fully human due to their ‘barbaric’ capacity for violent acts, and for some Europeans to envision the colonial project as a humane and civilizing endeavor.³⁸⁹

It needs to be mentioned that the hills had always been coveted by the British colonizers and that most so-called “British Governor-Generals” in India “have favoured the occupation of the hills,”³⁹⁰ because the plains were “hot, unhealthy, and hurtful to English constitutions.”³⁹¹ So “from the burning plains eager eyes have turned to the

³⁸⁷B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteer* (1906); quoted in Gundevia, *War and Peace in Nagaland* (New Delhi: Palit and Palit, 1975), 29.

³⁸⁸Tinker, “American Indians and Liberation: Harmony and Balance,” in *The Hope of Liberation in World Traditions*, ed. Miguel de la Torre (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

³⁸⁹Kunreuther, “‘Pacification of the Primitive’: The Problem of Colonial Violence,” *Philosophia Africana* 9 no. 2 (August 2006): 70.

³⁹⁰Hyde Clarke, “English Settlement,” *Society of Arts Journal* (19th May, 1858): 423. “The hills” here does not exclusively refer to the Naga Hills, but to the tribal inhabited areas in India in general.

³⁹¹Hyde Clarke, “The English Stations in the Hill Regions of India: Their Value and Importance, with Some Statistics of their Products and Trade,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 44, no. 3. (September 1881): 529.

hills,” because “in the hills we have cool and cold lands, with our own climates, our own fruits ripening, and children of our own blood thriving.”³⁹² However, “the war alone has stopped the influx of Europeans” in the hills.³⁹³ The English man who led the first attack on the Nagas wrote in his letter to one of his superiors:

I conceive that by a proper cooperation with that gentleman [i.e., Miles Bronson, the first missionary to the Nagas in what is now Arunachal Pradesh] and the encouragement of the Nagas to cultivate the products of their hills and the tea in particular, we may hope ere long to see civilization greatly advanced among these Nagas, and our supremacy gradually extended over the hills, without which...there seem to be little hope of effecting any great change in the habits of the people, or of our being able to avail ourselves of the great natural resources of the fine tract of mountainous country.³⁹⁴

And so in what Chaube has referred to as an outline of “the ‘manifest destiny’ of British in north-east India,” from the very beginning “fate seems determined to prove that there shall be no rest for English in India till they stand forth as the governors or advisors of each tribe and people in the land.”³⁹⁵

As for the raids carried out by Nagas on the plains, a variety of reasons has been mentioned. First, likely the most off-cited reason was Nagas’ ‘penchant’ for raiding due to their predatory, warlike and restless character. This belief was nearly universal among the British. Second, S.K. Barpujari has noted that the British and Manipuri incursions into the Naga Hills enraged the Angami Nagas who launched their vengeful foray into defenseless North Cachar.³⁹⁶ Third, Jenkins believed that the Kacharis’ attempt to subject the Nagas to slavery and for the possession of the salt-springs at Semkhor generated the

³⁹²Ibid.

³⁹³Ibid., 530.

³⁹⁴Quoted in H. K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India (1836-1900 A.D.): A Documentary Study* (Guwahati; Delhi: Spectrum Publications, 1986), 256.

³⁹⁵Quoted in *Hill Politics*, 369.

³⁹⁶Barpujari, *The Nagas*, 12.

spirit of revenge and retaliation.³⁹⁷ Fourth, another colonial officer held the opinion that the shortage of food supplies in the hills compelled the Nagas to venture onto the plains to obtain food, using force sometimes. Fifth, H.K. Barpujari has argued that the plains peoples' association, collusion and cooperation with the British in the invasion of the Naga Hills incited retaliatory raids.³⁹⁸ More importantly, the British colonization caused socio-political disruption, polarization and militarization of this ethnically diverse region known today as Northeast India.³⁹⁹ The allegation that Naga raids increased significantly must therefore be critically examined and engaged accordingly.

The British-Naga Encounter

Between 1832 and 1850 the British undertook ten military “expeditions” (i.e., invasions) into Naga territories, which inflicted considerable damage and suffering on the people.⁴⁰⁰ The Nagas first experienced Western military invasion and its violence in 1832 when British troops led by two British officers entered their land.⁴⁰¹ Alexander Mackenzie wrote that the two “led 700 Manipuri troops with 800 coolies [porters] from the Manipur valley” moved to the Naga Hills and “had literally to fight their way through

³⁹⁷Ibid., 13.

³⁹⁸Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier*, vol. 1 (Guwahati: Lawyer's Book Stall, 1970), 143.

³⁹⁹Northeast India refers to the seven northeastern states of India, which are Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Recently, Sikkim, a former Buddhist Kingdom that was annexed by India in April 1975, has come to be included in this group. The Northeast is inhabited mostly by tribal peoples who often feel alienated from the rest of India because of the poor treatment they receive.

⁴⁰⁰British writers have always used the word ‘expedition’ rather than ‘conquest’ or ‘invasion’ in reference military incursions in the Naga Hills; unfortunately, most Naga writers, likewise, use the same term.

⁴⁰¹Johnstone, *My Experiences in Manipur and the Naga Hills* (Elibron Classics, 2006), 22. The invasion was led by Francis Jenkins and Robert Pemberton.

the whole of Kutcha [Zeliangrong] and Angami Naga country.”⁴⁰² It is alleged that this first contact between the Nagas and British was initiated by the latter’s desire to create a communication route between their administrative offices in Manipur in the southeast and Assam on the northwest of the Naga Hills.⁴⁰³ It needs to be underscored, however, that Jenkins was asked by William Bentinck to explore and assess the Northeast region including adjacent hills in Burma, which led to extensive tea cultivation in the region later.⁴⁰⁴ Jenkins was later awarded a gold medal by the Agricultural Society of Calcutta for his role in promoting and developing tea.⁴⁰⁵

The fierce Naga resistance was due in part to British ignorance of indigenous protocol when passing through a village or using another’s lateral communication route. Traditional Naga community protocol required any group to send a messenger ahead to request and obtain permission to pass through the territory of another group.⁴⁰⁶ No group that intends to simply pass through is harassed or refused. As a practice of hospitality to anyone passing through, a village would set up fire on the outskirts of the village and keep it burning day and night so that any stranger passing through might make use of it.

In the winter of 1832-33, “Raja [King] Gumbheer Singh of Manipur, accompanied by Manipur Levy under Mr. Gordon, again marched through to Assam by a

⁴⁰²Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, repr. ed. (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1979 [originally published in 1884 as *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*]), 101.

⁴⁰³*Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴Bentinck served as the ‘Governor-General of India’ between 1828-1835. See Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontiers of British India; Manipur, Assam, Araccan, &c* (44th N.I., Calcutta, 1836); Pemberton accompanied Jenkins in the first invasion of the Nagas.

⁴⁰⁵Tanka Bahadur Subba and G. C. Ghosh, *The Anthropology of North-East India: A Textbook* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003), 62-3.

⁴⁰⁶Mary Clark has noted this practice among the Ao Nagas. See Clark, *A Corner in India*, 99.

route a few miles to the east of Jenkins' track."⁴⁰⁷ As a result of this military alliance, Jenkins promised to give to Singh "all the hills between the Doyeng and Dhunsiri."⁴⁰⁸ So, in 1835 a colonial administrative map was redrawn and the Naga Hills 'disappeared' as "the forest between the Doyeng and the Dhunrisi was declared to be the boundary between Manipur and Assam,"⁴⁰⁹ essentially dividing the Naga Hills and giving it to the rulers of Manipur and Assam.

Between 1839 and 1850 a series of eight military expeditions was launched into the Hills, this time all from Assam. However, the Naga reaction to the earliest military expeditions was not hostile. Reporting on the English impression of the "first notice of Nagas, 1835," Mackenzie wrote as follows:

The first impression among our local officers was that we had now in this quarter to reckon upon frequent incursions by Nagas as well as by hostile Singphos and Burmese; and orders were given by Government to retaliate sharply and severely upon all villages concerned in such outrages. But it was shortly afterwards discovered that these Nagas were themselves most peaceably inclined, and that if any of our villages had been attacked by them, it was only in mistaken retaliation for wrongs done to the Naga tribes by Singphos either of Assam or Burma.⁴¹⁰

Correspondingly, writing on the Angami Nagas, who ferociously fought against the British invasion later, Moffat Mills conceded that "the Angamee Nagas are not a dangerous class, though warlike, that is, they do not go forth to conquer other Districts, to colonize and retain them."⁴¹¹ Mills, however, mentioned the practice among the Angami Nagas of "predatory cruel inroads for plunder, and to capture slaves to be redeemed,"⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁷Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 101.

⁴⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 102. The two rivers mentioned by Mackenzie are the largest rivers that run through what is known today as the state of Nagaland.

⁴⁰⁹*Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰*Ibid.*, 88.

⁴¹¹Mills, *Report On Assam*, clxii; from Mills' (Judge of Sudder Courton deputation) letter, dated 24th July 1853, to the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Cecil Beadon, Esquire.

⁴¹²*Ibid.*

which I will argue later is the result of the social and political polarization caused by British colonization of the region. Similarly, regarding the first expedition from Assam, Mackenzie reported, “Several of the independent Naga villages received Mr. Grange in a friendly spirit.”⁴¹³ Following his 1845 expedition, John Butler, too, reported: “We were treated with great civility, and invited into their houses.”⁴¹⁴

However, this congenial and peaceable response of Nagas towards the invaders gradually shifted as the Nagas discovered the true intent of Britain’s presence in their country. Several factors contributed to this eventual hostility against the British. I will identify a few of them. First, from the very outset the British administration had their eyes on the Hills’ natural resources. In 1844, John Owen observed that the Nagas were beginning to realize that the ostensible British desire to wander “into their forests in search of the [tea] plant is a mere pretext to see their country, and if found to be plentifully supplied with valuable productions that appropriation will follow.”⁴¹⁵

Second, British military adopted extreme measures against the Nagas in order to enforce the law of *Pax Britannica*. For example, a British officer, who led one of the earliest attacks on the Nagas, wrote, “...after halting two days, and not being able to get them [Nagas] give rice, a village...was burned to the ground, and notice was sent to other clans that, if they did not come in, their villages would share the same fate.”⁴¹⁶ As a result of the burning, early the next morning “an ample supply of rice was then brought in for

⁴¹³Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier*, 104. Grange led the first attacked from Assam.

⁴¹⁴Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 41.

⁴¹⁵Owen, *Notes on the Nagas Tribes, in communication with Assam* (Calcutta, 1844), 49; also see *India’s North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Verrier Elwin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 56.

⁴¹⁶Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 207.

the troops” by neighboring villagers; he then expressed his satisfaction because the burning of the village “had the desired effect.”⁴¹⁷

Third, extraction of revenue, both cash and kind, and the requisition of unpaid labor from the Nagas by the invaders generated resentment and violent reactions. Mackenzie wrote, “In April 1844...when an Assistant was sent up to collect the first year’s tribute, the Chiefs defied him and absolutely refused to pay. They followed this up by a series of daring raids, in one of which they overpowered a Shan out-post and killed most of the sepoys [soldiers].”⁴¹⁸ Similarly, another colonial officer wrote, “He [a Naga] said we had come here and occupied land, we had cut down their trees, bamboos, and grass, we wanted revenue from them and made them furnish coolies [labor].”⁴¹⁹

The accumulative effect of these experiences motivated intense fighting against every expedition, particularly the latter ones which hindered the quick take-over of the Naga Hills. The protracted campaign to bring the Nagas to submission led to intense frustration for the colonial administration. In 1849, the British Council in India sent a letter to Jenkins, who was charged with the invasion, and expressed frustration with the slowness in subduing the Nagas. The letter read: “The President in the Council has learnt with much regret the failure of the endeavour which has been so long and perseveringly made to induce the Naga tribes....” The letter authorized Jenkins to adopt “the most stringent and decisive measures in regard to these barbarous tribes...” and added that the

⁴¹⁷Ibid.

⁴¹⁸Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier*, 108.

⁴¹⁹“Cawley to Johnson 28 October 1878” in Barpujari, *The Nagas*, 115.

president was “willing to leave a very wide discretion in [Jenkins’] hands as to steps to be taken during the approaching cold season.”⁴²⁰

The war against the Nagas dragged on and sustaining the effort became more and more difficult for the invaders. Expressing deep frustration over the situation, a colonial officer reported, “Our own population of Mikirs being very scanty, we shall be unable to continue to employ them in conducting expeditions into the Angami Naga Hills, for rather than submit to this service, I am persuaded they will leave the district, or be utterly ruined from not being able to do their cultivation.”⁴²¹ Mackenzie reported similar concerns because the Manipuri “troops got no pay and had to live on the plunder of the villages they occupied.”⁴²²

The protracted war had its effect on tea plantation as well. The military expedition “had a disturbing effect on the communications between Calcutta and the [tea] planters” as steamboats belonging to tea companies were requisitioned for Government service in ferrying military supplies and “very few of the civilians’ stores found their way up the river; those that did were badly treated.”⁴²³ It was also reported that “the withdrawal of elephants to Government service, animals which at the time were indispensable in many ways, especially for garden work” added a heavy loss to tea companies.⁴²⁴ Expressing frustration with the supposedly badly managed military expeditions, it was hoped that

when another scrimmage—a mere question of time—takes place, the planters, who would be well able with a little assistance to manage an affair of this kind at about one-tenth of the former cost, will be taken into the Government confidence, or entrusted with the total extermination of the Nagas.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁰Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 110-11.

⁴²¹Mills, *Report on Assam*, clix.

⁴²²Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 103.

⁴²³George Barker, *A Tea Planter: Life in Assam* (Thacker, Spink & Co, 1884), 67.

⁴²⁴*Ibid.*

⁴²⁵*Ibid.*, 68.

Unable to sustain the intensity of a military conquest or to foresee the likelihood of subjecting the Nagas to British imperial law any time soon the overt military attacks on the Nagas ceased in 1851. Mr. Dalhousie wrote, "I dissent entirely from the policy which is recommended of what is called obtaining a control, that is to say, of taking possession of the hills, and of establishing our sovereignty over their savage inhabitants."⁴²⁶ "Our possession" he added, "could bring no profit to us and it would be unproductive." So, with the failure of the policy of "absolute conquest," "a policy of absolute non-interference - a withdrawal from all intimate relations with incorrigible savages" was adopted in February 1851.⁴²⁷

Despite this new policy, the Nagas continued to harass and raid the British installations on the plains and in the foothills. It was reported that, "from 1854 to 1865 there had been nineteen Angami raids, in which 232 British subjects had been killed, wounded, or carried off."⁴²⁸ In response the colonial administration reconsidered the existing policy and proposed a change. In 1862, a colonial report read as follows:

It is not credible to our Government that such atrocities should recur annually with unvarying certainty, and that we should be powerless alike to protect our subjects or to punish the aggressors. It is quite certain that our relations with the Nagas could not possibly be on a worse footing than they are now. The non-interference policy is excellent in theory, but Government will probably be inclined to think that it must be abandoned.⁴²⁹

Despite intense policy discussions, the administration remained averse to taking a more direct military action. This was, in part, because, "it could only be done at great

⁴²⁶Dalhousie, "Minutes as Regard to the Relations to be Maintained with the Angami Nagas," 20 February, 1851. Dalhousie was the 'Governor General of India' during this time.

⁴²⁷Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 369.

⁴²⁸*Ibid.*, 118.

⁴²⁹*Ibid.*, 116.

expense, and would require a strong force to hold it.”⁴³⁰ Gradual and indirect measures of occupation were adopted including the gradual establishment of administrative posts in the Naga Hills by annexing the smaller and ‘friendly’ Naga villages with the promise of protecting them from larger villages. The colonial administration also introduced a policy that required the Nagas to lay down their spears and daos (a Naga machete) before entering its administered region for the purpose of trade with the plains people. A combination of these direct and indirect measures finally led to the establishment of Kohima, the present-day capital of Nagaland, as the British headquarters for the Naga Hills. However, a big part of the Naga inhabited region in the east, adjacent to Burma, remained what the British administration termed “unadministered.” Despite an attempt to do so, the British never succeeded to occupy parts of the unadministered region.

After resisting the colonizer for decades, the Nagas came to realize that to continue to resist and struggle would mean even more suffering, and they began to submit to the imperial force. As a result, the situation in the Hills remained calm and the British administration found it necessary to send only one expeditionary team in fourteen years.⁴³¹ Describing the state of the affair in the 1880s, Mackenzie wrote:

The attitude of the tribes...was one of partly exhaustion and partly of expectancy. The indirect results of the war were far more grievous to them than the actual hostilities; and those on whom the blow had fallen hoped, by quiet and peaceable demeanour, to earn some relaxation in the stringency of the conditions to which they were bound. Accordingly, throughout the year there was little or no crime, no outbreak, and no necessity to employ force.⁴³²

Shakespeare wrote that a British military expedition in 1888-9 in the northeastern part of the Naga Hills had “good after effects, for that part of the country enjoyed an

⁴³⁰Ibid., 113.

⁴³¹Barpujari, *The Nagas*, 35.

⁴³²Ibid., 141.

immunity from raids for many years.”⁴³³ He also stated that during two years (1905 and 1906), except for a couple of tours for exacting fines for committing minor offenses on the border between what is now Burma and India, the situation remained calm.⁴³⁴ By 1923, “[t]he permanent posts held in the Naga hills [i.e., in the northeastern region] by the Battalion were now only two, viz. Mokokchang and Kongan, such being the quiet, contented condition existing in this area....”⁴³⁵

The mission to pacify the Nagas or, in the words of Chinua Achebe, the “pacification of the primitive”⁴³⁶ caused decades of suffering and loss for the Nagas. Indeed, Baruah described it as “one of the most violent chapters in the history of British conquest of the sub-continent.”⁴³⁷ In nearly every expedition, the British troops would attack villages, set fire to houses, kill any Nagas who resisted and force the survivors to flee into the forest.⁴³⁸ On the plight of the Nagas during the years of successive military expeditions, Birendra Chandra Chakravorty observed that “the Nagas suffered much, being reduced to homeless wanderers, and living in impoverished huts in jungles infested with ferocious beasts.” The result was “unprecedented sickness and mortality among them, and a severe strain upon the resources of those who had had to supply them with foodstuffs.”⁴³⁹

English writers also remarked on the acts of brutality meted out to the Nagas. Commenting on the fate of one Naga village, a colonial officer, who led two expeditions

⁴³³Shakespeare, *History of the Assam Rifles*, 169.

⁴³⁴*Ibid.*, 188.

⁴³⁵*Ibid.*, 199.

⁴³⁶“Pacification of the Primitive” comes from the last line of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1959).

⁴³⁷Baruah, *Durable Disorder*, 104.

⁴³⁸For an extended account of successive British incursions during this period, see Butler, *Travels and Adventures*; also see Changkiri, *The Angami Nagas and the British*.

⁴³⁹Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes*, 100.

in 1844-45, reported that all the houses of those Nagas in Khonoma who refused to relocate to Mezoma were burned down.⁴⁴⁰ In January 1866, Mackenzie also wrote, “Rezepemah [Razhuphema] was leveled to the ground; its lands declared barren and desolate for ever; and its people, on their making complete submission, were distributed throughout other communities.”⁴⁴¹ This practice was the rule, not an exception, as can be extrapolated from another written record:

Generally, those villages which took part against us were punished by fines in grain and cash and a certain amount of unpaid labour...and those who stood out against us and had to be attacked were in most instances punished by the demolition of their village, and in some instances by a removal of the site from a fortified and inaccessible crest to a position more easily accessible. The village of Konemah [i.e., Khonoma] suffered, in addition, the confiscation of its terraced cultivation and the dispersion of its clans among other villages.⁴⁴²

For Nagas, whose meaningful existence is inseparably tied to ancestral land and place of birth, to be uprooted from such a place has multiple profound emotional and psychological effects.⁴⁴³ Wati Longchar argued that “if the land is lost, the clan’s identity too will be lost.”⁴⁴⁴ The practice of forced resettlement amounts to cultural genocide or ethnocide, because geographical dislocation precipitates the dissolution of cultural memories, history and traditions. For example, consequent upon the British dispersal of Khonoma people, several clans of Khonoma Village are now dispersed and found among three different tribes – Mao, Zeliangrong and Angami.⁴⁴⁵ Although the men and women

⁴⁴⁰Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 190.

⁴⁴¹Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 121.

⁴⁴²Elwin, *Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, 190; also see Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 190.

⁴⁴³To this day, most Nagas who have moved out of their village and taken residency in urban areas continue to maintain strong attachment to their native village, known as *kepfugha nu* (village [*nu*] of birth [*kepfugha*]) and will pay a visit at least once a year to renew their relationship with the land and fellow village folks. Those who are able financially bring from the city gifts or provide feasts during the celebration of Christmas.

⁴⁴⁴Longchar, *The Tribal Religious Traditions*, 118.

⁴⁴⁵Niu Whiso, interviewed by the writer, December 12, 2007.

of these clans continue to adapt and exist under their respective family names, they no longer share the language and history of origin.

Colonization and social polarization

In addition to the direct military invasion that inevitably caused violence and militarized Northeast India, there are several factors that contributed significantly to social tensions in the region, especially involving the Nagas. One major contributing factor was the establishment of British tea plantations, which I will discuss more elaborately in a short while. For now, I will address in brief some of the contributing factors that relate to the Nagas.

1. Strategy of divide and rule:

The so-called “Northeast” region is the space in which Indo-Chinese cultures and/or races meet. It is known for its ethnic and religious diversity. However, that does not mean the ethnically distinct peoples of the region remained unconnected to one another. Julian Jacobs observed that “the people of the Hills and of the Plains or Valleys are radically different but have always been interconnected.”⁴⁴⁶ Assamese scholar Sanjib Baruah expands the observation by noting that “in the period immediately after the colonial conquest, British administrators not only understood the ties between the Nagas [people of the hills] and the Assamese [people of the plains] but even made use of those ties for their own purposes.”⁴⁴⁷

In the project to subjugate the Nagas, the British administration took advantage of the ethnic differences when it enlisted the help of Naga neighbors to invade the Naga

⁴⁴⁶Jacobs, *The Nagas: Society, Culture and the Colonial Encounter* (London: Thames and Hodson, 1990), 9.

⁴⁴⁷Baruah, *India Against Itself*, 31.

Hills. The Manipuris, Kacharis, Kukis and Assamese were employed for colonial purposes as soldiers but also as porters. In the first attack on the Nagas, 700 Manipuri troops and 800 porters/carriers accompanied Jenkins and Pemberton.⁴⁴⁸ With an object of launching their second invasion of the Naga Hills (the first from Assam), an “auxiliary force” comprising 200 Kacharis was formed and an attack was initiated soon after.⁴⁴⁹

Following the invasion, the rulers of the Kacharis and the Manipuris were directed to exercise administrative control over the Nagas as British representatives, which only exacerbated existing tensions. Mackenzie claimed that “the only effect of Manipuri occupation had been to exasperate the [Naga] tribes” and “to bring down the hillmen upon our villages in force as soon as the Manipuris had withdrawn.”⁴⁵⁰ Regarding the attack and decimation of a Naga village in 1879, one English writer wrote, “...he [Johnstone] dispatched a strong detachment of Manipuri and Kuki troops, who surprised and destroyed Phesama, killing over 200 Nagas.”⁴⁵¹ The lower ranks of the British occupying forces were filled primarily by “hill natives,”⁴⁵² who served the military purposes of the British. So, as colonial agents the ‘hill natives’ were seen as the enemies of Nagas.

⁴⁴⁸Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 101.

⁴⁴⁹Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East frontier*, 173.

⁴⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁵¹Shakespeare, *History of the Assam Rifles*, 150.

⁴⁵²Clarke, “The English Stations in the Hill Regions,” 530. After the failure of ‘absolute conquest,’ the British attempted to recruit Nagas as soldiers. This was one of the strategies adopted for pacifying the Nagas, but it failed as the Nagas would abandon the service in a short time. So the British army was mostly made up of the Manipuris, Kukis, Kacharis, Mikiris and Assamese. Latter, Nepali immigrants were brought in to serve as well.

2. Resettlement and provision of weapons:

A.J. Moffat Mills reported that “in 1835 our hill villages in North Cachar were found to be constantly suffering from Naga exactions and raids.”⁴⁵³ This is the same region where the British Government had earlier settled non-Nagas to create a buffer zone. With reference to this same region, Chaube wrote, “As an antidote to those intransigent Nagas, several Kukis were settled in North Cachar with arms and rent-free land, thus making use of the traditional Kuki-Naga feud for political purpose.”⁴⁵⁴ In what is known as “Colonel McCulloch’s policy,” the British gave “legal rights” to the Kukis to settle “on exposed frontiers” of the Naga Hills.⁴⁵⁵ With reference to the Kuki settlement, James Johnstone wrote,

Colonel McCulloch’s policy of planting Kuki settlements on exposed frontiers, induced the Government of Bengal to try a similar experiment, and a large colony of Kukis were settled in 1855 in the neighbourhood of Langting, to act as a barrier for North Cachar against the raids of the Angami Nagas.⁴⁵⁶

This strategy of relocating non-Nagas to inhabit Naga ancestral land clearly indicates how the British administration used the rich ethnic diversity in the region to its advantage by setting up the different groups to a position of confrontation. By creating an atmosphere of polarization, the British were then able to foster its policy of ‘divide and rule.’ Therefore, it is obvious that “places [and people] are managed and controlled by ‘strategies’.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³Mills, *Report On Assam*, 103.

⁴⁵⁴Chaube, *Hill Politics*, 7.

⁴⁵⁵Luingam Luithui and Nadita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1984), 17.

⁴⁵⁶The Kukis are one of the tribes in Northeast India, described by Johnstone as “a wandering race’ and “braver men” than the Nagas. See Johnstone, *Manipur and the Naga Hills*, 26, 27.

⁴⁵⁷Pat Dudgeon and John Fielder, “Third Spaces within Tertiary Places: Indigenous Australian Studies,” *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 16 (2006): 399.

The same inhabitants of North Kachar who were reported “to be constantly suffering from Naga exactions and raids” were now found to be “constantly embroiling the Nagas in their quarrel one with another.”⁴⁵⁸ Browne-Wood reported in 1844 that “they [the inhabitants of Kachar] go armed with muskets, consequently have very great advantage over the unfortunate Nagas.” Here we can observe the shift of power that comes with having European connection and the introduction of gun. Because of their closeness to the center of power (i.e., the British administration), both geographically and politically, the Kacharis had the favor of power shifted towards them very swiftly. They could then utilize the power derived from their connection with the British and musket-power to dominate and exploit the Nagas. Likewise, Mackenzie also reported that “muskets were given to Borpathor men [by the British] to defend themselves in case of future attack” from the Lotha Nagas.⁴⁵⁹

To divide and rule, those who are loyal and willing to submit are rewarded. As one colonial officer wrote, “Thus they [those subservient hill tribes] are induced to value the English alliance, and are trained up as good subjects.”⁴⁶⁰ It is obvious that taking away a part of land from one group and resettling it with another caused conflict. Then, in order to quell the conflict guns were supplied to one group, thereby creating an imbalance of power and exacerbating the hostility and violence in the region. Finally, a suppressed and uneasy peace is then created by the imbalance of force, the effect of which is being born by or remains unresolved among the native peoples of the region to this day.

⁴⁵⁸Browne-Wood is quoted in Elwin, *Nagas in Nineteenth Century*, 237-8.

⁴⁵⁹Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 96.

⁴⁶⁰Clarke, “The English Stations in the Hill Regions,” 531.

3. Forcible land appropriation:

Forcible land appropriation for tea plantations as well as housing for the plantation workers on the ancestral Naga lands represented a blatant and unforgivable insult to the Nagas. For the Nagas, earth, land and soil are one and the same, all designated by the same word – ‘ayi’. As it is for many other indigenous peoples, *ayi* is considered Mother earth that sustains all life. According to Singthang, Rengma Nagas believed that *ayi* (the earth) is female and *atsang* (the sky) is male, and they complement each other in the nurturing of life on earth.⁴⁶¹ *Ayi* is sacred not only because it is handed down and entrusted to the living by the ancestors, but also it is the ‘mother’ that provided sustenance to one’s ancestors.

Also, it is believed that a person is embraced or wrapped around twice by *ayi* – once when a person’s umbilical cord is buried at birth and in death when a person is embraced again in burial.⁴⁶² In death, the mother earth that sustains life also receives back and treasures the very life it once fed and nurtured. Their deep sense of connection with *ayi* also can be seen in their attitude towards it. For example, just before drinking *azü* (a traditional drink), while holding the cup and saying a prayer, a few drops of *azü* is dispensed on the ground as a gesture of giving back to or sharing with its provider. Also, when a person arrives in an unfamiliar wilderness, dust is picked up from the ground and spread over oneself as prayers are uttered. This is a gesture of ‘introducing’ oneself to or becoming familiar or one with *ayi* in an unfamiliar place; for it is believed that unfamiliarity with *ayi* (land) could bring sudden illness or death.

⁴⁶¹Senthang Kath, interviewed by the author, December 9, 2007. ‘*Ayi*’ is a Rengma Naga word.

⁴⁶²Not all Nagas buried their dead. Some exposed the dead body to the Sun. I will discuss this practice further later with respect to ‘headhunting’.

Furthermore, it is deeply personal because one's history and identity exude or originate from what one does with the land. Longchar argued that the traditional Nagas "do not make a sharp distinction between the land, history and time."⁴⁶³ Important events are remembered around activities done on a parcel or particular piece of family-owned land. Traditional Nagas do not conceptualize and count years in term of lineal numbering. Therefore, a person's age, date of birth or moment of death is remembered around significant events or cyclical agricultural activities done on family-owned lands. So a parent would say to a child, "You were born in the summer of the year our family cultivated the parcel of land at *Atsangtong*."⁴⁶⁴ Or one might be told, "Your brother was killed by the British the year our family cultivated the family field in such or such region."

In this sense, therefore, the land is not only sacred, but is also exceedingly personal and essential to both personal and community identity. A discussion around a family land divulges family history and narratives and connects one's very existence and history to that piece of land. The sale of land was and is almost unknown. On occasion, a parcel of land would be forcibly taken away by a more powerful village or as compensation for a very serious crime. When one's ancestral land is forcibly taken away, a natural response is fierce resistance which often leads to blood-shed or war. Any critical examination of the escalation of hostility between the Nagas and their neighbors,

⁴⁶³Longchar, *Doing Theology*, 122.

⁴⁶⁴*Atsangtong* is a name given to a particular region among the Rengma Nagas of Nsunyu village. The land surrounding a village is divided into different regions and given names, and the cycle of cultivation is rotated. While some tribes combine terrace cultivation with swidden or shifting cultivation, most Nagas practice the later form of cultivation.

including the increase of ‘headhunting’ raids by Nagas on the plains must proceed from this context.

4. Pitting Nagas against each other:

Every traditional Naga village is independent and, just as with modern nation-states, there are moments of good and bad relationships between and among neighboring villages. It is not uncommon for a number of villages to form a confederacy or for a stronger, larger village to protect and influence a smaller one. Rules and parameters are agreed to such that to break these brings significant consequences.

When the British invaded, subdued and compelled the smaller and weaker Naga villages to fight with their troops against more formidable villages such as Khonoma, Kohima, Kekrema and Mezoma, the small villages were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. On the one hand, those villages who refused to fight alongside the British or cooperated with the ‘enemies’ were severely punished by the British. On the other hand, those smaller villages, by cooperating with the British troops brought upon themselves the wrath of the bigger villages. Consequently, conflicts among Naga villages increased, providing the colonizer the grounds to justify their pacifying mission. Mills has reported that “after traveling all night, he [Vincent] surprised the village of Jaqueemah [Jakhama]...and burned it to the ground, because the inhabitants were in alliance with the enemy.”⁴⁶⁵ Another village was attacked and “fines were imposed on the houses in which enemy had been sheltered,” instilling “a wholesome dread of our vengeance into the minds of the people, if they shelter the enemy.”⁴⁶⁶ After the people of Mizoma were coerced to join the British troops in an attack of Khonoma, Butler expressed his

⁴⁶⁵Mills, *Report on Assam*, cliv-v.

⁴⁶⁶Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 206.

apprehension by stating that “the Mozo-mah clan will be exposed to the vengeance of the enemy [i.e., Khonoma].”⁴⁶⁷

5. Tea plantations and the strategy of pacification:

The British tea plantation project is a major crucial factor that had a significant effect not only on the relationship between the Nagas and the British, but also on the Nagas and their neighbors and is crucial for understanding the British government’s stringent strategy on pacification of the ‘wild’ Nagas. It needs to be unmistakably noted that the beginning of the mission to pacify the Nagas was not because of ‘headhunting’ raids amongst the Nagas themselves; rather, it was the result of such raids on the plains where British plantations existed.⁴⁶⁸ The plantation generated increased ‘headhunting’ raids by Nagas into the plantation settlements. Therefore, this increase raids that served the British to justify the campaign to invade the Nagas needs to be examined in the appropriate context. I will discuss here the origin of the British tea plantation in the region and how it created a situation that enabled the British imperial government to use it to justify their take-over of the Naga Hills.

Before that, however, I’d like to present briefly the attitude of the progress minded West towards the Naga traditional lifestyle. The theory of evolution skewed the vision of Euro-Americans who saw the ‘other’ through the lens of unilinear progression of socio-economic organization and were single-mindedly determined to turn the ‘savage’ into the ‘civilized’ or the ‘other’ into ‘us’. They ranked indigenous and other colonized peoples on a scale based on their agricultural practices or techniques and

⁴⁶⁷Ibid., 203.

⁴⁶⁸See Andrew West, *The Most Dangerous Legacy: The Development of Identity, Power and Marginality in the British Transfer to India and the Nagas* (Hull: University Of Hull, 1999), 18.

settlement patterns. The technique and degree of utilization of land was now understood in terms of progress. Michael von Brück argued that “progress is not only a quantitative item, measured, as it were, in the (colonial) extension of space or territory, but is now the qualitative intensification of land cultivation as well.”⁴⁶⁹ Adam Smith thought the colonized land remained wasted until it was colonized and made productive by Europeans. He argued, “The colony of a civilized nation which takes possession either of a waste country, or of one so thinly inhabited that the natives easily give place to the new settlers, advances more rapidly to wealth and greatness than any other human society.”⁴⁷⁰

The indigenous traditional practices of clearing jungle as pasture lands and swidden cultivation were now characterized as “indiscriminate grazing” and exhaustive for “productive powers of the land.”⁴⁷¹ Concomitant with the designation was the need to redesignate the status of those whose land was taken. In the logic of the ‘superior’ culture the people who fail to use the land ‘properly’ must be “nomadic”, “wild” and are “a considerable threat to plantation settlements.”⁴⁷² Whereas settled forms of cultivation were seen by British as “the penultimate icon of civilization itself,”⁴⁷³ shifting forms of cultivation was considered primitive and lacking in scientific and technological progress.

Plantations were referred to as “tea gardens” and sometimes even assigned the Judeo-Christian metaphorical designation of the “Garden of Eden.”⁴⁷⁴ An American missionary in Assam, Nathan Brown, had hoped that the plantations “will become a

⁴⁶⁹Brück, “The Concept of Progress and Its Significance for European-American Development in a Global Context,” *Goethe-Institut*, www.fortschritt-weltweit.de/dokumente/religion/fortschritt_von_brueck.pdf (accessed September 14, 2008), 16.

⁴⁷⁰Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R.H. Campbell et al (Oxford, 1976), 564.

⁴⁷¹Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 64-5.

⁴⁷²*Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁷³*Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁷⁴Quoted in *ibid.*, 52.

garden of the lord.”⁴⁷⁵ By this time, from American missionaries to British officials and entrepreneurs, everyone “nurtured similar optimism about the economics of Eden.”⁴⁷⁶

In contrast, indigenous form of cultivation and subsistence practiced by Nagas and others were disparaged as primitive and the practitioners, by virtue of practicing swidden cultivation, were labeled indolent, “a besetting sin because they detest fixed employment.”⁴⁷⁷ Fixed employment, or settled peasantry, was then considered superior and introducing it among the tribal peoples was one way to be bringing the ‘primitive’ people in to the sphere of civilization. Civilization or progress, according to Baruah, was one of the ideas Europeans brought with them to Northeast India, the idea that “a dense population and industry...were seen as markers of civilization, settled agriculture belonged to a higher plane than shifting cultivation and gathering.”⁴⁷⁸ Therefore, Chatterjee rightly maintained that “plantations could be imagined as a necessary Garden of Eden, bringing to fruition, through their spectacle of cultivated order, a moral vision of imperial light.”⁴⁷⁹

The Nagas were, undoubtedly, seen as primitive people stuck in the past because of their shifting or swidden agricultural practice. In the judgment of the West, the Nagas were not only lacking in progress but also indolent. American missionary Bronson remarked that like other ‘wild’ tribes the Nagas were “naturally indolent and need some powerful stimulus to exertion. They are generally satisfied with gaining a bare subsistence. The ready sale of their salt always supplies their wants, with but little labor,

⁴⁷⁵Jayeeta Sharma, “British Science, Chinese Skill and Assam Tea,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 4 (2006): 450.

⁴⁷⁶*Ibid.*,

⁴⁷⁷Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 65.

⁴⁷⁸Baruah, *Durable Disorder*, 84.

⁴⁷⁹Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 53.

leaving them much time for idleness and useless amusements.”⁴⁸⁰ The introduction of settled cultivation in the form of tea plantation was then seen as superior and a path to progress. In a letter to his superior Jenkins wrote that with the help of American missionary Bronson “...and the encouragement of the Nagas to cultivate the products of their hills and the tea in particular, we may hope ere long to see civilization greatly advanced among these Nagas....”⁴⁸¹ Bronson, too, asserted,

...I hope our coming among them will...dispose them to habits of civilized life. It strikes me that we should aim at benefitting the people in every way in our power; and perhaps nothing is more needful than to correct their indolent habits and to introduce among them some knowledge of the arts. I have thought of introducing among them the manufacture of tea on the following plans, viz., to get them all engaged in the cultivation of the plant and in the manufacture of green Tea, which could be sold in this State to Mr. Bruce or some Company at one rupee or 1/4 per seer. ...the profit would all be theirs and tend to get industries habits introduced. Besides it would send a lot of Tea into the Market without trouble.... It would also help to civilize the peoples and it would enrich and improve the country and bind the Nagas to the Company [i.e., East India Company] by another strong link.”⁴⁸²

Obviously, colonialism and commerce were closely intertwined and, as Lauren Benton argued, “establishing legal authority would make commerce possible; commerce would in turn solidify colonial rule.”⁴⁸³ British commercial interest served to advance the conquest of the Naga Hills and colonized the Nagas for more than a century. Eight of the first ten British invasions came from the western plains and foothills of the Naga Hills where extensive British tea plantations occurred. The purpose was to secure a peaceful tea plantation in the region between what is now known as Nagaland and Assam, because

⁴⁸⁰“Bronson and the Nagas” in Barpujari, *The American Missionaries*, 246.

⁴⁸¹*Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁸²*Ibid.*, 253-4.

⁴⁸³Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 151.

the pacification of Nagas was necessary for imperial planters to till and produce tea without fear and disruption.

Barpukari reported, “Steuart Bayley, Chief Commissioner of Assam (1878-81) believed that the Angami [Naga] raids on British territory and outlying tea-gardens could not be stopped unless the tribe was pacified and brought under control.”⁴⁸⁴ J.H. Hutton, who served as an administrator of the Naga Hills (1909-1935), has rightly pointed out that “the original occupation of the [Naga] hills...was in the nature of an insurance policy, first taken out about 100 years ago, for the peaceable development of the plains.”⁴⁸⁵ Hutton’s “peaceable development of the plains” is in reference to the British tea plantations in the plains and foothills between the Naga Hills and Assam, which generated an increase raids by Nagas.

Tea and the British Empire

Underscoring the importance of tea in relation to the British Empire, Marlene Dietrich metaphorically noted, “The British have an umbilical cord that has never been cut and through which tea flows constantly.”⁴⁸⁶ Alan and Iris Macfarlane observed that tea “became a primary motor for the development of great empires whose health and strength could not have been sustained without tea, and who therefore put enormous pressures on those who produced it.”⁴⁸⁷ With reference to the prospect of profit from tea plantations in Northeast India, a British observer reported, “It is not saying too much

⁴⁸⁴Barpukari, *The Nagas*, 32.

⁴⁸⁵Hutton, “Problems of Reconstruction in the Assam Hills,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 75, no. 1/2 (1945): 6.

⁴⁸⁶Quoted in Alan Macfarlane and Iris Macfarlane, *The Empire of Tea: The Remarkable History of the Plant that Took the World* (Woodstock; New York: The Overlook Press, 2003), 167.

⁴⁸⁷*Ibid.*

when we venture to assert that a more cheering prospect was never opened up to the British enterprise, with a greater certainty of a rich reward.”⁴⁸⁸

In Europe, the drinking of tea had been popular by the sixteenth century. By then, tea was imported mostly from China. However, the tea imported from China was not only dangerous and required at least eight months to import but also expensive.⁴⁸⁹ In contrast the tea produced in the Northeast “could be obtained for less than half that price.”⁴⁹⁰ Also, the continuing deteriorating relations between the British and the Chinese, culminating in the “Opium War” in 1839 to 1842, compelled the British to look for an alternative place for importing tea. So “considerable discussion took place in the East India Company about the potential of tea cultivation in India.”⁴⁹¹ India was being seriously considered as “an alternative supply of tea, as China was monopolizing the valuable item.”⁴⁹²

In 1833, the ‘Lord Bentinck’s Tea Committee’ reported that tea was “beyond all doubt indigenous to upper Assam, a discovery by far the most important and valuable that has ever been made on matters connected with the agricultural or commercial resources of this empire.”⁴⁹³ Until this discovery, tea was assumed to be indigenous only to China. However, as Beatrice Hohenegger observed, while it was popularly understood in the whole Western world that “the one and only source of tea was China, the Singpho people – and other tribes indigenous to Southwest Asia including the Shan and the Nagas

⁴⁸⁸ Quoted in Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the Future* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1986), 61.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 54.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 55.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

– had been making use of tea growing wild in their lush jungle hills for centuries, perhaps millennia.”⁴⁹⁴

When tea or “green gold,” as Macfarlane and Macfarlane term it, was found growing in Northeast India the British administration asked Francis Jenkins to assess the resource. Jenkins in turn asked Charles Bruce “to obtain a comprehensive report on the locations of these plantations as well as the different modes of preparation of tea employed by the tribes.”⁴⁹⁵ Among others in his report, Bruce mentioned to the Bentinck’s Tea Committee that “on ten tracts, annual profits would be Rs 23,266, so on one thousand tracts it would be Rs 23,266,000.”⁴⁹⁶

Although the tea plantation project was beset by shortages of capital and labor and near failures in the initial stage, “a speculative boom in 1860 led to the rapid development of gardens and the importation of thousands of laborers.”⁴⁹⁷ And in the next twenty years more than one million indentured laborers including children arrived in Assam from neighboring states such as Bengal, Bihar and other central states of India. As a result, “tea acreage, production, and exports grew spectacularly. Acreage more than doubled, production tripled, and [by the 1900s] India surpassed China as the world’s

⁴⁹⁴Beatrice Hohenegger, *Liquid Jade: The Story of Tea from East to West* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 153.

⁴⁹⁵Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, 62. Sema has mentioned that Jenkins had asked Robert Bruce, but actually it was his brother Charles Bruce. Whereas Jenkins did not assume his office in Assam until 1834, Robert had died only a year after discovering the use of tea in Northeast India with his brother Charles in 1823.

⁴⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 143. To help understand the value of rupee in the 1850s, consider “the average rate of wages *per month* in Assam was from 2 rupees 8 annas...to 3 rupees...previous to 1857.” See Charles Henry Fielder, “On the Rise, Progress, and Future Prospects of Tea Cultivation in British India,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 32, no. 1 (March, 1869): 32.

⁴⁹⁷Prabhu Mohapatra, “Assam and the West Indies, 1860-1920: Immobilizing Plantation Labor,” in *Master, Servants, and Magistrates in Britain and the Empire, 1562-1955*, edited by Douglas Hay and Paul Craven (Chapel Hill, NC; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 457.

largest exporter of tea.”⁴⁹⁸ The *Indian Year-Book* (1932-1933) reported that the area under tea cultivation was 433,809 acres and it further remarked that “in less than a hundred years the British Empire has become the tea-garden and the tea-shop of the world.”⁴⁹⁹

For centuries, as Hohenegger noted, “tea was used as a medicinal brew in the hills and jungles of Southeast Asia” and “played a central role in the development of Taoist and Zen spirituality.” However, “after the Western traders arrived on the Eastern shores, tea underwent a profound transformation. The sacred beverage, the elixir of immortality, was reduced to a commodity.”⁵⁰⁰ Thus, with the ‘discovery’ of tea among the Assamese, Nagas, Shans and others, “tea colonization” began in British India,⁵⁰¹ and at whose discovery James Leonard could write, “Those supplies, which the progress of civilisation has converted from a luxury to a necessary of life, from the palace to the cottage....”⁵⁰² This ambitious and massive project of tea colonization did not happen without serious consequences to the natives. Priya Chatterjee observed that with the ‘discovery’ of tea the Northeast “region became the site of military battles between company troops, local

⁴⁹⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹Dana Albaugh, *Between Two Centuries: A Study of Four Baptist Mission Fields - Assam, South India, Bengal-Orissa and South China* (Philadelphia, PA: Judson Press, 1935), 50.

⁵⁰⁰Hohenegger, *Liquid Jade*, xi.

⁵⁰¹Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 59. Similar ‘colonization’ of native plants, fruits and animals occurred all over the world. Richard Franke has provided a useful account of the effects of colonialism on dietary habits around the world through the dissemination of localized crops and animals. See “The Effects of Colonialism and Neocolonialism on the Gastronomic Patterns of the Third World,” in *Food and Evolution: Toward a Theory of Human Food Habits*, ed. Marvin Harris and Eric Ross (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987); also see an equally useful contribution by Lucile Brockway in his *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), especially the third chapter on “Seed and Plant Transfers.” Alfred Crosby, Jr. has termed this colonial system “The Columbian exchange;” see *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pub. Co., 1972).

⁵⁰²Quoted in Jayeeta Sharma, “British Science, Chinese Skill and Assam Tea: Making Empire’s Garden,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 4 (2006).

rulers, and various indigenous communities,”⁵⁰³ which greatly polarized the ethnically diverse region.

The socio-political wounds have yet to heal for the indigenous population and the consequence of tea plantations remains to this day. For example, conflicts have frequently occurred between the states of Assam and Nagaland over land demarcations in formerly British tea plantations. In July 2007, two persons were killed and several houses put to torch in a disputed tea plantation area between the two states. Following the incident a reporter observed a “war-like situation” as the two states prepared for an all out war.⁵⁰⁴ Additionally, since its inception the tea cultivation has marginalized the local population as ‘outsiders’ pocketed the profit. Hohenegger observed that the Singpho leader who presented Robert Bruce of the East India Company with a tea plant in 1823 “could not have imagined that Upper Assam would become one infinite succession of tea garden upon tea garden, largely controlled by foreign corporations or wealthy Indian owners, but rarely by Assamese and hardly at all by Singpho tribes.”⁵⁰⁵

Tea cultivation, regional hostility and the pacification of Nagas

How did the tea cultivation lead to the division and hostility among the hill peoples and the plains people? How did the project then lead to the British campaign to pacify the ‘wild headhunting’ Nagas? My purpose here is to answer these questions as they relate to Nagas.

⁵⁰³Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 57.

⁵⁰⁴Namrata Goswami, “The Assam-Nagaland Border Face Off,” *Institute for Defence and Studies and Analysis*, Aug. 17, 2007, <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/NamrataGoswami170807.htm> (accessed November 1, 2007).

⁵⁰⁵Hohenegger, *Liquid Jade*, 263.

In order to undertake the massive tea plantation project, the East India Company needed large areas of land, and to acquire land, the British Government facilitated ‘wasteland’ policies and legislation, the first of which was the Wasteland Rules of 1838.⁵⁰⁶ The Macfarlanes note that “in 1839 the way was clear to rent the whole of Assam out to the highest bidder, and one came forward, calling itself The Assam Company.”⁵⁰⁷ Baruah has mentioned that “the colonial government’s efforts at regularizing the land rights of peasants to their land were also the time when the foundation of the tea industries in Assam was laid.”⁵⁰⁸ One of the far-reaching decisions under the land right policies was “the colonial state’s assertion of claims to the vast majority of land in which it assumed, no private rights ever existed....[among which] were land declared wastelands enabling their allocation to tea plantations.”⁵⁰⁹ Chatterji observed that “plantation settlements on land legally designated waste resulted in the largest and most invasive transformations of land use in northeast India.”⁵¹⁰ These so-called wastelands in the foothills included most of the areas kept fallow. It was and still is the practice of Nagas and other native peoples to leave their land fallow until it is ready for the next cycle of cultivation.

Since the inception of European colonialism, colonial powers have crafted a great number of laws and means of providing the colonizers and settlers with a ‘just’ title to and the right to the acquisition of native lands. These legal mechanisms “served to extract land from precolonial users and to create a wage labor force out of peasant and

⁵⁰⁶Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 63.

⁵⁰⁷Macfarlane and Macfarlane, *The Empire of Tea*, 142. “Assam” should not be confused with the modern day state of Assam, because in those days colonial Assam or “the District of Assam” refers to most if not the entire region of what is now called ‘Northeast’ India.

⁵⁰⁸Baruah, *Durable Disorder*, 83.

⁵⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 84.

⁵¹⁰Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 63.

subsistence producers.”⁵¹¹ In “Virginia’s Verger,” Samuel Purchas has listed all the possible justifications through which the English could justify their settlement in Virginia.⁵¹² Francis Jennings believed that the legal concept and practice of declaring ‘wastelands’ occurred when the value of tobacco was discovered in North America. He argued that this happened with the discovery of tobacco’s value as a staple commodity. “Whereas the fur trade had required Indian trappers and hunters, tobacco could be produced more lucratively by the colonists themselves. Indians were transformed from participants in the old trade to hindrances upon the new trade.”⁵¹³

One of the justifications provided by Purchas “was based first and last on God’s commands.”⁵¹⁴ In *Hakluytus Posthumus*, Purchas arrived at the following conclusions:

...we have a right to replenish the whole earth: so that if any Countrey be not possessed by other men, (which has been the case of Summer Illands, and had been of all Countries in their first habitations) every man by Law of Nature and Humanities hath right of Plantation....And if a country be inhabited in some parts therof, other parts remaining unpeopled, the same reason giveth liberty to other men which want convenient habitation to seat themselves, where (without wrong to others) they may provide for themselves. For these have the same right unto these latter parts, which the former had to the former; especially where the people is wild, and holdeth no settled possession in any parts.”⁵¹⁵

This same notion was apparent in the work of many other European writers, Locke being the foremost among them. In *Two Treatises on Government*, Locke presents the following argument:

⁵¹¹Sally Engle Merry, “Review: Law and Colonialism,” *Law & Society Review* 25, no. 4 (1991): 891.

⁵¹²Purchas, “Virginia’s Verger,” in Peter Hulme and William Sherman, ed. *The Tempest: Sources and Contexts, Criticism, Rewritings and Appropriations. William Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 93-5.

⁵¹³Jennings, “Virgin Land and Savage People,” *American Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (Oct., 1971): 520.

⁵¹⁴Merete Borch, *Conciliation – Compulsion – Conversion: British Attitudes Towards Indigenous Peoples, 1763-1814* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2004), 200.

⁵¹⁵Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus Or Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells by Englishmen and others*, vol. 19 (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), 222.

God, when he gave the World in common to all mankind, commanded Man also to labour.... God in his Reason Commanded him to subdue the Earth, i.e., improve it for the benefit of Life.... He that in obedience to this Command of God, subdued, tilled and sowed any part of it thereby annexed to it something that was his Property.⁵¹⁶

The practice of designating colonized land as *vacuum domicilium* – i.e., legally ‘waste’ – and forcibly making it available for colonial plantations and settlements has been put into effect centuries before the East India Company’s arrival in Northeast India. So the Company was simply following the ‘legal’ lead already established elsewhere, such as in North America. With the designation of large areas of land as wasteland, areas that were previously used for hunting and crops by the Nagas and other indigenes were now incorporated into a “new global resource use regime” and native access was denied.⁵¹⁷ Kevin Hannam observed that as a result of the “‘green imperialism,’ in many parts of Assam a villager would have to walk many miles around tea plantations as the use of the roads through plantations was restricted.”⁵¹⁸

It is important to note that all the reported raids by Nagas between 1839 and 1850 took place west of the Naga Hills, where British tea cultivation was heavy. The chief cause for these raids is the forcible encroachment of Naga ancestral land for colonial tea plantation, which the Nagas rejected and accordingly showed their disapproval by raiding the tea plantation settlements which were owned by the Nagas for hunting and swidden cultivation. This ‘lawless’ acts of Nagas provided the grounds for the British Government to argue for a stringent strategy of pacification of Naga villages.

⁵¹⁶Locke, *Two Treatises*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 309.

⁵¹⁷Baruah, *Durable Disorder*, 87.

⁵¹⁸Hannam, “Tea Production and Tourism Development in Assam: A Missed Opportunity,” in *Tea and Tourism: Tourists, Traditions and Transformations*, ed. Lee Jolliffe (Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2007), 73.

The push for expanding tea cultivation created animosity between the plains people and the hills people and has been amply annotated by both colonial and other writers. John Owen observed that the Nagas held “the impression that our wandering into their forests in search of the plant is a mere pretext to see their country, and if found to be plentifully supplied with valuable productions that appropriation will follow.”⁵¹⁹ The Nagas’ fear were realized very soon when “the spread of the tea gardens from the middle of the nineteenth century strengthened the case for a ‘forward policy’ on the hills,” and “a ‘forward policy’ was initiated on the entire of western Naga belt.”⁵²⁰ A British officer writing to the British Government of Bengal in June 1862, wrote,

As tea planting extends, and it will extend undoubtedly in the very direction of the Angami Naga country, for that great tract that we abandoned to those savages when we withdrew our posts from Deemapore [i.e., Dimapur] which abounds with the finest tea lands in Assam. The suppression of these incursions will become more and more necessary, and be more and more loudly called for, and we cannot too soon, I think set about the work.⁵²¹

In September of that same year, a letter was sent back to the “Agent of North East Frontier” which read, “Looking to the certainty of early extension of the cultivation of Tea in the direction of Naga Hills which are said to abound with the finest tea land in Assam, and where some gardens are already established, the Lieutenant Governor desires that measures may at once be adopted.”⁵²² Chakravorty maintains that “the rapid extension of tea cultivation along this frontier and the employment of hill men in plantation works sometimes gave rise to petty quarrels with the Nagas.”⁵²³ Similarly,

⁵¹⁹Owen, *Notes on the Nagas Tribes, in communication with Assam* (Calcutta, 1844), 49; also see Elwin, *India’s North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, 56.

⁵²⁰Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-east India*, 6.

⁵²¹Barpujari, *The Nagas*, 68. Bengal was a British protectorate directly under the control of the East India Company that also oversaw the imperial activities in ‘Assam’, known as Northeast India today.

⁵²²*Ibid.*, 69.

⁵²³Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes*, 88.

Baruah provides the following account of the origin of hostility between the “hill peoples and lowland peoples.”

When the lands in the valleys and the foothills were found suitable for the large-scale commercial production of tea, a mad scramble for land – by entrepreneurs and speculators alike – followed, and the British came into direct confrontation with the Nagas. The land grab profoundly disrupted the hunting and gathering activities and the exchange networks of the Naga people. The Nagas resisted the land grab with numerous raids on the newly established tea plantations and other valley settlements, and the British responded with relentless brutality. The Naga–British encounter was one of the most violent chapters in the history of British conquest of the subcontinent.⁵²⁴

Edward Gait, a British administrator in Assam, wrote:

As early as 1860, the Assam Company took up land for tea cultivation, in the Naga Hills, 20 years or more before any other Company was started. Due to occurrence of many clashes between the tea gardens and the Nagas, the imperial power had to take preventive measures to ease tension along the border by prohibiting any fresh grant south of Ladoigarh which was recognised as the boundary between Naga territory and Assam.⁵²⁵

Mackenzie too reported that “the rapid extension of tea cultivation along this frontier gave rise to considerable [tension] between 1869 and 1873.”⁵²⁶

Another English writer observed that “Cachar, one of the divisions of Assam, produces tea of good quality” where “there are a score of other tea plantations.”⁵²⁷ Mills acknowledged the Nagas as the rightful owners of this area alongside Cacharis and Mikiris. “The land in northern Cachar consists generally of fine black mould, which is generally very fertile; the country is entirely a hill tract cultivated by the wild tribes of Nagas, Cacharees and Mikirs.”⁵²⁸ This prime land was later taken over by the British and the Nagas were forced to pay revenue in order to cultivate it. Mills wrote, “Some of the

⁵²⁴Baruah, *Durable Disorder*, 104.

⁵²⁵Quoted in Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, 63.

⁵²⁶Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, 98.

⁵²⁷Clark, “The English Stations in the Hill Regions,” 530.

⁵²⁸Mills, *Report on Assam*, 2 (under the title, “Nowgong”).

Naga chiefs hold small plots of land in our territory at the foot of the hills, which... ‘binds them in a measure to us.’”⁵²⁹ Mackenzie reported that in 1835 the inhabitants of this area were found to be “constantly suffering from Naga exactions and raids,”⁵³⁰ further admitting that the area of British tea plantation fell under the ownership of the Nagas who enjoyed revenue from tea planters. He wrote:

Although the Government claimed as British territory the whole country up to the boundaries of Manipur and Burma, it had hitherto treated the Naga tract as outside Assam for all civil purposes. The tea planters had long since in many places, both in Lukhimpore and Sebsaugor, taken up land south of the revenue line, in some instances paying revenue to us, and in others to the Naga chiefs. The earlier settlers found it to their interest to conciliate the Nagas, and troubled themselves little about Government protection.⁵³¹

Even after the British creation of “Inner Line” mandate that separated the plains from the hills in 1873, the Nagas continued to receive land revenue from tea planters, as the Nagas themselves did not engage in tea plantation as a means of livelihood. With reference to this fact, Chakravorty wrote, “Under the provisions of the Inner Line Regulation a boundary line was laid down between British territory and the independent Naga land in 1873, a compensation being paid to the Nagas for the area occupied by those tea-gardens which lay beyond the Inner Line.”⁵³²

Reports of the earliest invaders undoubtedly show that the British incursion into the Naga Hills was mainly driven by the desire to exploit tea and other resources. E.R. Grange led the first expedition from Assam in 1839 and reported finding in Jakymee (i.e., Jakhama) village “the tea tree growing in the most luxuriant manner...”⁵³³ Browne-

⁵²⁹Ibid., 52.

⁵³⁰Mackenzie, *The Northeast Frontier*, 103.

⁵³¹Ibid.

⁵³²Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes*, 90.

⁵³³Elwin, *Nagas in Nineteenth Century*, 220.

Wood, who led an expeditionary party in 1840 provided a more upbeat and detail description when he wrote:

After a little further conversation, I requested to be shewn the tea; Jeereebbee [the head of Razhuphema village] immediately escorted me to the spot, where I saw the tea plant growing most abundantly and luxuriantly immediately near to the village; I followed the tea for some distance, and saw very many spots covered with it.... I asked Jeereebbee if he had any objections to my sending up Assamese tea-makers to manufacture the tea on the spot, telling him that I would give him *monees* [beads], salt, daws [Naga machete], &c., to which he replied he would be very happy to accommodate in any way....In return I cannot say how much tea there may be in these hills, but I am of the opinion, that it extends over a great part of these low hills.⁵³⁴

“As late as 1880,” as Chatterji has reported, “British planters in Assam were ‘troubled’ by Naga raids on plantation lands.”⁵³⁵ Thus, it may be concluded that the British pacification efforts were chiefly a response to the Naga raids; but the raids were the result of social disruption and polarization and the increased hostility caused by the colonial military and economic expansion in the Naga territory.

Pax Britannica and the pacification of Nagas

In the understanding and scheme of colonialism, two types of violence exist: barbaric violence and civilized violence.⁵³⁶ Civilized violence was understood as a necessary instrument not only to quell barbaric violence, but also to permeate progress or civilization among the colonized subjects. According to Mark Slater, “the supposed elimination of violence in everyday [colonized] society...lies at the root of the discourse of civilization,”⁵³⁷ which, V.G. Kiernan argued, did “something to barbarize Europe.”⁵³⁸

⁵³⁴Ibid., 235.

⁵³⁵Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, 57.

⁵³⁶Mark Slater, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002), 36.

⁵³⁷Ibid., 35.

So in most cases, civilized violence, also known as pacification, and the dissemination of progress among the barbaric, wild and irrational colonized subjects went hand-in-hand - without exception to the Nagas.

The imperial desire to pacify the Nagas in the aftermath of the increased raids by Nagas is deeply imbedded in the idea of *Pax Britannica*, or the 'British Peace,' which was deeply associated with progress. Violence and Pax Britannica are deeply intertwined, and they always go hand in hand. Pax Britannica was not the result of peace itself; it was a 'peace' maintained by force and violence. Therefore, the violence related to the pacification of the Naga tribes must be examined in the light of the notion of Pax Britannica.

Just before the beginning of the decline of the British Empire, H.S. Perris described Pax Britannica as "the progress of [British] civilization towards Peace."⁵³⁹ In exultation of Britain's role in bringing civilization to people of "lower cultures" and fostering progress at a global level, Perris wrote:

[Britain] has been the foremost in storming the icy fortresses of the Poles. She has struck down the pirate and slaver; given support and hope to little peoples struggling to be free; planted the tropics; founded commonwealths of freedom in America and Australasia; schooled the Indies; opened up the Dark Continent; brought East and West together; abridged the distances that ages have separated the peoples of the earth, and spread among them all the dawn of a sense of kinship and mutual need. These are no mean services to the common life of mankind; and as we contemplate the ripening harvest of civilization, which will be the permanent fruit of these three hundred years of tilling, we need grudge no tribute of praise to...Britain....⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁸ Kiernan, *Colonial Empires and Armies, 1815-1960* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 178.

⁵³⁹ Perris, *Pax Britannica: A Study of the History of British Pacification* (New York; London: Macmillan Co., 1913), vi.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 11-12.

Clearly, Perris and many others saw Britain as an agent of progress for the entire human race and believed in an imminent attainment of peace and progress at a global scale, with the ‘Great Britain’ at the center. A Western Pacific high commissioner wrote, “It will, I think, be conceded that one of the cardinal principles upon which the administration of a new country should be based is that the ‘Pax Britannica’ must be enforced.” He further argued that any attempt to educate and civilize “a savage people in order to lift them to a higher plane of civilization” would be a wasted effort “unless it is demonstrated that the Government can and will make the King’s peace respected.”⁵⁴¹ With regard to the Rengma Nagas, Mills, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, wrote, “The Eastern Rengmas have been administered so short a time that they have not yet fully appreciated the effect that the Pax Britannica is bound to have on their customs, and still adhere to their old rules.”⁵⁴²

Pacification and imperial law

Robert Williams, Jr. has asserted that the central idea that sustained European expansion is the belief that “the West’s religion, civilization, and knowledge are superior to the religions, civilizations, and knowledge of non-Western peoples.”⁵⁴³ Legal discourse “was central to the ‘civilizing mission’ of imperialism”⁵⁴⁴ and “served to redeem the West’s genocidal imposition of its superior civilization.”⁵⁴⁵ The British

⁵⁴¹Quoted in Margaret Rodman and Matthew Cooper, ed., *The Pacification of Melanesia* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 44.

⁵⁴²Mills, *The Rengma Nagas* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), 26. The Eastern Rengmas are one of the smaller tribes that accepted, without violent resistance, the law of Pax Britannica at the end of colonization, because not only were the Rengmas aware of their numerical strength but also had heard of their big and strong neighbors like the Angamis crushed by the ‘force’ of Pax Britannica.

⁵⁴³Williams, Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6.

⁵⁴⁴Merry, *Law and Society Review*, 890.

⁵⁴⁵Williams, Jr., *American Indian in Western Legal Thought*, 7.

looked upon the Nagas and other tribal peoples as savage and lawless, so one objective for carrying out punitive military expeditions into the Naga Hills was to bring the 'lawless' Nagas within the purview of the British law. Indeed, the Grange military expedition into the Naga Hills was "to accomplish a meeting with some lawless" Nagas.⁵⁴⁶ James Johnson, who took charge of the Naga Hills after Mr. Damant was killed by Angami Nagas, wrote, "We had been forced into the hills by the lawlessness of the Naga tribes, and we ought to have made them bear their full share of the inconveniences attendant on our occupation...."⁵⁴⁷ Acceptance, whether by choice or force, of the law of the Empire was considered acceptance of progress.

'Lawless' is not meant the Nagas did not possess any system of law. It only means the Nagas were outside the realm of the imperial law. Having perceived or decided that the Nagas were 'lawless,' the British imposed the imperial law and make the Nagas the "law's subjects," bound by the law of the empire.⁵⁴⁸ Pacification requires passing from 'lawlessness' to imperial law's subject, and Pax Britannica is hindered as long as perceived 'lawlessness' exists or there are subjects outside the boundaries of the imperial law. Once the outsider is brought within the purview of the imperial law, Pax Britannica is realized, albeit under constant threat, vigilance and uneasy peace. The law thus played an important role, and, "backed by force [it] made the Pax Britannica the assurance of peace."⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 111.

⁵⁴⁷Johnstone, *My Experience*, 148.

⁵⁴⁸Katherine Biber, "Cannibal and Colonialism," *Sydney Law Review* 27, no. 4 (December 2005): 625. As soon as Butler set his foot on the Naga Hills, he declared "all the Nagas were British subjects." Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 44.

⁵⁴⁹"It Talks in Every Language" (available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,884996-2,00.html>; accessed October 31, 2007).

The practice of appending certain qualities or characteristics such as lawless, savage and wild to particular peoples is essential; because it is by categorizing the other as the other, an opportunity to civilize or bring in to the law's authority is created. Katherine Biber aptly noted, "Law always constructs an Other. It draws boundaries around itself. Everything within the boundary is within law's jurisdiction. Everything outside the boundary is lawless."⁵⁵⁰ And "it is the intention of law," argued Biber, "to bring everything within its own boundaries." With regard to Nagas, the intention of the imperial law to bring the Nagas within its own boundaries created tension and generated violence. But, as Biber argues, "once they can be classified, once legal names or categories can be appended to them, they become law's subjects."

The British colonial government took credit for the cessation of 'headhunting' among the Nagas by compelling the Nagas to become imperial law's subjects. As one British anthropologist puts it, "...before the Pax Britannica stopped them they were headhunters to a man..."⁵⁵¹ In other words, by imposing an imperial law that the British claimed 'outlawed' the practice of headhunting, the Nagas were now made the imperial law's subjects. And by virtue of becoming the imperial law's subject, the Nagas were now under the legal system of the empire, whereby they no longer had the right to be outside the imperial law. By bringing the Nagas under the 'protection' and 'peace' of Pax Britannica, the Nagas were made subjects of the imperial law, whereby they had no choice but to 'peacefully' submit and abide by the law of the empire. This stage of pacification was perceived as attainment of progress. As the law's subjects, therefore, the

⁵⁵⁰Biber, "Cannibal and Colonialism," 625.

⁵⁵¹Ursula Graham Bower, *Naga Path* (London: John Murray, 1950), 1. Bower visited the Naga Hills in 1937-46 with the intent "to putter about with a few cameras and do a bit of medical work, maybe write a book" – and write a book she did!

Nagas were now at the legal disposal of the imperial law. Against the wishes and disapproval of the Nagas, this forced legal arrangement or structure later resulted in annexing the Nagas and their homeland to independent India and Myanmar for which the Nagas are still paying the cost. In 1974, the imperial law declared that its Naga subjects would henceforth be citizens of Indian and Myanmar nation-states, and it has since been the fate of the Nagas.

The imperial law also provided justification for the use of force if necessary to accomplish Pax Britannica. Not surprisingly, perhaps, neither the Empire or its representatives hesitated to use violence to enforce Pax Britannica. The use of violence in the form of military expeditions was the method to achieve the pacification of the ‘wild’ Nagas. Laura Kunreuther has observed that “the law itself becomes an *instrument of violence*” because in Western legal discourse, “the law is seen as a way of containing violence.”⁵⁵² The law justifies and permits the application of a greater force of violence in order to solve a problem of violence. Consequently, “the court and the law are...weapons of the colonial mission” and exert violence upon the law’s subjects.⁵⁵³ For this reason, “laws need their prisons and their police force to be effective.”⁵⁵⁴

The imperial law, its mandate and application, utterly contradicted the traditional Naga understanding and practice of law. The traditional Naga legal system presumes a non-violent means of enforcing the law. As such, traditional Naga society has never had a police force or a prison because there was no need. For example, when a murder occurs in a village, by intention or otherwise, that village arranges with a neighboring village to

⁵⁵²Kunreuther, “‘Pacification of the Primitive,’” 68.

⁵⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴Ibid., 73.

which the perpetrator is exiled and then cared for by the people of the neighboring village. The duration of the exile can vary from one or seven years to life, depending on the wishes of the victim's family and/or the nature of the murder. For less serious offenses such as theft or injury to another, the next of kin of the offender must take responsibility for disciplining the offender, which precludes excessive punishment and retaliation by the victim's family. On the few occasions when the immediate family members failed to take an appropriate action, the victim's family could resort to administering their own punishment for the crime, which only served as vengeance rather than discipline and therefore aggravated the problem.

Contrary to traditional Naga practices, some of the first things the British did were to set up *thanna* (prison) and police force. Some Nagas were exiled to as far as the islands of Andaman, where they were left to die.⁵⁵⁵ One of the first legal actions initiated by the British during the early invasion was to facilitate written agreements with the Nagas. With regard to one such agreement in the winter of 1844-45, Butler wrote, "Written agreements were drawn out by us (for the Nagahs [sic] have no written language)" and in return for the legal agreement, the British Government would "redress their grievances...and secure their general welfare by such measures as would conduce to their happiness."⁵⁵⁶ One of the points of the agreement required the Nagas to "refer all disputes to British authorities." Elaborating on what that might entail, Butler told a village elder of

⁵⁵⁵This is in concurrence with the British practice of banishing English criminals to the 'islands' of Australia and New Zealand.

⁵⁵⁶Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 39. Similarly, when capital punishment was introduced by European colonizers in the New World, Native Americans could not understand the logic of taking another life for a life that had already been taken, because among them the normal punishment for murder was to compel the murderer to work for the sustenance and welfare of the victim's family.

Mizoma, “The crime of murder would in future only be settled by the offender being hung; such was British law.” But, he said, “this the chief could not comprehend.”⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁷Ibid., 45.

CHAPTER FOUR: AMERICAN MISSIONIZATION OF NAGAS

NO braver men and women have ever faced the enemy at the front than those who, from time to time, have pioneered our work among the wild beasts and savage men who inhabit the Assam range of the Himalaya mountains. The heart thrills as one reads of the opening of the work among the Nagas by the intrepid Miles Bronson in 1840 at Namsang, 'far away on the rugged peaks of these mountains, where this Sabbath (January 13, 1839) finds me with a people rude and wild as the untamed beasts.' After long and patient seed-sowing they were joined by other workers, all of whom were soon rejoicing over rich harvests.⁵⁵⁸

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the British East India Company established its military and administrative presence in Northeast India (formerly Assam). However, just as the world was divided for colonization and evangelization by Western powers missionization of the Northeast region was also divided among several Western Christian denominations and mission organizations: the London Baptist Mission concentrated its work in the South Lushai Hills; the Welsh Presbyterian mission worked in the Khasi Hills and North Lushai Hills; and the American Baptists were given responsibility to evangelize the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, the Garo Hills and the Naga Hills.⁵⁵⁹ Additionally, the Roman Catholics, German Evangelical Lutherans, the Society for Propagation of the Gospel, Australian and New Zealand Baptist missionaries

⁵⁵⁸This typical portrayal of the Nagas is quoted from Sidney W. Rivenburg, "The Assam Side," in *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (May 1902). Rivenburg served as a missionary among the Nagas for forty years, beginning in 1883.

⁵⁵⁹Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, 42.

were also engaged in proselytizing in the region.⁵⁶⁰ The arrival of the British invaders opened up a floodgate of missionary activities and tremendous competition to influence the diverse ethnic groups in the region.

Once a foreign religion, today Christianity has come to so thoroughly dominate Naga society that indigenous religious practices are considered uncivilized and ‘satanic’. Christianity is no longer the foreign interloper; it is not only deeply interwoven into Naga thought and expression, but has in fact become the culture of the people so that one who does not profess to be Christian is now considered a ‘second class’ citizen. The legacy of American Baptist missionaries in bringing Christianity and ‘civilization’ to the Nagas has remained sacrosanct, and aside from passing or generalized statements on the negative effect of the process of Christianization on Naga culture, a critical and extended assessment of such impact is lacking among the Naga intelligentsia.

Both colonization and christianization remain destructive intrusions, because both operate as ‘standardizing operations’ that aim to westernize the colonized. In this chapter, I will elucidate the cultural impact of missionization by Western missionaries between 1839 and 1947. Coterminous with British colonization that was in process in the region, American missionaries contacted and proselytized a number of Naga tribes. Their missionary involvement included the establishment of churches, schools, mission centers and ‘Christian’ villages for converts. They also introduced reading, writing and Christian rules for new converts and translated the Bibles into native languages.

In my analysis of the impact of missionization, I will take the prohibition of the drinking of locally brewed ‘rice beer’ by Western missionaries as an example of cultural

⁵⁶⁰W.F. Dowd, “Other Societies in Assam,” *BMM* (September 1907), 370.

supremacy and prejudice assumed by the missionaries of their own vis-à-vis the Naga culture. This and other prohibitions served as the ‘seed’ that caused the process of the cultural demise of the Nagas.⁵⁶¹

Missionization of Nagas

*“To spread the knowledge of Christ among... unenlightened nations:”⁵⁶²
Background of Western Missionary Movement*

In the late eighteenth century the Western world experienced what has been called an Evangelical Revival, and the Protestant Missionary Movement is one of the results of the revival. Andrew Wall called the modern missionary movement “an autumnal child of the Evangelical Revival.”⁵⁶³ The movement generated a flurry of missionary activities around the globe, and “more Protestant mission outreach was undertaken by more people in more places that were more widely separated and more culturally diverse than ever before.”⁵⁶⁴ This spirit of missionary zeal to engage non-Christians outside the confines of Europe and the U.S. was also directly related to the ongoing projects of exploration and colonization.⁵⁶⁵ “Like the explorer,” argues Norman Etherington, “the missionary arrived in regions barely touched by Western influences, preaching the superiority of Western religion, technology and cultural practices.”⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶¹John Henry Hutton referred to change or transformation as “the seed of conversion...which missionaries bring.” Hutton, *The Angami Nagas* (1969), viii.

⁵⁶²This is the motto of the London Missionary Society, <http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/4/251.htm> (accessed March 12, 2008).

⁵⁶³Wall, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 79.

⁵⁶⁴Jonathan Bonk, ed. *Between Past and Future: Evangelical Mission Entering the Twenty-First Century* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 180.

⁵⁶⁵Robert Torbet, *Venture of Faith: The Story of the Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1814-1954* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1955), 19.

⁵⁶⁶Etherington, *Missions and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

In speaking of the wide-spread missionary activities around the world during the heydays of colonialism, Paul Pierson observed, “At a time when confidence about the role of America in world history, belief in the superiority of Western culture, and religious enthusiasm were on the increase,” the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM) and other missionary agencies caught the attention of thousands of Americans who went out as missionaries. He also rightly noted that “the roots of American Protestant missionary movement lay in the Puritan experiment and in the religious awakenings that occurred in the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.”⁵⁶⁷ The American Baptists missionaries who came to the Nagas were products of this period of changes and upheaval in their own society.

Culturally and religiously conditioned by changes and developments during their time, most missionaries adhered to the Puritan morality, the fundamentalist elements of Christian faith and adopted a ‘premillennial’ outlook that put evangelism and the salvation of souls at the top of their mission agenda. And they tried to ascertain that all requirements for the salvation of the soul were strictly met by converts. With reference to Protestant missions, Thomas Spear and Isaria Kimambo write:

Fuelled by nineteenth century evangelical fervour and pietistic Christ-centred concerns, Protestant missionaries focused on gathering small flocks into Christian villages and preaching individual salvation, the confession of sin, the constant struggle between God’s word and Satan’s, and the coming end of the world.⁵⁶⁸

Andrew Porter argued that “Protestant Christianity embodied the peak of religious perfection,” and it was believed that the West was in “possession of a revealed religion;

⁵⁶⁷“The Rise of Christian Mission and Relief Agencies,” in *The Influence of Faith: Religious Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Elliott Abrams (Lanham; Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 153-4.

⁵⁶⁸Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. *East African Expressions of Christianity* (Oxford; Nairobi: James Currey, 1999), 4.

and that the possession of that religion can alone confer immortality and best confer present happiness.”⁵⁶⁹ Consequently, it was thought that “missions made possible ‘the triumphs of reason over ignorance, of civilization over barbarism and of benevolence over cruelty and oppression.’”⁵⁷⁰ Many in the West saw Christianity was an agent of universal progress as we read from the writing of Arnold Toynbee.

Thus the historical progress of religion in this world, as represented by the rise of the higher religions and by their culmination in Christianity, may, and almost certainly will, bring with it, incidentally, an immeasurable improvement in the conditions of human social life on Earth; but its direct effect and its deliberate aim and its true test is the opportunity which it brings to individual souls for spiritual progress in this world during the passage from birth to death. It is this individual spiritual progress in this world for which we pray when we say ‘Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven.’⁵⁷¹

So, riding high on the wave of these developments and forces of beliefs, the Americans Baptist missionaries came to the Nagas. They were people of their time, who might have had good intentions but were deeply entrenched in the vortex of colonial euphoria and left behind trails of destruction on the native Naga culture. Their concerns were sincere in that as a product of their time they truly believed the Nagas’ existence amounted to deep barbarism and savagery, and they sought to ‘civilize’ the Nagas. The thought that their action could be considered genocidal by the native people later never occurred to them. With respect to the inception of missionary activity among the Nagas, A.C. Sinha wrote,

...development and progress were thought to be products of [Western] culture and history and the world was considered to be Europecentric [*sic*]. The American Baptist missionaries, as the representatives of the above ideology,

⁵⁶⁹ Porter, *Religion Versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 92.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁷¹ Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 251-52.

came to Nagaland in 1876 [sic] and established a mission station with a view to converting the indigenous communities to Christianity.⁵⁷²

Missionary activity as civilizing mission

One of the popular missionary motives was the civilization of the ‘uncivilized’ natives. About a decade after the British East India Company invaded the Northeast region in 1824, on March 10, 1835, Jenkins, a British administrator in Assam, sent a letter to the board of American Baptist Missions, requesting personnel for proselytizing the natives. With reference to this particular event, Dana Albaugh wrote, “...Major Jenkins, British Commissioner of the then wild and uncivilized country of Assam, came to feel that some of his barbarous subjects might be in need of a spiritual reformation.”⁵⁷³ Similarly, Clarke too wrote, “There is an American Baptist mission station, Assam being one of the districts in which the American Baptist Society co-operates with us for the civilisation of the natives.”⁵⁷⁴ This should surprise none, because Christianity and civilizing mission went hand in hand. In fact, civilization was considered a prerequisite for proselytization.⁵⁷⁵ It was believed that civilizing the ‘barbarous’ natives would prepare them to grasp and embrace Christianity.

With the view to extend the civilizing mission to the Nagas, in 1838, Jaipur (Assam) – “then just becoming the favorite enterprise of the East India Company” – was chosen for “its proximity to Nagas.”⁵⁷⁶ The Naga Hills was then referred to as “the wilds

⁵⁷²Sinha, “Christianity and Ethnic Identity among the Nagas,” in *Continuity and Changes in Tribal Society*, ed. Mrinal Miri (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1993), 143.

⁵⁷³Albaugh, *Between Two Centuries*, 49.

⁵⁷⁴Clarke, “The English Stations in the Hill Regions,” 531.

⁵⁷⁵For argument in support of this view, see Jacob Dharmaraj, *Colonialism and Christian Mission: Postcolonial Reflections* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999) and Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*.

⁵⁷⁶Gammell, *A History of American Baptist Missions*, 217.

of barbarism”⁵⁷⁷ and the people as “those savage wilds.”⁵⁷⁸ Consequently, it was acknowledged, “To the natural man these people [Nagas] would be revolting, but in Christ all is changed.”⁵⁷⁹ It was also hoped that “the Nagas, once civilized and Christianized, will make a manly, worthy people.”⁵⁸⁰ In speaking of the Nagas, Clark said that they are “the easiest to Christianize” because “they are by far the most part pure pagans,” who “are sitting in gross darkness...and to whom we are under obligations to give it [i.e., the gospel].”⁵⁸¹

Having perceived the Naga Hills as “the paradise of the head-hunters,”⁵⁸² where “heathenish darkness and ignorance reign supreme,”⁵⁸³ the mission to the Nagas began essentially as a strategy for colonial pacification and civilization. As it was understood then, “civilization was white and Christian and everything else was barbarian.”⁵⁸⁴ A colonial officer, who led a military expedition to the Naga Hills in 1850, outlined the goals of British colonization of the Naga Hills. One goal was “the introduction of civilization and Christianity among a large class of people at present hopelessly buried in barbarism and superstition.”⁵⁸⁵ With the hope of ‘taming’ and controlling the ‘wild tribes,’ British officers invited American missionaries at their personal capacity, because

⁵⁷⁷Clark, *A Corner in India*, 15.

⁵⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 135.

⁵⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁸¹From the *Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Held in Nowgong (December 18-29, 1886)* and quoted in Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland*, 84-5.

⁵⁸²See Alva Curtis Bowers, *Under Head-Hunters' Eyes* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1929), 194. Bowers' chapter (i.e., IX) on the Naga Hills is called “A Head-Hunter's Paradise.” Similarly, in Mary Clark's *A Corner in India*, the third chapter is entitled “A Plunge into Barbarism,” which describes the beginning of American Baptist Missions in the Naga Hills in 1872.

⁵⁸³Clark's letter, “Assam,” *BMM* 77 (February 24, 1897), 191.

⁵⁸⁴Roger Osbrone, *Civilization: A New History of the Western World* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2006), 5.

⁵⁸⁵Barpujari, *The Nagas*, 60.

mission activity could inevitably make easier for colonial officers in dispensing their duty as agents of civilization.

More than thirty years after the failure of the first American Baptist missionary effort (1839-1841), in 1871 an Assamese evangelist named Godhula was sent to Ao Nagas by E.W. Clark, who was also an American Baptist missionary in Assam. Godhula was trained and sent by Clark with the specific intent to prepare the way for the latter for missions among the Ao Nagas. This mission to the Nagas was commended by Mary Clark as “a bold venture” which “no one from civilization had before attempted.”⁵⁸⁶ Subsequently, missions were started for other Naga tribes within a decade or two.

The germination of Christianity among the Nagas was associated with fear and suffering. Likewise, its rapid growth also occurred amidst political tension, oppression and suffering. The invasion by British, followed by its substantial military presence created extreme tension across the Northeast region in general and in the Naga Hills in particular. Not surprisingly, every white person, British or not, was suspect as a “Company agent.”⁵⁸⁷ In 1839, it was reported that “they [Nagas] were in a state of the greatest excitement at the coming of the white face, and suspected the motives I had in coming.”⁵⁸⁸ The Nagas feared that American missionaries were Company agents, coming “to spy out their roads, sources of wealth, number of slaves, amount of population, and means of defence, and the best methods of taking the country.”⁵⁸⁹ When insisted that they were not a part of the Company, the Nagas argued, “Is not your color, your dress, your

⁵⁸⁶Clark, *A Corner in India*, 12.

⁵⁸⁷‘Company’ refers to the British East India Company.

⁵⁸⁸From the journal records of Miles Bronson, the first missionary to the Nagas; Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India*, 232. The Assamese evangelist, Godhula, was suspected at first to be “a Company man.” Clark, *A Corner in India*, 10.

⁵⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 234.

language, the same; and what person would come so far, merely to give us books and teach us religion?”⁵⁹⁰

The American missionizing enterprise was significantly truncated with India's independence in 1947. After the independence, as the fight for Naga political freedom intensified, the Government of India responded by sending even more troops, and in 1955 the government summarily expelled all foreigners from Nagaland and imposed restrictions for all foreign citizens seeking to enter the region. This restriction remains in effect today, and the sole aim of which is primarily to preclude divulging news of gross human rights violation and inhumane atrocities against the Nagas by Indian troops under the guise of fighting against Naga ‘terrorists’.⁵⁹¹ It was then against the backdrop of political turmoil and suffering that Western Christianity was introduced to the Nagas. Eventually, it was also with the backdrop of religio-cultural paradigmatic shift and confusion that the seed of political resistance and self-determination was sown and germinated among the contemporary Nagas, especially following the political independence of India and Myanmar (formerly Burma).

The rate of conversion among the Nagas remained low for decades. After 30 years of proselytization the number of Ao Naga converts totaled 569. In the Angamis tribe, where the process of mission began in 1878, the Christian population was 650 in 1936.⁵⁹² In 1941 Christian Nagas comprised 17.9% of the overall Naga population.⁵⁹³ However, the scenario of conversion changed in the second half of the twentieth century. Beginning

⁵⁹⁰Ibid.

⁵⁹¹For an extensive account of the suffering of Nagas under the Indian military, see Kaka Iralu's *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears*.

⁵⁹²Gundevia, *War and Peace*, 44.

⁵⁹³Richard Eaton, “Comparative History as World History: Religious Conversion in Modern India,” *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 246.

in the 1950s the rate of conversion of Nagas increased dramatically. By 1981, 80.2 percent of Nagas had converted to Christianity, an increase of 64.3 percent in just 40 years.⁵⁹⁴ Today, the census report of India (2001) recorded 90.02% Christian population among the Nagas in Nagaland.⁵⁹⁵

Thus, it may be noted that a correlation exists between the escalated political and military tensions and the swift conversion by the Nagas, and this large scale conversion by the Nagas cannot be understood without serious consideration of the tumultuous sociopolitical situation. The period between the mid 1950s and the early 1980s also mark the darkest and most violent period in the history of the Nagas in the wake of their resistance against the political occupation of India. For now, suffice it to say that for Nagas their act of conversion, which is to identify with their erstwhile Christian colonizers, was in part a form of resistance to their immediate non-Christian colonizer. Even today, many Nagas have the illusion that the West, especially American Christians, and their 'Christian' governments will come to the aid of the Nagas in their struggle for political emancipation.

Missionaries, rice beer, and the demise of Naga culture

The American missionaries to the Nagas, as products of Western culture, were inextricably invested in the notions of progress, the evolution of culture and, consequently, the superiority of the West. Accordingly, these missionaries assumed the role of arbiters and saviors of the 'uncivilized' Nagas. They presumed to decide which elements of Naga culture were 'evil' and proceeded to discourage and, even forbid, those

⁵⁹⁴Ibid., 243-271.

⁵⁹⁵*Census of India* (available from <http://www.censusindia.gov.in>).

activities and beliefs they considered not in congruent with Western Christianity. Christian rules of conduct were drawn up for converts in part to distinguish them from the unconverted. Consequently, Christianity, not colonialism, has marked greater change among the Nagas. “If one responsible dynamic factor were to be singled out for an overall change in the life of the Nagas,” argued Naga Christian leader Khrieleno Terhuja, “it would undoubtedly be the introduction of Christianity among them.”⁵⁹⁶ That being said, Christianity and colonialism were always conjoined to a greater or lesser degree.

Christopher Furer-Haimendorf has argued that “the missionaries encourage their converts to disregard tribal laws and customs even in spheres not directly connected with religion.”⁵⁹⁷ However, for Nagas, laws and customs had always been integral part of their religious life; indeed, ‘religion’ permeated all of life. Therefore, the Naga understanding precluded the possibility of considering any single aspect of life as separate from the whole.

Undoubtedly, most missionaries had good intentions for the Nagas. This does not, however, mean that their actions were constructive. Similar views are increasingly being expressed by native peoples around the world who have experienced christianization by Western missionaries. In *Missionary Conquest* Tinker argued that from a Native American perspective even the best-intentioned missionaries were complicit in and guilty of contributing to cultural genocide of the original inhabitants of the ‘Turtle Island.’⁵⁹⁸ Similarly, Patrick Harris has argued that with an intense desire to propagate the gospel

⁵⁹⁶Terhuja, “The Christian Church Among the Angami Nagas,” in *The Tribal Situation in India*, 294. Terhuja is one of the earliest educated Naga women and leaders.

⁵⁹⁷Furer-Haimendorf, *Naked Nagas: Headhunters of Assam in Peace and War* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spinck & Co., 1946), 52.

⁵⁹⁸Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 1-20.

and to win convert, the missionaries often portrayed “the customs of native peoples as an obstacle to civilization.”⁵⁹⁹

The missionaries saw the Nagas and their culture through the lens of binary oppositions, such as ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’, ‘Christians’ and ‘pagans/heathens’ or ‘light’ and ‘darkness’. Influenced by their culture, they saw many elements of Naga culture requiring termination or cessation. One such element is the drinking of “rice beer,” which they thought was not compatible with Christian living. English writers, both Western and non-Western, refer to this common Naga drink as ‘alcohol’, ‘wine’, ‘liquor’ and ‘beer’. However, each of these terms is misleading, because the purpose of this traditional Naga drink is fundamentally different than those mentioned. Every Naga tribe has a name for this common drink. “Azü”, a Rengma Naga word, will be used in most cases. Additionally, although the traditional Naga drink could become intoxicating when consumed excessively, it was never used as a means of intoxication. This is crucial, because the missionaries forbade the consumption of azü mainly for fear of its potential for intoxication. For Nagas, however, it was a regular food, and people hardly became inebriated because of its consumption.⁶⁰⁰

Before the arrival of the missionaries, all Naga tribes drank azü made from rice. The brewing process differed among Naga tribes, and depending on the method used in the brewing, azü is identified and classified by different names. The traditional drink is often referred to as “rice beer,” but rice was only one of the many items used in the making of azü. *Athazü* or rice beer (*atha*=rice; *zü*=beer) is the most common but not the

⁵⁹⁹Harris, “Anthropology,” in *Missions and Empire*, 239.

⁶⁰⁰The Naga elders I interviewed, including the elders of Nsunyu and Chunlikha villages, Niu Viso (of Angami Naga tribe) and Satemmeren Longkumer (of Ao Naga tribe), all dismissed widespread drunkenness in olden days. Rather, they lamented that drunkenness has become widespread today.

only type. Nagas also used corn, millet, yam, pumpkin, cassava root (tapioca), sweet potato or banana for preparing their beverage. When made of corn, it is known as *nthapvuzü* (*nthapvü*=corn); when made of millet, it is *achengthazü*. Yeast is an important ingredient in the fermenting of any types of beer.

Every Naga family brews its own beverage. When *athazü* is made, rice is first boiled or cooked in a usual way. It is then spread on a mat to cool down. A piece of yeast is broken and mixed with the rice. To ferment, the rice is then put into a bamboo basket lined with leaves. After a day or two, the fermented beverage, which is now called *azü*, is collected by pressing down with a gourd. The pressing is continued for several days until no more liquid can be extracted.

Social functions of azü

Azü played a significant cultural role for Nagas. One Western writer has tried to explain the significance of *azü* in a Western context: “To the Ao [Nagas] a feast without rice-beer is unthinkable, for what wine is to the Italian and whisky is to the Scotchman, rice-beer is to the Naga.”⁶⁰¹ While this example says the significance of *azü* to the Nagas, it is incomplete, because *azü* is much more than a beverage. It served a variety of functions in the life of Nagas and played a significant role in personal and social life, such as in religious rituals and ceremonies, feasts and festivals, rites of passage from birth to death, in hospitality and peacemaking, and in all public functions. In the following pages, I will outline its cultural significance.

1. *Azü* was more than a beverage. It was a form of food, and this cultural fact was obvious to the colonizers. Hutton rightly observed that “it is more than a drink, it is

⁶⁰¹Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 53.

almost the staple article of consumption, the staff of life, and might be reckoned more appropriately as food rather than drink.”⁶⁰² Because azü was mostly made of rice, the staple food of the Nagas, not only was the liquid consumed, but the rice was eaten as well. However, as it was kept for weeks and the liquid pressed, distilled and consumed for days, the residual rice would lose its taste and was used finally as food for domesticated animals.

2. Azü had a significant social function as well. In its function as a gift, when given to relatives and friends it served to identify, affirm and sustain relationships. It was an element of hospitality so that when one decided to visit her friend or relative, especially someone who lived in another village, it was very likely she would take azü with her.

Regarding the role of azü it is said, “*Azü pi apvüshang sagho*” (We built friendship with rice beer). It is also said, “*Azü pi atheghi sagho*” (We built family relations with azü). Azü also had a peaceful and conciliatory role among Nagas. When a person desired reconciliation with an enemy, he would brew azü and offer it to his adversary.⁶⁰³

3. *Azü kethüghü* (*kethüghü* – new), which refers to ‘tender’ beer, was used to feed a nursing infant whose mother was unwell and unable to breast feed or who had the misfortune of losing a mother. Ancient Nagas did not drink any milk. Therefore, in the

⁶⁰²Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, 97.

⁶⁰³Elders of Nsunyu and Chunlikha, interviewed by author, December 11 and 23, 2007. I learned these various uses for azü in my interviews with the elders of Nsunyu and Chunlikha villages. An elder from the Ao and Angami tribes each also related similar explanations in separate interviews on December 7 and December 19 respectively.

event of such misfortune the baby was fed with and sustained by azü, which obviously had a nutritive value for infants as well.

4. Azü also served as a means of providing service to members of one's community by way of offering free drinks to all, which in the literature of Western writers is known as the "Feast of Merit," which will be discussed further in chapter 6. The host family prepared azü, along with meat and rice, and fed the entire village. Every feast was, thus, accompanied by azü in abundance, and the Nagas became inebriated almost only during such festive occasions.

5. Finally, it is said among the Nagas, "*Azü pi anyi sadenong pi kekule sathsü*" (that is, azü enabled the worker to keep his spirit high). In the past, azü brought joy to the worker and eased the hardship of manual labor on the farm. Every meal was accompanied by azü, making it an enjoyable experience. As the Nagas engaged in daily tasks in groups of twenty or more, azü was served at least a few times. And as the people worked together, they sang simultaneously. Today, Naga elders lament that the hills that once reverberated with traditional music remain silent and lifeless. Once an integral part of Naga life, the practice of working and singing, let alone drinking, in groups rarely happen even among those who rely on traditional means of subsistence. Consequently, it is much harder for individuals to toil alone.

Azü and missionaries

When White people first came into contact with the Nagas, they looked down on the Nagas because the Nagas sipped "this abominable beverage."⁶⁰⁴ Butler remarked, "In one corner was a trough filled with some kind of fermented liquor made of rice, which

⁶⁰⁴Butler, *Travels and Adventures*, 41.

was thick and white, and most offensive to our olfactory nerves.”⁶⁰⁵ However, after decades of colonization this attitude changed. Writing forty years later in 1882, R. G. Woodthorpe wrote, “This is an exceedingly toothsome beverage, and at certain times when fresh and well brewed has a refreshing effervescence.”⁶⁰⁶ He also noted that Naga men, women and children all drank azü and “were always ready to share the contents of their cups with us; and after a long and hot climb up hill, to take a short rest in the shadow of the house and a pull at their flagon was never unpleasant.”

The Nagas had never thought of the use of azü as ‘sinful.’ The idea of sin in its consumption was implanted by western missionaries. Furer-Haimendorf who commented that azü was “sweet and frothy, like champagne”⁶⁰⁷ also stated:

Drinkers of rice-beer, the missionaries teach, will burn in hell fire for ever, and the Naga, dazzled by the prestige of the white man and not knowing that since the oldest times wine and beer have been drunk throughout Christendom, eschews his cherished national drink. But although the spirit is willing, the flesh is often weak, and not all converts find it easy to remain true to their resolution; many drink secretly and with a bad conscience.⁶⁰⁸

That missionaries opposed the use of azü from the very beginning can be read from a missionary’s letter: “Total abstinence from all intoxicants is required.” The same missionary also reported that a convert had built his house and was ready to marry, “but he will not marry her until she promises – and practices too – to give up rice-beer drinking.”⁶⁰⁹ At a Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong, Assam, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of mission in Northeast, missionaries from Northeast gathered together to celebrate as well as to discuss mission problems and strategies. One

⁶⁰⁵Ibid. Butler led the military expedition to the Angami Naga region in the winter of 1844-45.

⁶⁰⁶Woodthorpe, “Notes on the Wild Tribes,” 64

⁶⁰⁷Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 59.

⁶⁰⁸Ibid., 53.

⁶⁰⁹Clark, *A Corner in India*, 140.

of the discussion topics was called “maud-drinking” and the following suggestion was made with regard to it.

Maud-drinking.- They [Nagas] ferment the rice, and it becomes eatable. So far, good; but as fermentation proceeds, the liquid which trickles out is intoxicating. This they drink. It seems that the best thing would be to eat the fermented rice, but not drink the liquid. But the former leads to the latter, so we think we must teach them to dispense with both, lest the temple of the Holy Ghost be defiled.⁶¹⁰

In another discussion a few days later, Clark, the pioneer missionary to the Nagas who was in attendance with his wife, made the following remark to the conference attendees: “One difficulty is, the Nagas do not get drunk easily. When does the drunkenness begin? It is difficult to say just what is to be called drunkenness. Total abstinence is best.”⁶¹¹

As the discussion reveals, the problem was not the drinking *per se*, but the presumed drunkenness caused by the drink. Unlike the Nagas, who had no traditional concept of ‘sin’ equivalent or similar to Christian teaching, the western missionaries saw drunkenness as sinful. More than a biblical concept, the teaching of abstinence and a revulsion for alcohol was culturally rooted in American Christianity at that time. During this time, not only was drunkenness condemned, but there was a wide-spread temperance movement in America. Tumultuous periods such as the American Revolution, industrialization and subsequent urbanization generated unprecedented drunkenness, which was blamed for rising unemployment, crime and all sorts of social evils.⁶¹² In reaction, a general sense of prohibitionism arose, especially among Protestant Christians.

⁶¹⁰*The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference, Held in Nowgong (December 18-21, 1886)* (Calcutta: Baptist Missions Press, 1887), 228.

⁶¹¹*Ibid.*, 230.

⁶¹²Mark Keller, “A Historical Overview of Alcohol and Alcoholism,” *Cancer Research* 39 (July 1979): 2822-29.

In 1785, Benjamin Rush wrote an influential booklet entitled “An inquiry into the effects of ardent spirits upon the human body and mind: With an account of the means of preventing, and of the remedies for curing them,” which is believed to be a primary cause for the spread of temperance movement across America.⁶¹³ Gradually, the temperance movement not only denounced intemperance but also any use of alcoholic beverages.⁶¹⁴ The temperance movements or societies got a boost from the religious fervor and revivals of the Second Great Awakening (1800-1830s), which afforded a strong emphasis on personal holiness and perfection. The menace of alcoholic drink was so great that in the state of Massachusetts in 1880, the prison commissioners reported that “ninety out of every hundred persons committed to the prisons, were intemperate; and that the cost of protecting the State from this army of criminals during the year was \$1,971,198.”⁶¹⁵ The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour report of 1879-80 also showed that “eighty-four percent of all the crimes of the State which came before the courts, came directly or indirectly from the abuse of alcoholic stimulants.”⁶¹⁶ Giving us a sense of the prevailing social environment and attitude during the 1880s, Charles Loring Brace wrote:

No language can exaggerate the evils of this fearful curse [i.e., alcoholic drinks] in modern times, especially on the labouring classes of the countries we have named. Only war surpasses it in the harvest of misery and poverty and crime it sows for the families of the poor. It desolates homes, breaks the hearts of women, turns out children worse than orphans on a cold world and thus makes them criminals, impoverishes the labourer, sows quarrels, violence, disturbance, and murders, fills prisons and almshouses and hospitals, and is the prolific cause of idiocy, insanity, disease, and moral and physical degeneration. It would be safe to say that in all northern countries, more than half of all the offences against

⁶¹³Keith A. Mathison, “Origins of and Reasons for the Rejection of Wine,” *IJIM Magazine Online* 3, no. 4 (January, 2001).

⁶¹⁴Keller, “A Historical Overview,” 2825.

⁶¹⁵Charles Loring Brace, *Gesta Christi: A History of Humane Progress Under Christianity* (London; New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882), 435.

⁶¹⁶*Ibid.*

person and property, are caused directly or indirectly by excessive use of alcoholic drinks.⁶¹⁷

Given this magnitude of social problem and consequently negative attitude towards drinking in the West, it is not so surprising that the missionaries would strongly advocate for the obliteration of what they thought was alcoholic. And judging from their particular Christian standpoint, the missionaries vouched for a total abstinence of something that was essential and central to the Naga culture. Because in their view, anything that was not acceptable on the basis of their own cultural and religious standard was not acceptable in any other culture. Wherever they went, as Spear and Kimambo argued, “missionaries brought, and enforced, specifically [Western] cultural norms of religious, social, moral and economic behavior and sought to mold...individuals and societies to them.”⁶¹⁸ So, because of the missionary influence, to this day Naga Protestant Christians equate total abstinence from alcoholic drinks with Christianity and consider Roman Catholic Nagas as ‘non-Christians’ because some older converts from the latter have not rejected azü.

It may be mentioned that the missionaries laid the foundation of division or separation between ‘drinkers’ and ‘non-drinkers’. In one missionary letter, it read, “As the harvest time approached...with more or less drinking and feasting, we are solicitous for these young Christians.” It further noted that “when called to work where the rice-beer was served, these [Christians] withdrew from the crowd and ate their midday meal by themselves.”⁶¹⁹ On the divisive affect of the prohibition of drinking, Hokishe Sema,

⁶¹⁷Ibid., 434.

⁶¹⁸Spear and Kimambo, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 3.

⁶¹⁹Clark, *A Corner in India*, 139.

one of the first Nagas to obtain a theological graduate degree and who later became a prominent state and national political leader, observed that:

Many problems arose between those who still held the faith of their forefathers and the new converts. All new converts had been strictly forbidden to touch alcohol [i.e., azü] in any form. Any new convert who drank after his conversion was expelled from the Christian community. As a result of this there arose a sharp division between the drinkers and non-drinkers now called Christians. Christians were asked to drink only tea. Rice beer called Madhu was a popular drink among the Nagas before the advent of Christianity.⁶²⁰

It is unclear whether a sort of business conspiracy existed between the British tea-planters and the missionaries with regard to the prohibition of drinking azü. What is clear is that such prohibition helped boost the British tea economy in the region. Every ethnic group in the Northeast had its own traditional drink. American Baptist missionaries considered all traditional drinks as alcoholic and inconsistent with Christian living. So, the simultaneous introductions of the prohibition, tea-drinking and tea as cash crop had a booming effect on the English tea in the region. Anthony Gilchrist McCall, who was in charge of the Lushai Hills, observed that the prohibition of the traditional drink by missionaries “had given a wide impetus to the drinking of tea.”⁶²¹ According to Akashe, the British government forbade any Naga from growing more than fifty tea plants for fear of losing the monopoly of tea business.⁶²²

In an effort to stop the drinking of azü, the missionaries encouraged drinking tea and its cultivation. One Western writer observed, “As a substitute for rice-beer the Mission has introduced tea, which drunk without milk is greatly inferior in nutritive value.

⁶²⁰Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, 50.

⁶²¹McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (London: Luzac & Co., Ltd., 1949), 209.

⁶²²Akashe Thong, interviewed by author, December 20, 2007. Akashe is 89 years old and a traditional healer who has practiced traditional healing for decades. He studied under two American missionaries, J.E. Tanquist and G.W. Supplee, in 1944-45. He later suffered torture at the hand of Indian army, Sikh (Punjab) regiment in 1955, when its airplane was brought down by suspected Naga army.

Its other disadvantage is that it has to be bought for hard cash, whereas rice-beer brewed at home from surplus rice.”⁶²³ In an effort to discourage the drinking of azü, American missionaries even sold tea to the Nagas. Sydney Rivenburg wrote, “I have been selling tea...to the Nagas who are becoming regular addicts, but it does not make them drunk – and that is something.”⁶²⁴

Not surprisingly, the prohibition on alcoholic drinks has never been wholly successful; rather, it has historically negative consequences upon the Nagas from the start to now. Some of the reasons for the failure of prohibition and its negative impacts may be noted here. First, while the missionaries preached total abstinence, the British troops and administrators supplied it to the Nagas in exchange for goods and labor.

Second, as Nagas gradually converted to Christianity and abandoned their traditional drink, non-Naga traders made available unlimited supply of non-traditional alcoholic drinks, much stronger and destructive to the Nagas. In the absence of any regulatory mechanism in terms of consumption, distribution and the level of alcoholic content in the drinks, those who brew alcoholic drinks compete for the strongest drink, because the stronger the drink or the higher the content of alcohol, the higher the price and the more the costumers for it. This is more so after the declaration of Nagaland as a ‘dry’ state in 1989.

Third, and as a consequent to the above, alcoholism which was unknown to Nagas has become a dreaded social problem. Amidst deteriorating socio-political circumstance,

⁶²³Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 53.

⁶²⁴Narola Rivenburg, ed. *The Star of the Hills: Letters from Rev. Sidney and Hattie Rivenburg, Pioneer Missionaries in Assam (1883-1923)* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1942), 112.

the Nagas have turned to alcohol and drugs to numb the pain and humiliation of living under political and military oppression, unemployment and social dysfunction.

Fourth, the Nagaland state government introduced a bill known as the “Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act 1989” that declared Nagaland a ‘dry’ state.⁶²⁵ However, this legal mandate has not been properly enforced and served only to raise the price of liquor exorbitantly, impacting those who drink and their families and benefiting illegal sellers.

Finally, to this day, Naga Christians believe strongly that alcohol is anathema to Christianity. All who drink are looked down upon and criticized for engaging in ‘unchristian’ behavior such that alcoholics and habitual drinkers avoid social interaction with church goers and often form their own group. So, those who drink have psychological repercussions, because drinking is illegal and, by Naga Christian standards, it is a sin, which means that the drinker is both ‘criminal’ and ‘sinner’. Consequently, those who drink have their self-worth, self-estimate and social-standing gravely undermined by the habit, and unlike in the pre-Christian era, those who drink do so with bad conscience. With the disorientation of the mind or the worldview of the Nagas, what was once considered culturally essential and vital for living has come to be utterly negative today.

Thus far, I have pointed out how the prohibition of the drinking of azü, which was once an integral part of the Naga cultural life, affected the social life of the Nagas. In the following pages, I will discuss some other prohibitions imposed on the Naga converts by the missionaries.

⁶²⁵Under this legal mandate, the brewing of azü for private consumption is permitted.

Prohibition of the practice of morung

P. Moasosang, a prominent Naga leader, noted that “as a mark of conversion, the new converts were required to abandon many indigenous customs and practices which the Mission thought were not consistent with their theology.” He further observed that “this view seems to reflect more or less, their [i.e., missionaries’] assumption that the values they treasured in their culture had universal validity.”⁶²⁶ One such customs required of Christian to abandon was what is called “morung.”⁶²⁷

Morung refers to a Naga traditional institution which served many functions in traditional society. It is often called a “bachelors’ house” by Western writers because unmarried young men slept there until they got married and began a family. But it is more than a building where unmarried men slept. It was a place of recreation and entertainment and also a center for administering discipline and discussion of community affairs,⁶²⁸ where young unmarried men learned tradition, stories, songs, dances, handicrafts, social norms and values.⁶²⁹ Importantly, it was also a “ritual center” where ritual activities involving the community took place.⁶³⁰

In sum, the morung was the institution that undergirded transmission of the Naga traditions from generation to generation. It was the place where the past and the future

⁶²⁶Moasosang, “The Naga Search for Self-Identity,” in *A Common Perspective on North-East India* (Calcutta: Pannalal Das Gupta, 1967), 53.

⁶²⁷“Morung” is believed to be an Assamese word adopted and popularized by Western writers. Every Naga tribe has a word for this institution, however, today morung is commonly used by Naga writers because there is no common term in a Naga language.

⁶²⁸M. Alemchiba Ao, “Problems of Re-Adjustment to a New Situation,” in *Tribal Situation in India*, 482.

⁶²⁹Some Naga tribes had an equivalent house for women; however, among others, women slept together in the houses of widows or older women who had never been married.

⁶³⁰Anungla Aier, “Cultural Change among the Nagas: Festivals and Dress,” in *Naga Society: Continuity and Change*, ed. N. Venuh (Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2004), 53.

converged in a present space. In other words, it was an institution where the present generation was shown the direction of their future by pointing to and imparting the values of the past. And until its gradual decline and final abandonment after decades of westernization, the institution of morung “had been the most powerful influence in the Naga society.”⁶³¹ Naga writer Alemchiba Ao observed that “with the decline of this Institution and in the absence of any other Institution in its place the discipline and orderliness particularly among the young people became deteriorated and a vacuum was thus created in the village social organization.”⁶³² Given its crucial role in the linkage between the past and the future, thus, the cessation of the institution derailed the continuity of cultural knowledge and practice among the Nagas.

Additionally, it was a place where guests and visitors were entertained and served as a sanctuary for fugitives and alleged criminals who entered the morung could not be harmed until his case had been heard and justice determined. Even if a person was alleged to have committed murder his protection was assured until the case against him had been duly deliberated and decided.⁶³³

Mills, one of the last British administrators in the Naga Hills, has rightly observed that the outward state of the building of the morung in a village was “sure indication of the state of the village itself.” He wrote, “Decaying ‘morungs’ means a decaying village, and well-used and well-kept ‘morungs’ a vigorous community.”⁶³⁴ Writing from his experience as an administrator, Mills observed:

⁶³¹Ao in *Tribal Situation in India*, 482.

⁶³²*Ibid.*

⁶³³Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, 51-2.

⁶³⁴*Ibid.*, 49.

It is in the ‘morung’ that he fags for other boys and is taught his duties in life and generally hammered into shape. This means that the ‘morung’ tends to take the place of his father as a disciplinarian. This is most important, for it is from a son’s feelings towards his father as disciplinarian that one of the great stresses of the family complex arises. Looking back over the thousands of Naga disputes that have been brought before me in the course of my service, it certainly seems to me that quarrels between fathers and sons are more frequent in tribes which have no ‘morungs’. In the Sema tribe they are disastrously common and, as the son grows up, a feeling of rivalry toward his father is very apt to develop. Among the Angamis serious quarrels are not common, but a son is apt to resent any form of discipline, which, in truth, an Angami father rarely tries to exercise. In the Ao tribe, where the ‘morungs’ play an important part, quarrels between fathers and sons are rare.”⁶³⁵

In his book, *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam*, William Smith, who taught in a Bible school for the Ao Nagas, noted that “boys in Christian families are refusing to serve at the young men’s house [i.e., morung].” Smith further observed that the morung “was an important educational institution for the boys” and the breaking from this institution “destroys a valuable disciplinary agency and causes the boys to lose respect for the authority of their elders.”⁶³⁶ It is rare for an American missionary to mention the negative effect of the process of missionization on the Nagas. Probably, this was so because Smith was not a ‘real’ missionary, but a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago, conducting research for his doctoral dissertation in anthropology/sociology.

Smith was careful not to blame missionaries for the breakdown of this institution. His statement is worded so that Naga “Christian families” and Naga “boys in Christian families” are blamed. At least, he acknowledged, unlike other missionaries, the destruction of a fundamental Naga institution by ‘Naga Christians’ and the consequences for Naga society.

⁶³⁵Ibid., 50.

⁶³⁶William Carlson Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam: A Study in Ethnology and Sociology* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1925), 193.

Nagas and non-Naga scholars alike believe that missionaries were at fault for the disappearance of this important practice. During a visit to the Nagas in 1935-36, Furer-Haimendorf asked a Naga pastor why the “bachelors’ halls” were no longer used, the pastor replied, “How could a Christian boy sleep in these houses of the heathen? ...To use them would be against our [Christian] rules.”⁶³⁷ Mills remarked that the Mission’s prohibition of the institution of morung was “a very dangerous step,” because such a move entailed a serious psychological impact on the Nagas.⁶³⁸ Not only did the mission forbid participation in morung, but it also generated an alternative for the converts. Ms. Clark quoted a fellow missionary’s upbeat letter about “a religious and social reform” that was underway in Molung, in which it was said,

Instead of congregating promiscuously at difference houses [morungs] to sleep at night, singing objectionable songs, telling doubtful stories, and engaging in lewd conversation, these young reformers separated themselves and built a dormitory for their own accommodation.⁶³⁹

The prohibition of the Naga morung was based on the popular belief that it was a heathen institution where unchristian conducts took place. In the mind of missionaries, anything that predates ‘the dawning of light’ was all darkness, demonic, sinful and unchristian. Therefore, they sought for its cessation, which like many other things finally did. Anungla Aier, a Naga anthropologist, argued that the importance of the morung declined with the growth of Christianity among the Nagas as “the Christian Nagas began to develop an aversion towards the Morung considering it as the devil’s altar.”⁶⁴⁰ And as

⁶³⁷Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 51.

⁶³⁸Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, 49.

⁶³⁹Clark, *A Corner in India*, 138-9. It needs mention here that each clan group or *khel* in the village had its own morung; so the “different houses” points to the fact that Molung had not only one or two but more.

⁶⁴⁰Aier, “Cultural Change among the Nagas,” 53.

the morung declined, the church rose to fill the void, and finally it “replaced the Morung as the social and ritual center of the community.”⁶⁴¹

Strict observance of Sabbath or Sunday

From the journal record of Bronson, the first missionary to the Nagas, we learn the general attitude of the missionaries toward the observance of the Sabbath. On December 22, 1839, during his second visit to Namsang Nagas, Bronson wrote:

At break of day hearing a great tumult, I went out and found almost the whole village engaged in preparations to build me a house. I requested my interpreter to inform the chief, that I was highly gratified to find him so ready to assist me, and that I very much needed a house to make me comfortable;-but it was the Lord’s day, and I could not build on that day, and that I wished to see him early the next morning.⁶⁴²

The missionaries adhered to a strict observance of Sunday as a ‘holy day’ and imposed the same rule on the converts. To them, the faithful observance of Sunday as “the Lord’s day” was one of the characteristics of true conversion, and all who broke the Sabbath rules were ‘excommunicated’ from the membership of the church. In one missionary’s letter, we read, “Every form of demon worship, open or suspected, was attacked – Sunday-breaking, rice-beer drinking, licentious, and all social vices.”⁶⁴³ At the Jubilee Conference in 1886 “Sabbath-breaking” was discussed, and it was reported, “If we do not discourage this Sabbath-breaking, can we consistently oppose any Sabbath-breaking? The Nagas have been opposed in this, but to little effect. There seems no resort but discipline.”⁶⁴⁴ As a result of this strict imposition, by 1877 one missionary could

⁶⁴¹Ibid.

⁶⁴²Barpujari, *The American Missionaries*, 239.

⁶⁴³Clark, *A Corner in India*, 138.

⁶⁴⁴*Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference*, 228.

report to the home mission organization that “the Lord’s Day, as day of rest, is respected almost as well as in America.”⁶⁴⁵

The flip side of the imposition of a strict Sunday observance is the prohibition of work on a Sunday, which created confusion and hardship for the Nagas, especially during sowing and harvest times when crops had to be sown or harvested on time. The concept of a seven-day week was totally alien to the Nagas, and their idea of a ‘holy day’ was very different from that of Christianity. In Naga tradition, a holy day or ceremonial day could be any day because without the concept and structure of the seven week every day has equal status. Traditionally, ‘holy days’ were observed to mark the end of one agricultural season and the beginning of the next. Consequently, although many, religious observances did not hamper the regular flow of work because they fell in between two seasons when people had leisure moments.

Furthermore, the idea that particular days were to be ‘holy’ was unknown and even confusing to the Nagas who made no distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ or ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’. Today, the Nagas have come to radically compartmentalize their life to ‘things secular’ and ‘things sacred.’ This dichotomy creates in their minds that some days such as Sundays or religious holidays are holier than the regular days and that church related or ‘religious’ works are holier and greater than ‘secular’ works.

Prohibition of folk dances, songs, ceremonies and festivals

In addition to the prohibition of the cultural use of azü and the institution of the morung, customary feasts, ceremonies, traditional songs and dances were also forbidden.

⁶⁴⁵“Sixty-Third Annual Report of Assam Baptist Missionary Union,” *BMM* 57 (May 1877), 217.

With regard to the declining of such traditions, a missionary's report, dated February 28, 1888, contains the following:

Our own village is quiet, peaceable and prosperous; gradually the old festive occasions marked by riotousness and drunkenness are growing less, and little by little the old heathen rites and ceremonies are being abandoned. As we return from our tours among the other villages, I cannot tell how civilized and mannerly our people seem to us.⁶⁴⁶

Indigenous dances and songs were indispensable to the people's social life and wellbeing but the missionaries believed them to be vehicles for the worship of 'demons' and trafficking with 'evil spirits.'⁶⁴⁷ And because of this presumed association with 'demon worship' they had to be replaced with Western Christian hymns for the worship of 'the true' God. As a result, instead of the familiar old traditional songs, Nagas converts found themselves singing, "Thar is eh hap pie lend, fer fer eh weh."⁶⁴⁸ One missionary wrote, "I cannot tell you how it thrills our hearts to hear these heathen voices singing so sweetly the praises of Jesus."⁶⁴⁹ Mills observed that "neither the songs nor the dances are in any way indecent" and added that the prohibition of the singing and dancing, not only added dullness to village life, but seriously contributed to the loss of genealogies and traditions embedded in the practices.⁶⁵⁰

Prohibition of traditional attires

Traditional clothing and special accessories, such as bangles, earrings, headdresses and shawls, were forbidden for Naga converts because these were believed

⁶⁴⁶*BMM* (June 1888), 160.

⁶⁴⁷Joseph Puthnpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1984), 145.

⁶⁴⁸In her letter, Hattie Riverburg, wife of Sydney Rivenburg, mentioned that this was how the Naga converts sang in English 'There Is a Happy Land.' Rivenburg, *The Star of the Naga Hills*, 98.

⁶⁴⁹W.E. Witter in *BMM* (January 1887), 23.

⁶⁵⁰Mills, "The Effects on the Naga Tribes," 81.

to be elements used in ‘devil’ worship. Each of these items had specific socio-cultural significance. In particular, the shawl is given distinctive texture, design and artistic features which express definite cultural meaning. A person’s tribal connection and social contribution are easily identified by the shawl an individual wears. However, the arrival of the missionaries was followed by the introduction of foreign fabrics and garments which replaced traditional clothing. Indeed, it was reported that a young Naga was denied baptism because he declined to wear the recommended Assamese clothes.⁶⁵¹

Akashé, who attended a mission school and was taught by American missionaries, recollected that in the mid 1940’s a male student could wear the traditional hair style until he reached Class VI, but had to have an English haircut from Class VII. Likewise, he was allowed to wear short-pants up to Class VI, but was required to wear long-pants beginning in Class VII. Writing in 1933, Mills admitted that “both government and the Mission have in the past been guilty of encouraging...the tendency to...discard the old dress”⁶⁵² and added that, although the attitude of both had changed, under this influence the Nagas still said that they wore pants ““because they are Christians.””⁶⁵³

The mission triad – education, medicine and proselytization

In the following pages I will present a brief description of the work of missionaries in relation to education, medicine and proselytization. I will give particular attention to how education and medicine were understood and used by missionaries as a means to an end, i.e., conversion.

⁶⁵¹Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 153.

⁶⁵²Bodley, *Tribal Peoples and Development Issues*, 76.

⁶⁵³*Ibid.*

‘Civilizing the illiterate Nagas’

Attaining literacy signifies passage from barbarism to civilization. As Judith Marshall contends, it is not simply about language, its meaning and skills or grammar and syntax, but about social status and class “where schooling was signaled as the way to bridge the distance between ‘savage’ and ‘civilized.’”⁶⁵⁴ The effort to civilize the savage, illiterate Nagas was a cooperative enterprise between the British colonizers and the American missionaries; and both believed education was a means to an end. While the missionary’s goal of education was the conversion of ‘demon worshipers,’ the aim for the British colonizers was pacification of the ‘wild headhunters.’

While both had stakes in fostering Western education, the project of education and evangelization was overseen by American missionaries. When Jenkins, who is referred to as “the originator of the mission,”⁶⁵⁵ invited the American Baptists to undertake the project of proselytizing the natives, he also offered of financial assistance for establishing a school and purchasing a printing press. The work of Bronson among the Namsang Nagas was enthusiastically supported by British officials, including the pioneer tea-planter, Charles Bruce. This encouraged the home board of American missions to recruit and send immediately a missionary couple and Bronson’s sister to join the effort.⁶⁵⁶ By cooperating with Bronson, Jenkins had hoped “to see civilization greatly advanced among these Nagas, and our supremacy gradually extended over the hills” and believed that without such cooperative effort in the civilizing mission “there seem to be

⁶⁵⁴Marshall, *Literacy, Power, and Democracy in Mozambique* (Boulder; San Francisco: Westview Press, 1993), xv.

⁶⁵⁵Gammell, *A History of American Baptist Missions*, 217.

⁶⁵⁶Milton Sangma, *History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India (1836-1950)*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987), 219.

little hope of effecting any great change in the habits of the people, or our being able to avail...of the great natural resources of the fine tract of mountainous country.”⁶⁵⁷ Jenkins remained a generous benefactor throughout Bronson’s two year mission among the Namsang Nagas. In his letter to Bronson on May 28, 1840, Jenkins proposed to contribute Rs. 100 monthly and wrote:

...I think it would be prudent if you were to say nothing about appropriation made by the Government as they are very much afraid of any precedent of this sort ... for the same wants exist with all the missions as with yours, and if the gift to us makes no noise, I may be able to get it continued.⁶⁵⁸

Similarly, another British colonial officer, W. Robinson, in *A Descriptive Account of Assam* (1841), expressed hope that the educational and literary efforts of the missionaries in “the ‘alpine tract’ of the Naga country could perhaps be made to support a greater population of ‘savages.’”⁶⁵⁹

In return for British government assistance Bronson consulted with British officers, especially Jenkins, seeking advice and making ‘useful’ suggestions relative to the welfare of the Nagas. In written correspondence between Bronson and Jenkins, it is clear that Bronson served as an agent for Jenkins. In one letter, Bronson wrote:

I informed him [the village elder] that you had been informed of their wish to have books – and to become wise – and that you were highly gratified on account of it – and that you wished to benefit them and their country every way in your power and wished to teach them the useful arts – and how to live more comfortably on their own Hills.⁶⁶⁰

At the behest of Jenkins, Bronson persuaded the Nagas to take up tea cultivation and learn how to make salt. The response of the Nagas to the suggestion was far from positive, to which Bronson wrote to Jenkins, “I regret to say that I feel almost

⁶⁵⁷Barpujari, *The American Missionaries*, 256.

⁶⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 257-8.

⁶⁵⁹Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, 28.

⁶⁶⁰Barpujari, *The American Missionaries*, 262.

discouraged about the Nagas becoming a reform – civilized – and Christian people.”⁶⁶¹ Among other things, Bronson also suggested to Jenkins that a British administrator be posted near Naga villages and to take tour of the Naga Hills more frequently. He also suggested that the government should think of relocating the Nagas “all on some peak near the [salt] wells, and Tea – or a part near the wells – and a part at the Tea Gardens.”⁶⁶² Evidently, this symbiosis of relationship was aimed at yielding mutual benefits for the two forces.

As regards the professed primary objective of fostering education among the Nagas, one missionary report reads, “The main objective of these schools is the proclamation of the gospel to the people of the village....”⁶⁶³ With regard to one of the first mission schools among the Nagas, American missionary W. F. Dowd, wrote,

THE Impur school is intended to give a primary education to as many boys and girls as possible and to fit them to go out as teachers and preachers.... They study arithmetic, writing, spelling, physiology, hygiene, geography, and history; at the same time special attention is given to the study of the Scriptures and practical Christian work. The brighter pupils are taught English as soon as they can read their own language, and thus is opened to them the way for more advanced work in secular subjects as well as for the study of the entire Bible.⁶⁶⁴

This being the goal, most “school-teachers are also preachers.”⁶⁶⁵ Thus, we cannot agree more with Norman Etherington’s observation: “Few missionaries treated education as an end in itself; schooling was ancillary to the primary object of Christian evangelism.”⁶⁶⁶ With regard to the introduction of colonial education among the Native Americans, Bobby Wright and William G. Tierney claimed that the efforts of the colonizer to provide

⁶⁶¹Ibid.

⁶⁶²*Foreign and Political Proceedings* (FPP) (November 9, 1840): no. 82.

⁶⁶³*BMM* (July 1884): 259.

⁶⁶⁴*BMM* 85, no. 1 (January 1905): 19.

⁶⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶Etherington, “Education and Medicine,” in *Missions and Empire*, 261.

education were “designed to Christianize and ‘civilize’ the Indians, thus saving them from the folly of their ‘heathenish’ and ‘savage’ ways. The hope was that educated Indians, as schoolmaster and preachers, would become missionary agents among their own brethren.”⁶⁶⁷

The American Baptist missionaries had the strong conviction that the natives’ ability to read and write would enhance and solidify the work of missions as it was reported by Clark, “...as these [Nagas] know how to read the Scriptures, we have a better foundation for church-membership and for preachers.”⁶⁶⁸ As Nagas expressed a growing desire for education, as reported by one missionary, English schools sprang up to meet the need, and “nearly all of them included compulsory Bible training, which was supplied by teachers paid by the mission.”⁶⁶⁹ As a result, “more than one-third of the baptisms came through the 77 schools thus supported.”⁶⁷⁰

With their goal clearly marked, the missionaries transcribed several Naga languages into Roman letters, produced dictionaries and translated the Bible and hymns. The Bible, especially the Gospels, was translated for use as texts in schools. So, as school children learned to read biblical stories, they simultaneously imbibed Christian ideas and values with the acquiring of the ability to read and write. Higher or secular education was not the primary concern of the missionaries; rather, they favored elementary education or

⁶⁶⁷Wright and Teirney, “American Indians in Higher Education: A History of Cultural Conflict,” in *Sources: Notable Selections in Race and Ethnicity*, 2nd ed., ed. Adalberto Aguirre, Jr. and David V. Baker (Guilford, CT: Dushkin/GcGraw-Hill, 1998), 199.

⁶⁶⁸*BMM* (July 1884), 259.

⁶⁶⁹Torbet, *Venture of Faith*, 496.

⁶⁷⁰*Ibid.* This statistic figure refers to a neighboring tribal people, known as the Garos. The Christian schools, however, yielded almost the same result among the Nagas and the Mizos.

the ability to read and write in vernacular, because they believed that the local language was the fastest means to spread Christianity.⁶⁷¹

As more Nagas expressed their need for educational opportunities, it was used to press for observance of Christian rules and values. In one report, Clark wrote, “In every village where there is a school, the Sabbath is so far observed as a day of rest that work is not done in their fields.”⁶⁷² Thus, the establishment of mission schools has the specific object of spreading Christianity and Western values not only among the Nagas. Below is a description of the effects of mission schools among the indigenous Konds in central India.

So schools were not just secular addition to Mission work: they were central to it, and it seems that the fundamental aim of Mission schools was to undermine traditional beliefs and inculcate a reformed pattern of behaviour and attitudes, preparing the ground for conversion, and creating a missionized elite among the population, who would see the world as missionaries wanted them to see it, separated from their fellows by many symbols. This small, school-educated elite provided the way into the culture for the spread of Christianity.⁶⁷³

‘Healing the bodies of savage people’

After completing a degree in medicine while on furlough, an American missionary referred to his medical work among the Nagas as an attempt to “heal the bodies of this savage people.”⁶⁷⁴ This “healing of savage bodies,” like education, was adopted as a means to an end by most missionaries. So, we could not agree more with Etherington’s contention that “as with education, evangelical rather than philanthropic imperatives guided mission medicine.”⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷¹Etherington, *Missions and Empire*, 266.

⁶⁷²*BMM*, (July 1884), 259.

⁶⁷³Felix Padel, *The Sacrifice of Human Being: British Rule and the Konds of Orissa* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995). 219.

⁶⁷⁴*BMM* (July 1896), 299.

⁶⁷⁵Etherington, *Missions and Empire*, 275.

In 1888, after spending close to two decades among the Ao Nagas, Clark begged for an additional missionary, and he wrote, “It would be of much service to the cause if he has some knowledge in medicine, say enough for a hospital nurse.”⁶⁷⁶ All missionaries practiced healing, but not all missionary healers were doctors.⁶⁷⁷ As for example, Haggard admitted in his letter, “Before coming here I did not plan for or anticipate this, but I have been forced to take up the work of administering medicine....”⁶⁷⁸

Among the American missionaries to the Nagas, Sydney White Rivenburg embodies best a proselytizer, a medical assistant and an educator – the mission triad. Rivenburg worked among the Ao Nagas at the beginning of his missionary career, but later moved to work among the Angami Nagas. After five long years of discouragement of not seeing any converts, Rivenburg left for U.S.A. on a furlough. During the vacation, he attended Baltimore Medical College and graduated in 1894. The same year in summer he also passed the Pennsylvania State Board examination and returned to the Angamis with a medical degree.

Even before he acquired a medical degree, he had been deeply involved in administering medicine. On one occasion he said, “Since August I have been giving medicine, and this has offered many opportunity for introducing the great healer.”⁶⁷⁹ Like other missionaries, whenever he went out, he carried with him “a Scripture portion, hymnbook, pills, quinine, chlorodine, and pain-killer,” which he considered “my weapons for spiritual warfare.”⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁶*BMM* (September 1888), 371.

⁶⁷⁷Etherington, *Missions and Empire*, 281.

⁶⁷⁸*BMM* (July 1895), 310.

⁶⁷⁹*BMM* (July 1891), 275.

⁶⁸⁰*BMM* (October 1890), 413.

Effects of christianization on Nagas

Norman Etherington, in his “Introduction” to *Missions and Empire*, wrote, “The explosive expansion of Christianity in Africa and Asia during the last two centuries constitutes one of the most remarkable cultural transformations in the history of mankind.”⁶⁸¹ Similarly, Thomas Spear and Isaria Kimambo have argued that “Christianity may well be the single most important legacy of colonialism and, far from dying with it, has gone on to become one of the most dynamic social movements in Africa today.”⁶⁸² The latter remark pertains to Africa, but it could very well be applied to other locations and situations around the world, including the Naga Hills. Christianity has secularized the Nagas who made no secular and religious dichotomy and has been persistent vehicle for modernization of the Nagas. In many ways Western missionary projects undermined traditional beliefs and lifestyle and inculcated a reformed pattern of behavior and attitudes that reoriented or disoriented the entirety of Naga existence. For example, the Nagas had no concept of salvation or the end of the world, but today their beliefs and actions are being shaped and determined in large part by the notions of apocalyptic end of the world, individual salvation and eternal damnation.

American missionary project among the Nagas finally ended in 1955 because of the adoption of a policy by the Government of India that forced all Westerners out of the Naga Hills. However, connection between the Naga church and the ‘mother’ church remains to this day, which is maintained primarily in two ways: visits by American Baptist leaders to Nagaland for religious anniversaries and seminars and higher religious training by Naga church leaders in U.S. To underline this close connection, there is a

⁶⁸¹Etherington, *Missions and Empire*, 1.

⁶⁸²Spear and Kimambo, *East African Expressions of Christianity*, 4.

saying among some Nagas that when a Naga Christian dies she/he goes first to America and then to heaven.

Once the Nagas were believed to be ‘heathens’ and ‘savages’ who were therefore lost and living in the Hills where “heathenish darkness and ignorance reign supreme.”⁶⁸³ And the American missionaries felt obligated to convert the Nagas to the ‘Light’; but the conversion carried a heavy price. The Nagas were drastically transformed, gradually losing much of their tradition in the process. Unfortunately, to this day, some Western Christians entertain the notion that Nagas are merely Christianized and not truly converted. “So this begs the question: Were the Nagas genuinely born again or did they merely accept the Christian religion?” queried John Roughton, a Pentecostal minister who is married to a Naga and currently serving in Nagaland. “Many of these people are either not genuinely saved or not sure. *We must continue to evangelize each generation*,” he added (italic mine).⁶⁸⁴

The belief that “we must continue to evangelize each generation” and that the Nagas need to be ‘saved’ with the help of the West’s unceasing re-evangelization smacks an aura of incessant spiritual colonialism and supremacy. This mental attitude confirms that the marginalized colonial subjects have never been and will never be able to meet the expectation of the dominant culture. In 1899, a missionary to the Nagas confessed that, “The heathen can get on without us; we cannot without the heathen. If we fail in our duty they will be in worse condition than they have been for thousands of years.”⁶⁸⁵ The notion that it is the “White man’s burden” to christianized the marginalized religion,

⁶⁸³BMM (1897), 104.

⁶⁸⁴Roughton, <http://www.johnroughton.org/html/history.html> (accessed July 2, 2007).

⁶⁸⁵S.A. Perrine, BMM (1899), 100-102.

westernize their culture, democratize their government and capitalize their economy has been the main cause for much of the turmoil in modern world. In chapter 5, I will detail further how a section of American Christians and media continue to portray the Nagas as “former headhunters” or “once headhunters.”

CHAPTER FIVE: COLONIAL PORTRAIT AND THE COLONIZING OF THE MIND

One day the leader of the [Naga] party came to me and said: ‘Come up to our village in the hills, Sahib [Sir], and teach our children to talk with the books.’ ‘Not much,’ I answered, ‘I prefer that my head decorate my own shoulders rather than that my skull should grin from the front of a house! You know that you live in a head-hunter’s paradise, and a white man’s head would be such a special prize that mine would desert me in a very short time!’⁶⁸⁶

Indigenous peoples around the world have been the subject of colonial stereotype. For example, the indigenous Yanomami of Amazon rainforest (in Southern Venezuela and Northern Brazil) were portrayed as “the fierce people.”⁶⁸⁷ Similarly, the Nagas were infamously depicted as “the world famous headhunters.”⁶⁸⁸ Again, it was claimed that Yanomami were “in a state of chronic warfare.”⁶⁸⁹ It was also said that for the Nagas, “war is normal; peace is abnormal.”⁶⁹⁰ Furthermore, it was said that the Yanomami’s life revolved around warfare; it is also said that “headhunting” was “the very core of the Naga culture.”⁶⁹¹ At least for the Yanomami, efforts have made “to help revise the

⁶⁸⁶Quoted in Bowers, *Under Head-Hunter’s Eyes*, 198. They are recorded words of Clark before he went to the Nagas.

⁶⁸⁷Napoleon Chagnon, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).

⁶⁸⁸Fred E. Randle and William W. Hughes, *Hell on Land Disaster at Sea: The Story of Merrill’s Marauders and the Sinking of the Rhona* (Turner Publishing Company, 2003), 44.

⁶⁸⁹Chagnon, *Yanomamo*, 3.

⁶⁹⁰Mills, “The Effects on the Naga Tribes,” 71.

⁶⁹¹One Indian writer has argued that headhunting “was the main spring of their [Nagas’] lives and their activities and behaviour were inextricably woven round this practice....With the disappearance of head-hunting...the former village raiding found expression in underground activities.” See R.N. Haldipur, “Policy Towards and Administration of the Tribes of North-East India,” in *The Tribal Situation in India*, 307. It would be absurd for Nagas to make a counterclaim that the banning of the ‘core values’ of Hindu culture, such as the oppressive caste system, widow burning and child marriage, have given rise to Indian government’s political violence and oppression and the general social discrimination against the Nagas and

exaggerated representation.”⁶⁹² For the Nagas, however, the colonial portrayal is sustained by the frequent and continued use of words such as “former headhunters” and “once head hunters.” While the victor had the privilege of defining the vanquished through literature, the non-literate Naga culture deterred the Nagas from telling the story from their perspective. So, to a certain extent, the Nagas’ image as ‘wild’ and ‘warlike’ continues to remain the imaginative reproduction of colonial people who found the Nagas in their state of ‘barbarism’ and ‘savagery’.

Consequently, as a result of very little or no work been done to revise their image, the contemporary Nagas have only ‘graduated’ from ‘headhunters’ to being ‘former headhunters.’ Therefore, this work is, in part, to represent the Nagas not as ‘wild and barbaric savages’ but as ‘normal’ human beings both in the past as well as at the present. In order to accomplish this, I will outline traditional warfare which included the practice of decapitation. I will then argue that the term ‘headhunter’ was simply an invention of the colonizer, which was intended to colonize the colonized mind, i.e., to undermine, demoralize and negate the identity and culture of the colonized and to bring about conversion and change that would mirror the image of the colonial masters. The colonizing of the mind then created self-primitivization and self-alienation, paving the way for a desire to emulate the colonial master.

other ethnic minorities in India. Nonetheless, this Indian writer’s misleading view of the Nagas freedom movement as sheer atavistic violence has found currency among many.

⁶⁹²Jacques Lizot, *Tales of the Yanomami* (Cambridge [UK]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), xiv-xv; also see, R.B. Fergunson, *Yanomami Warfare: A Political History* (University of Washington Press, 1995).

The practice of warfare in traditional Naga culture

Beginning from the 1800s, cultural evolutionists undeniably equated cultural development with progress.⁶⁹³ The evolutionists drew comparison between cultures in order to establish their positions of progress in the unilinear history of evolution. For example, Lewis Henry Morgan's unilinear theory of cultural evolution held that human societies progress through three distinct stages: "from savagery, through barbarism to civilization."⁶⁹⁴

Being profoundly influenced and therefore biased toward a unilinear theory of cultural evolution, most Western writers thought their culture represented the pinnacle of cultural progress. Conversely, all indigenous cultures were relegated to the lowest stage of progress. One colonial writer described the Nagas as "very low in the scale of civilization" and deserving of careful study.⁶⁹⁵ Another recommended a study of the Naga languages because, "they represent the characteristics of the earliest pre-historic periods."⁶⁹⁶ Still another remarked that "in actual mental capacity [the Nagas] are rather low."⁶⁹⁷ In the scale of cultural progress, one writer argued, "head-hunting is a survival of cannibalism."⁶⁹⁸ Therefore, the attempt to find a trait of savagery or a lack of progress among the Nagas ended with 'headhunting'. In the following pages I will describe traditional Naga warfare, including decapitation.

⁶⁹³Some prominent proponents of cultural evolution were Herbert Spencer, Edward B. Taylor and Lewis Henry Morgan.

⁶⁹⁴See Morgan, *Ancient Society; or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization* (New York, H. Holt and Company, 1877).

⁶⁹⁵Quoted in Gertrude M. Godden, "Naga and Other Frontier Tribes of North-East India," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 27 (1898): 9.

⁶⁹⁶Hyde Clark is quoted in S. E. Peale, "The Nagas and Neighbouring Tribes," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 3 (1874): 481.

⁶⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 478.

⁶⁹⁸A.J.N. Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-Hunters of Nigeria* (London: Seeley, Service & Co., Ltd., 1912), 178.

Among the Nagas, the intent to engage in a war with an enemy village must be made known first. After a village reaches a decision to wage a war, it also decides on the number of days after which the war would be carried out. A messenger is then sent to the hostile village with the notice of an impending attack. For the Rengma Nagas, the disclosure of intent is to send a robe with knots.⁶⁹⁹ For example, a ten-knot robe would indicate a ten day notice before waging war. During the notified period, both sides must refrain from any attack.

The Nagas did not have a professional or standing army. Therefore, all able men of the village are required to participate in one way or another. While most of the men are assigned to combat, a few remain as village sentries. Ritual or ceremonial observances both precede and succeed a war. So a war does not begin or end with the actual beginning or end of the war. Three days before going to war, all male combatants are required to complete a ceremony in preparation for war. This is to enhance self-control and moral discipline.⁷⁰⁰ First, they must not speak ill of anyone. Second, they must not cause injury to any person. Third, sexual chastity is required. Fourth, they must prepare their own food from a temporary hearth outside the house. Fifth, spices that flavor the food must be eliminated. This dietary restriction is continued after the war as well. Sixth, they must

⁶⁹⁹Elders of Nsunyu and Chunlikha, interviewed by author, December 9, 2007. Some tribes used bamboo or chilli products for the same purpose. See R.R. Shimray, *Origin and Culture of Nagas* (New Delhi: Aruna Printing Press, 1985), 71-97.

⁷⁰⁰The number of ceremonial days varies from village to village. For example, it was reported that Ao Nagas observed one day of *genna* (ceremony) before leaving for war. The word, *genna* is believed to be an Assamese word, adapted by English writers. Depending on the context, it can mean at least a couple of things. *Chünna* or *Kechünna* (a Rengma Naga word) can mean that which one should never do or say. For example, it is *chüna* to curse someone. It is *chüna* to have an incestuous relationship. It can also mean a ceremonial observance when certain things such as food, work or contact with non-family members, are forbidden.

leave the village early in the morning under the cover of darkness in order to avoid being seen. Sixth, they must not pick anyone's fruit on their way to war or home.⁷⁰¹

There are moments when an enemy should not be killed during the war. For example, among the Rengma Nagas, if the enemy called out "Father" to a person aiming a spear at him the life of such caller was spared or if a man saw an enemy in time, plucked a bunch of leaves, wave them and then sit on them, he was not killed.⁷⁰² In both cases, the man was taken 'captive' but actually was adopted, which Rengma Nagas called *pi itsa sa* – 'to make my offspring.'

When an enemy was killed, the body was treated with reverence, because the desecration of a dead body is *genna*, and it was believed that such mistreatment would bring retribution upon oneself and/or community.⁷⁰³ Such an act of sacrilege was so serious that the conscience of the people was marred indelibly. For example, the clan of Thanduza from Kandinu went to war with a neighboring village and won decisively. However, some young adults in the party committed an act of profanity with the enemies' dead bodies that the act both shocked and traumatized the entire Kandinu. To this day the story is told again and again, and when a member of the Thanduza commits a crime or shows notable bad judgment someone says, "*Maba-mami wina kebazinyi*," which means

⁷⁰¹This is not exhaustive; the list was shared with me by the elders of Nsunyu and Chunlikha villages as they remember them today. The age of the interviewees ranges from sixties to late eighties and none had firsthand knowledge or experience of warfare among the Nagas. Many, however, were tortured by Indian army for resisting the Indian occupation.

⁷⁰²Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, 157.

⁷⁰³A British officer observed that some Naga tribes placed food and drink "beside the heads 'not out of derision, but in order that the disembodied spirits might not haunt the victors, but travel in peace to the city of the dead....'" Godden, "Naga and Other Frontier Tribes," 17.

their ancestors had a similar trait.⁷⁰⁴ Such an act of sacrilege created such a mental trauma that the incident has become a permanent community memory.

The end of fighting was followed by a series of ritual observances which were to cleanse the entire community of the impurities of war. While war was considered inevitable, it was also considered very contaminating. And the people felt a sense of having done something terribly bad for which they needed to be ritually cleansed. Therefore, the community or village must observe ceremonies and make the necessary sacrifices before resuming a normal life.⁷⁰⁵ Failure to fulfill ceremonial obligations by fighters or members of the community would result in some misfortune.

On returning to the village from fighting, the fighters were forbidden to go home directly. Every one was required to observe a segregative ceremony, for it was *genna* (forbidden) to meet with one's family or village folks before completion of the required purification ceremony. All who fought observed *genna* for a certain number of days at the village morung (a village institutional house) where they must sleep and eat for a designated number of days.⁷⁰⁶ Here, they prepared their own food on temporary hearths. During this period, they ritually washed their spears, daos (machete), clothes and bodies. At the end, all the utensils used were destroyed. Finally, they returned to their families and resume their normal life.

Now, decapitation must be considered in relation to this traditional warfare, because it was only in the context of warfare that the act occurred. In Western literature, however, the discourse on Naga warfare is either discreetly appended to or discussed in

⁷⁰⁴Sawathang Kez, interviewed by author, December 17, 2007.

⁷⁰⁵Such a ceremony by the Rengma Nagas lasted five days. See *The Rengma Nagas*, 159.

⁷⁰⁶This time period is not necessarily the same in every village. For the Rengma Nagas, see *The Rengma Nagas*, 159.

the context of headhunting. Contrary to what has been normally portrayed, traditional Naga warfare was never about hunting for heads, nor was it some indulgence in murderous expectations. Rather, decapitation was incident to war and not the cause nor even a sole reason for war. In other words, when the Naga ancestors went to war, they did not think of it as undertaking a headhunting trip. Rather, they were going in to battle, to engage an enemy.

In Rengma Naga language, *aghi* (war) and *alikewi* (*ali* - head; *kewi* - cut) are almost always used together. Alikewi is used in the context of hostility. So traditionally, alikewi is inseparably linked to aghi. However, aghi does not always lead to alikewi, nor is alikewi the sole aim of aghi. More often than not aghi comes to an end when the enemy's houses have been burnt down, property destroyed, parcels of ancestral land and/or domesticated animals seized. Warfare was also supplanted by piercing a grass effigy with spears while calling for the death of enemies. This was how sometimes the need for fighting was invalidated and eliminated.

As noted earlier, the Nagas have been depicted as warlike, incessantly engaged in warfare and taking heads until they were pacified by the 'civilized' West. This narrative conceals or eclipses the inhumane treatment suffered by the Nagas in the process of their 'civilization.' The ancient Naga society was by no means idyllic, but the contention that war is normal and peace is abnormal is without doubt a colonial construct which functioned to justify colonial atrocity against the Nagas. Western claims that decapitation was both common and widespread are unfounded when one learns of the time and complexity involved in completing ritual observance necessary for bringing an enemy's head. For example, a person who had taken a head must avoid certain kinds of food, such

as mushroom, beans, salt or chili for the rest of life.⁷⁰⁷ From this practical stand point alone it becomes apparent that beheading was much more an exception than a rule. In certain cases, the one who brought an enemy's head would want to give it to another person who was willing to accept it and undergo the requirements of these painstaking observances.⁷⁰⁸ Even those Westerners who held that war was normal and peace was abnormal asserted that "the number of lives lost is very small indeed."⁷⁰⁹

Additionally, killing of any kind was kept to the minimum for fear of retaliation. One colonial officer wrote "With them [Nagas] it is an article of faith that blood once shed can never be expiated except by the death of the murderer or some of his near relatives and though years may pass away vengeance will assuredly be taken one day."⁷¹⁰ Some writers have cited this source to claim that the spirit of vengeance fueled the practice of headhunting from generation to generation. The Naga writer Moasosang Ao claimed that it had the opposite effect and indeed, fear of retaliation was a strong deterrence to committing murder or beheading. He further explained, "Among the Nagas blood relationship is vital. The strong kinship obligations bind all its members closely, so that any harm to one of its members affects the whole group and redress must be made."⁷¹¹ Therefore, it was precisely the fear of reprisal that minimized acts of bloodshed.

Another strong indicator that traditional Nagas existed more peacefully and interacted more frequently with each other than it has been characterized in colonial literature is their ability to learn each others languages through a tradition known as

⁷⁰⁷See Kenilo Kath, *Traditional Religious Systems of the Rengma Nagas* (Delhi: Anshah Pub. House, 2005).

⁷⁰⁸Thandu Kez, interviewed by author, December 17, 2007.

⁷⁰⁹Mills, "The Effects on the Naga Tribes," 75.

⁷¹⁰Woodthorpe, "Notes on the Wild Tribes," 67.

⁷¹¹*National Seminar on Hill People of North Eastern India*, 54.

“*apfüshang kesa*” (*apfüshang* - friendship; *kesa* - making). To have many friends in various villages meant honor and, unlike today, most Nagas were able to speak the languages of several adjacent tribal villages due mostly through *apfüshang kesa*.⁷¹² An important component of *apfüshang kesa* included *apfüshang kebhali* (*kebhali* – mutual-seeking). *Apfüshang* is strengthened with the reciprocal visits and exchanges of gifts, *azü* (rice beer) being an important item. Because of the inheritance of one’s father’s friends, *apfüshang* remains long-standing and children of friends become friends, and one loses honor by losing one’s friend and/or ancestral friends. These friendships become crucial for both the individuals as well as the entire village if a conflict between villages arises.

Debunking the myth of headhunting

When White people set out to explore the world, the non-White world was thought to be filled with barbarism and savagery, and, without exception, the Other they encountered were either barbarians, headhunters or cannibals of one kind or another. So, just as the Caribs were distinguished as the modern English synonym for man-eaters (cannibals), the term “headhunters” is almost synonymously used to refer to the Nagas in Western literature.⁷¹³ This colonial stereotype led to the contention that the Nagas were wild, barbaric and bloodthirsty.

⁷¹² Among Nagas today, English serves as the common or ‘official’ language. In Nagaland, however, Nagamese serves as the ‘bazaar’ (market) language. Nagamese is neither taught nor learned formally, but picked-up by interacting with the business community who are mostly non-Nagas. It is a pidgin language that is a mixture of Assamese and Hindi. It is spoken but not written and only those who know Hindi or Assamese can speak it with any level of success. The consequence of these ‘common languages’ is that most Nagas cannot speak the language of any other tribe.

⁷¹³ The term ‘cannibal’ is a corrupt form of Caribs which came about through Spanish mispronunciation; Caribs became Canibs which eventually became cannibals. See Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 44-45.

Obviously, the word ‘headhunter’ carries with it an enormous potential for misinterpretation. This ‘civilized’ prejudice against the ‘uncivilized’ Nagas and their culture has contributed to profound misunderstanding. So, there is a need for critical study of ‘headhunting’ as it is referenced or described in the historical and colonial literature and to refute, clarify and rectify the misconceptions and misrepresentations which abound. Because the discourse on headhunting is not simply a matter of colonial textual record; it is more about asymmetry and inequality between the colonizer and the colonized. It is about the subjection and subjugation of the colonized. Geof Wood has termed it “labeling” and refers to it as “a relationship of power” and “an act of valuation and judgment involving prejudices and stereotyping.”⁷¹⁴ Therefore, debunking the mythical portrait is necessary to dispel “the fog of colonial mentality.”⁷¹⁵ I will present a few points to explain why ‘headhunting’ is a colonial construct that has no validity when critically examined from the perspective of the colonized and textualized Nagas.

First, it must be unmistakably understood that the Nagas never called themselves ‘headhunters’ nor did they think of themselves as such until they were described so by the West. This being the case, the idea and image of Nagas as ‘headhunters’ persists as a Western conception and colonial stereotype. Decapitation was not a random act of savagery or a lack of conscience as one colonial officer would have us believe: “...it was a very common practice with them [Nagas] to cut off the heads, hands, and feet of anyone they could meet with, ‘without any provocation or pre-existent enmity, merely to stick up

⁷¹⁴Wood, “The Politics of Development Policy Labelling,” in *Leballing in Development Policy: Essays in Honour of Bernard Schaffer*, ed. Geof Wood (London: SAGE Publications, 1985), 5-6.

⁷¹⁵Chinweizu refers to colonizing of the mind as “the fog of colonial mentality.” See *Decolonizing the African Mind* (Lagos: Pero Press, 1987).

in their fields to ensure a good crop of grain.”⁷¹⁶ Decapitation became a moral issue only if the traditional protocol of war was violated.

The objective of vilifying and bedeviling the Nagas was to justify the colonial war of pacifying the ‘headhunters’. This project, not surprisingly, was constituted by violence that far exceeded the purported cruelty and inhumanity of ‘headhunting’. With regard to Africa, Deborah Kaspin observed that the most vivid portraits of native savagery are produced “where settlers most aggressively advance and maintain their territorial claims.”⁷¹⁷ The Nagas are known for their stiff resistance against the White invaders and consequently suffered the most, which earned them the reputation of being the most barbaric and bloodthirsty of all in the Indian subcontinent.

This brings us to the second point. The use of the term ‘headhunting’ is misleading and problematic. It may be argued that there was no practice of ‘headhunting’ among the Nagas. This proposition is being posited on the fact that it is one thing to hunt for one’s enemy in warfare and quite another thing to hunt for heads for their supposed value. The term ‘headhunting’ is a civilizing trope that conjures up an image of hunting animals. If human beings were being hunted down ‘so cheaply’ like animals for the imaginary value of their heads, the headhunters must be far from being civilized. Going by this understanding, the ‘headhunting’ is barbaric and a trait of irrational savagery, requiring urgent civilization. In reference to a group of supposed African ‘headhunters’, a Western writer claimed that “the search for beasts may develop into a hunt for men.”⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁶Godden, “Naga and Other Frontier Tribes,” 10.

⁷¹⁷Kaspin, “Signifying Power in Africa,” in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Paul Stuart Landau (Ewing, NJ: University of California Press, 2002), 327.

⁷¹⁸Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-Hunters*, 152.

Decapitation or beheading did exist in Naga culture, but to name it ‘headhunting’ grossly misrepresents the reality. By using appalling and malevolent terminology, this cultural trait of the past was misrepresented and given a dreadful meaning which efficaciously stereotyped the colonized as more barbaric and violent than they actually were. William Smith called ‘headhunting’ an “unmerciful warfare.”⁷¹⁹ No warfare is merciful, and we could accept Smith’s characterization with no offense. So rather than to name it ‘headhunting,’ it would be more appropriate to call the Naga warfare “beheading in warfare.” Nonetheless, ‘headhunting’ was intentionally picked and used to achieve colonial purposes.

Third, the reported widespread ‘savage headhunting’ is empirically untenable. As such, the alleged pervasive practice of headhunting is emblematic of colonial exaggeration. It is commonly believed among the Nagas that decapitation did occur in the distant past, but traditional stories referencing such practice are hard to come by even from the memories of contemporary Naga elders. So, although limited or restrained occurrence is not denied, even among the Nagas the belief in an extensive practice could be merely a colonial projection. To support the claim of widespread practice, a plethora of reasons have been cited in an extensive body of writings on ‘headhunting’. Some of them are listed briefly below.

1) It has been widely reported that headhunting was done “to increase the fertility of the killer’s village by adding to its store soul-force.”⁷²⁰ Another writers reported that the ancient Nagas believed the “...enemies heads cause crops to flourish and men and

⁷¹⁹Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, 70.

⁷²⁰Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, 160-62.

animals to increase.”⁷²¹ 2) It was also reported that revenge was responsible for headhunting: “The old blood revenge, which demanded at least a head for a head, led to many a raid.”⁷²² 3) Still another reason is reported to be “...immunity from sickness.”⁷²³ It has been mentioned that belief in power emanating from the human skull can thwart sickness, especially plaques, from passing the village.⁷²⁴

4) For one colonial administrator, headhunting was necessitated simply by a lack of truth-telling and honesty. He remarked that “most savages are somewhat economical of truth.”⁷²⁵ This “lack of truth-telling,” he argued, required that proof of having vanquished an enemy be presented in the form of the head. 5) The practice was merely to continue the “custom of their fathers.”⁷²⁶ 6) It “was a distinctly religious motive,” done to please “their god, Lizaba.”⁷²⁷ 7) Another widely reported view held that it was a rite of passage when a boy became a man: “Men were called boys, women, or even cows, until they had made a contribution to the village skull-house, after which they became full-fledged members of the community.”⁷²⁸ 8) It was also said to be a requirement for marriage and reported that a young man who had never taken a human head had a hard time finding a spouse. 9). The drive for honor, glory and social prestige is cited as another major motive.⁷²⁹ “[T]he most deep-lying motive seems to have been of social

⁷²¹Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, 70.

⁷²²*Ibid.*, 71.

⁷²³*Ibid.*

⁷²⁴J.H. Hutton, “The Significance of Head-Hunting in Assam,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 58 (Jul. -Dec., 1928):6.

⁷²⁵Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, (1921), 157.

⁷²⁶Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, 70.

⁷²⁷*Ibid.*, 71.

⁷²⁸*Ibid.*

⁷²⁹Furer-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas*, 95.

nature, because a man's social position depended upon his success in war."⁷³⁰ 10). Some writers have stated the love of adventurous sports as a reason.⁷³¹ Smith called it simply "a mode of recreation" in which the Nagas took a great deal of pleasure.⁷³²

Some of the above reasons are said to be specific to a tribe; others are believed to be applicable to the Nagas in general. Whether applied specifically or universally, it is difficult to imagine how long a population could sustain itself with the losses that would necessarily accrue. Regarding the claim of constant warring among the Iroquois nations, this point was noted by Karl H. Schlesier, who asked: "Where, after these tremendous losses [through war with the White invaders, famine and disease], are the men supposed to have come from to fight continuous wars during this period?" He added, "These wars have sprung only from the imagination of scholars."⁷³³ The remark of a colonial officer, who visited the Naga Hills twice in 1856 and 1883, is worth mentioning here: "A fairly safe estimate – judging by the skulls in the Morongs – would give about 12,000 murders, in about 40 years, on an area roughly 20 miles square."⁷³⁴ To put his estimated number in perspective, this number of killing exceeds the current total population of Tikhir Naga tribe, which according to the 2001 census record is 10,377.⁷³⁵

If the myriad motivations attributed to the Nagas by the West were true, the Tikhirs and other small tribes could easily have been made extinct within a generation or two. Indeed, a large portion of the total Naga population could have been exterminated

⁷³⁰Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, 71.

⁷³¹Singh, *The Tribal Situation in India*, 307.

⁷³²*Ibid.*, 73.

⁷³³Schlesier, "Epidemics and Indian Middlemen: Rethinking the Wars of the Iroquois, 1609-1653," *Ethnohistory* 23, no. 2 (Spring, 1976): 141.

⁷³⁴S.E. Peal, "Fading Histories," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 63, no. 1 (1894): 13.

⁷³⁵Tikhir is one of the smallest tribes among the Nagas. For further information, see http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_nagaland.pdf.

before the White people encountered them. If the non-Naga sources are correct, any one of these reasons would be enough to wipe each other out. The fact that the Nagas were a large enough population to resist the colonial invasion and to be an American missionary target casts doubt on these claims.

Fourth, even particular location of a village has been used to support the contention that headhunting was widespread. Western writers have claimed that Nagas chose to put villages on mountain-tops because that provided natural protection from headhunting raids. With reference to the Naga choice of village location, one writer reported that “villages [were] built on high ridges for additional protection against enemies....”⁷³⁶ This reflects the writing of one of the first missionaries who wrote, “Village sites were chosen, planned, and built with reference to war, and paths were kept to the mountain ridges and highlands in order to avoid giving advantage to skulking foes.”⁷³⁷ Another colonial officer hypothesized that the Nagas “established their villages on the very crests of the hills, whence an extended view of the country round about may be obtained, and where sudden attacks are almost impossible owing to the acclivity of the approaches.”⁷³⁸

Undeniably, nearly all Naga villages are located on hilltops. The question is whether or not the choice of location has to do with the practice of headhunting. It is evident that Western missionaries and colonizers came with a strong assumption that the Nagas were fierce headhunters. For example, a Dutch anthropologist in 1936 acknowledged that he wanted to explore the Naga countries because “feuds and

⁷³⁶Albaugh, *Between Two Centuries*, 71.

⁷³⁷Clark, *A Corner in India*, 46.

⁷³⁸W. H. Furness, “The Ethnography of the Nagas of Eastern Assam,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 32 (July-December, 1902): 446.

headhunting were still the order of the day” and “after years of anthropological desk-work I would soon be among real ‘savages.’”⁷³⁹ So, with this expectation in mind, they looked, consciously or not, for cultural practices or activities that could authenticate their presumption. The location of villages on top of the hills validated their preconception. I will offer a few geographical and cultural alternative reasons for why the Nagas chose the hilltops for the site of their villages.

Considering the geography of the Naga Hills, mountain tops or ridges provide the best choice to build settlements. For most part, the Naga homeland contains almost no valleys or lowlands large enough to accommodate a village. So, the only other alternative to hilltop would have been the cliffs. Because of their location on the ridge, most Naga villages are arranged lengthwise with houses built along the ridge in two rows facing each other. Also, a village situated on a hilltop receives sunshine more often and for longer period than it would receive in a lowland or valley. This is vital for daily existence. Drying grains was and is almost a daily routine for Nagas. For example, before rice is pounded in preparation for a family meal, it is spread out to dry in the sunlight for hours. In winter and inclement weather it takes days to dry. Receiving enough sunshine was also important because certain grains and vegetables are also dried to be stored for winter meals. Additionally, situating a village on a hilltop provided a view of the surrounding area and had a daily practical importance. Locating a village on a hilltop provided an advantage to overlook the land and helped facilitate decisions about which area to cultivate for the next cycle. It also enabled the villagers to determine where to hunt, fish and collect wild fruits and vegetables. So locating a village on a hilltop has very little or

⁷³⁹Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 4, 2.

nothing to do with ‘headhunting;’ rather, it was determined by the geographical expediency and cultural practices.

Fifth, another claim that the Nagas indeed practiced headhunting relates to reports of human skulls in certain villages. The reports are made normally after a trip to Naga villages adjacent to Myanmar. The Konyak tribe is often the reference. As recently as 2003 an Indian journalist documented her seeing “a stone slab...covered with about 200 skulls, prized trophies of the once dreaded Konyak headhunters of Nagaland.”⁷⁴⁰ One consequence of the Indian Government restricting access to Nagaland by non-Indians is that the former Naga Hills have become a space for competing heroism for ‘intrepid’ Indian journalists and writers who would write and disseminate stories of ‘headhunting’ thereby perpetuating the colonial discourse and stereotype.

To understand why the finding of skulls is confined primarily to the Konyaks and other tribes who live on periphery of the present-day Nagaland, we must once again look at the history of colonization and christianization and as well as cultural practices of the Nagas in this particular area. Assam, located in the west of the Naga Hills, was historically the launch point or official headquarters of both the christianizing and colonizing projects. Often referred to as the frontier tribe, the people of Konyak, some of whom live in Myanmar, inhabit the extreme northeast of the Naga Hills along the border with Myanmar. The British did not succeed in occupying a portion of this frontier region and referred to it as ‘unadministered region.’

⁷⁴⁰Anu Malhotra, “Travels with my Camera: Of Headhunters and Tribal Chiefs,” *Hindustan Times*, April 5, 2003. Hutton also shows pictures of an exhibition of skulls in a Konyak “bachelors’ hall.” See “The Significance of Head-hunting in Assam.” Traditionally, Nagas hung skulls of both domesticated and wild animals in their houses, and in Hutton’s pictures, there are animal skulls as well, but nothing is said about the significance of such preservation.

Likewise, the region remained unevangelized until the Ao Nagas took it upon themselves to christianize the Konyaks beginning in the 1940s. Today, the Konyaks, as well as other tribes adjacent to Myanmar, are considered ‘backward’ because the effects of colonization and christianization reached them much later.⁷⁴¹ They continued their traditional practices for decades after the other Nagas had abandoned theirs. It is one of their traditions which will help us to understand the existence of skulls on display in Konyak villages. The tradition is the preservation of the skulls of deceased relatives to give them respect and honor.

All Naga tribes honored their dead through prayers and sacrifices offered. Western people called this veneration ‘ancestral worship.’ This, the Nagas believed, earned the favor of the deceased who protected them from sickness and other misfortune and rewarded them with good health and prosperity for their good conduct. More importantly, this was an act of an ongoing communication and relationship with dead relatives, reinforcing the value and idea of family as a closely knit and ongoing relationship among the dead and the living. So what the White people condemned as ‘ancestor worship’ was actually an act of a people paying due respect to the deceased family members who continue to be actively interested and involved in the well-being of the living.

The cultural practices of veneration, however, varied among Nagas and not all Nagas buried their dead relatives. The Konyaks and a few other tribes placed the body of the deceased on a raised platform where it would decompose. When the body was fully

⁷⁴¹ The term “backward tribe” is an official designation that has a similar function as the “Affirmative Action.” The government reserves a certain percentage of employment opportunity for the designated backward tribes.

decomposed, the skull was removed, cleansed and preserved by the family. At least once a year, during a ceremony marked to remember the dead (much like the memorial holiday in the West), the skulls were brought out and given their share of food and azü (rice beer) by the living members.⁷⁴² The preservation of skulls to honor the dead logically resulted in the accumulation of a significant number of skulls. To many Westerners and Indians, foraging for cultural traits that might imply savagery and barbarism, the discovery of skulls became a gold mine.

A descriptive narration by Christoph Furer-Haimendorf who, in 1935, was preparing in Europe for a visit to the Konyaks, illustrates the prevailing attitude about the ‘exotic’ Naga people. In his book, *The Naked Nagas: Head-Hunters of Assam in Peace and War*, Furer-Haimendorf described how he was intrigued by British colonial literature about the Konyaks. He was excited by the thought of an adventure of going to what he referred to as “the promised land” that “had never been studied” nor “seen by the eye of an outsider.” Above all, he was singularly intrigued because “feuds and head-hunting were still the order of the day.”⁷⁴³ However, he was utterly disappointed when he reached his “promised land” because, he wrote, “At the time of my field work [1936-37]...headhunting was not permitted...under British administration, but it was still practiced in unadministered areas....”⁷⁴⁴ A year prior to meeting the Konyaks, “feuds and head-hunting were still the order of the day.” However, a year or so later, because of the ‘civilized’ British administration, the age-old practice of ‘savagery’ just disappeared.

⁷⁴²Some Western writers such as Christoph Furer-Haimendorf were aware of this practice. See Furer-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas: An Indian Frontier Tribe*.

⁷⁴³Furer-Haimendorf, *Naked Nagas*, 4.

⁷⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 97.

How the ‘dreaded Konyaks’ were so swiftly and miraculously tamed is then left to the imagination of his readers.

The discourse on headhunting in Western literature

In my continuing effort to refute or nullify the myth of headhunting, I will briefly point out some flaws, inconsistencies and dubious claims on the subject in the Western literature. Gerrit Huizer has rightly pointed out that colonial “anthropology is politics, generally the politics of domination.”⁷⁴⁵ In agreement with Huizer, Faye Harrison concurred that “anthropology [in fact] is politics, generally the politics of [imperialist] domination.”⁷⁴⁶ As such, as we critically engage the subject of ‘headhunting,’ we need to underscore the colonial biases contained in the Western ethnography of the Nagas. In fact, Harrison argued that the contribution of native writers “premised upon alternative sets of priorities, visions, and understanding” is essential for “the decolonization of anthropological knowledge and authority.”⁷⁴⁷

First, as noted earlier, the single most substantive ‘proof’ in the literature is the display of skulls. Claims about headhunting by Nagas are numerous even though none is substantiated with an eye witness, nor was a decapitated body presented. Nearly all writers claimed that by the time they wrote headhunting had ceased thanks to Pax Britanica. William Arens’s observation on the Western stereotype of certain ‘cannibals’ is remarkably similar to the headhunting discourse.

From all corners of the globe the reports come in that a specific group of people an anthropologist has lived among were cannibals long ago, before contact, until pacification, just recently or only yesterday. The reader is engulfed by a stream

⁷⁴⁵Huizer, “Anthropology and Politics,” 16.

⁷⁴⁶Harrison, “Ethnography as Politics,” 88.

⁷⁴⁷Ibid., 88-89.

of past tenses denoting varying removes in time, indicating a demise of the custom sometime before the researcher took up residence on the scene.⁷⁴⁸

From the perspective of the colonized Nagas it is not surprising that one colonial administrator wrote the following: “Although no cannibalism is known among the Naga tribes, all tribes have the tradition of a cannibal village ‘just a little further east, beyond the next range of hills.’”⁷⁴⁹ As noted earlier, a similar description was reported by a Dutch anthropologist who went to the Konyak Nagas: “...headhunting was not permitted...under British administration, *but it was still practiced in unadministered areas....* (emphasis added).”⁷⁵⁰ An American army personnel who came into contact with the Nagas during World War II termed the Nagas as “the world famous headhunters” and asserted that “there was no doubt that the Nagas were still taking heads when we were in their county.”⁷⁵¹ This assertion was followed by this admission: “I did not personally see any collections of heads in the Naga country.”⁷⁵² He further admitted, “My only contact with the Nagas was the visit several of them made to our marching line and demonstrated the use of their crossbows.” Despite his very limited contact and having no evidence of any collections of heads, the writer could easily conclude that the Nagas were still taking heads “despite information to the contrary in today’s encyclopedias.”⁷⁵³

Wherever a White person went the native savagery and barbarism seemed to cease almost immediately, except ‘a little further beyond the mountain’ where the people

⁷⁴⁸ Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 35-6.

⁷⁴⁹ Hutton, “The Significance of Head-Hunting,” 405.

⁷⁵⁰ Furer-Haimendorf, *The Konyak Nagas*, 97.

⁷⁵¹ Fred E. Randle and William W. Hughes, *Hell on Land Disaster at Sea: The Story of Merrill’s Marauders and the Sinking of the Rhona* (Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing Company, 2003), 44.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.* 44.

had not come into contact with civilization. So, there was an imaginary existence of continuing barbarism beyond the sight of a White person.

Second, there has been no report, written or oral, of a White man being beheaded by a Naga. A few British colonial officers were reportedly killed in the course of their invasion, but they died from wounds inflicted by either spears or Western-made guns. American missionaries often reported their lives being ‘endangered,’ but there is no documentation of any physical harm or killing. To illustrate the purported danger faced by missionaries, one missionary wrote,

To intimidate the missionary [Clark], a war party of young men ambushed one whole week for human heads, which they intended to throw down before him as symbolical of what he might expect himself in case he did not retreat to the plains. They returned, however, without booty, but racked with fever, thus affording the missionary an opportunity of exercising some medical skill and taming their savagery.⁷⁵⁴

Mrs. Clark is relating her husband’s experience when he first met the Ao Nagas. The question is, why would the Nagas, instead of taking the readily available head of a helpless White stranger, choose to endanger themselves to bring a head from somewhere else just to intimidate a White missionary?

Third, the Western writers, especially the missionaries, had already produced an extensive body of literature on ‘headhunting’ prior to any contact with the Nagas. And the primary source for their works is the Assamese who lived west of the Naga Hills and had come into contact with the White people ahead of the Nagas. For example, Clark first went to the Naga Hills in 1872; however, in a letter dated December 1871 he wrote the following:

⁷⁵⁴Clark, *A Corner in India*, 18.

Now a few words about these savages of the Hills. They are men of blood and war. Their fighting is all hand to hand, with big knives and spears. With them it is no glory to kill a noncombatant or a slave. But as our Indians prized a scalp, so these men glory in the head of a warrior; and as, among some of the tribes, a man is hardly considered a man till he has taken human life, so they are not always very particular whether the man they kill is an enemy or not, provided, if not an enemy, it is done secretly.⁷⁵⁵

In 1872 as the Clarks were preparing to go to the Naga Hills, they also reported, “...we told our Assamese Christians how we longed to bear the message to those distant wilds. They shook their heads doubtfully. ‘They [Nagas] are savages, sahib [sir], village warring with village, constantly cutting off heads to get skulls.’”⁷⁵⁶ In addition to the Assamese being obviously the source of information as evidenced in this quote, it also prompts us to question the validity of the Assamese claim itself: how could the Assamese come to know about the Naga ‘headhunting’ practices without possibly visiting the dreaded hills? If the Nagas were indeed ‘ferocious headhunters,’ the Assamese could not have visited and returned safely to tell stories of their adventure. Also, it is helpful to remember that at the time this discourse on headhunting was being popularized, both land acquisition for tea plantations and the recently introduced monetary economy had caused considerable animosity among the diverse ethnic peoples of the Northeast. Therefore, reports of Naga ‘savage headhunting’ related by a possibly hostile neighbor must not be blindly accepted.⁷⁵⁷

Both the missionaries and English colonial officers made use of the Assamese to extract information on and interact with the Nagas. Even the very word “Naga” is an Assamese derivation. “Noga” was the word by which the Assamese referred to the Nagas.

⁷⁵⁵ *BMM* (April 1872), 125-126.

⁷⁵⁶ Clark, *A Corner in India*, 9-10.

⁷⁵⁷ In *The Man-Eating Myth*, Arens has argued that ethnographers’ sources on the savage cannibalism often came from neighbors who were in many cases at war with each other.

So, the content of colonial literature on Naga headhunting practices is to a certain extent based on Assamese preconception and interpretation of their Naga neighbors.

Fourth, another reason for doubt is the dispute of such existence among colonial writers. The existence of headhunting among the diverse ethnic groups in Northeast India was highly contested among Western writers even during the colonial period.⁷⁵⁸ For example, T.H. Lewin in the *Wild Races of South Eastern India* (1870) claimed that Lushai (now called Mizos) were headhunters; however, Lewin's claim was dismissed as "a pure invention" by John Shakespeare.⁷⁵⁹ Interestingly, if not ironically, Shakespeare posited instead that headhunting "was undoubtedly a Thado [a neighboring tribe] custom." This claim was then refuted by William Shaw, in *Notes on the Thadou Kukis*, who asserted that it would be "an error to regard the Thado as a typical or even a bona fide headhunter."⁷⁶⁰ Shaw then argued that the Thados, commonly referred to as 'Kukis' today, were only slave-hunters but learned the practice of headhunting later "by contact with genuine headhunters." The entire population of native peoples in the Northeast was categorized to one of the three types of 'headhunters' – genuine, confirmed or suspect headhunters. The Nagas belonged to the first category in the literature of colonial writers.⁷⁶¹

Fifth, the early colonial literature hardly contains terms such as 'headhunting' and 'headhunters,' although mentions of headtaking did occur sporadically. Instead, the term "raid" or "murder" was used. For example, the terms "raid and murder" occurred

⁷⁵⁸David Vumlallian Zou, "Raiding the Dreaded Past: Representations of Headhunting and Human Sacrifice in North-East India," *Contribution to Indian Sociology* 39, no. 1 (2005): 83.

⁷⁵⁹Shakespeare, *The Lushai Kuki Clans* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1998 [1912]), 60.

⁷⁶⁰Shaw, "Notes on the Thadou Kukis," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 24 (1928), 78.

⁷⁶¹Zou, "Raiding the Dreaded Past," 84.

numerous times in the three consecutive annual reports, i.e., the *Annual Administration Report of the Naga Hills Political Agency*, 1875-76, 1876-77 and 1878-79. No where do the reports mention 'headhunting' or 'headhunters.' Only once, the term "head-taking" appeared in the 1876-77 report. It was only in the latter part of the second half of the nineteenth century that 'headhunting' gained popularity, most notably in the writings of missionaries. The letters and journals of the first White missionary and his wife who went to the Nagas in 1839 made no reference to the term 'headhunting.' Terms such as 'wild,' 'uncivilized' and 'illiterate' were used though. By the end of the nineteenth century the 'truth' that the Nagas were 'headhunters' had been well established.

Also, until the 1900s headhunting was not described extensively. The proposal by the British India Government in 1903 to document an official ethnography of the more important but 'vanishing' tribes of the Northeast made possible the production of official monographs that expanded and embellished the subject for mass consumption. A series of monographs on certain Naga tribes, as well as other ethnic groups in Northeast India were undertaken. Between 1910 and 1935, publications on the Naga tribes were produced by T.C. Hodson on *Naga Tribes of Manipur* (1911), Angami and Sema Nagas by J.H. Hutton (1921, 1921) and Ao, Lotha and Rengma Nagas by J.P. Mills (1922, 1926, 1935). Each purported to document the entirety of the aforementioned tribes' life including geography and physical look in a single monograph. All contained extensive discussions of 'headhunting,' making what seemed once hardly noticeable a popular subject.

Sixth, comparisons were made with other so-called 'savages' and hypothetical conclusions were drawn, because for the colonizer, all the colonized shared barbaric traits; that is, component or practice of one group of savages must be applicable to another

savages. One colonial officer in North Africa wrote, “One of my aims in writing this book has been to show how much the uncivilized natives of Northern Nigeria resemble some other aboriginal races....”⁷⁶² Comparing and contrasting to identify the characteristics of savagery and barbarism was essential to many who wrote about the Nagas. The following is an example:

When I began to read systematically works on the Pacific and Malay Archipelago, it slowly dawned on me that our “Naga,” were nothing more or less than Northern Dyaks: that the notorious “head-hunters” of Borneo, judging by their physique, houses, modes of cultivation and warfare-by their dress, arms, and even down to trivial details, were not only allied, but closely related racially, to my former savage friends.⁷⁶³

Making comparisons with the writings of the reports by others elsewhere describing ‘anthropologized’ cultures enabled ethnographers to add new dimensions, hypotheses and embellishment to the subject. So, what seemed once trivial, unexciting or lacking in exotic features is magnified and became a popular subject. Also, what has been described and recorded was seldom transmitted by the anthropologized subjects themselves, but was derived from conclusions drawn out of comparisons.

The colonial portrait: Function and effect

In his controversial and ground breaking work, *The Man-Eating Myth*, William Arens argued that the savage cannibalism is a colonial projection and Western obsession with the ‘savage’ and has little or no basis in empirical reality.⁷⁶⁴ Likewise, in *Cannibal*

⁷⁶²Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-Hunters*, xi.

⁷⁶³Peal, “Fading Histories,” 13.

⁷⁶⁴I am aware of the debate surrounding Arens’ claim in his book. He has argued that there is a lack of hard evidence or credible eyewitness accounts on cannibalism. His book drew criticism for its sensational rhetoric, methodology and inconsistency in empirical standards. Perhaps, the consensus among most anthropologists is that normative and institutionalized or ritualized practices of consuming human flesh did take place in some time and place in the past, not necessarily among the colonized peoples

Talk, Gananath Obeyesekere argued that the accounts of South Seas native atavism, savagery and violence originated in the fascination and demands of Western readers whose preconception of the native peoples included cannibalism.⁷⁶⁵ Kathrine Biber concurs that “there is no credible historical evidence to support allegations that indigenous Australians practised the forms of cannibalism sought by the colonists” and dismisses cannibalism as only one of “the European labels.”⁷⁶⁶ She also adds, “So long as it is possible and imaginable that [Australian] Aborigines practice cannibalism; it remains necessary to control, correct, and eliminate them...the narratives supplied the justification for force, violence, and dominance.”⁷⁶⁷ Memmi called this colonial projection or label a “mythical portrait of the colonized.”⁷⁶⁸ Meryll Davies, Ashis Nandy and Ziauddin Sardar have termed colonial portrayal as “a Greek tragedy” akin to “a classical Greek tragedy” and believe that the West owes the intellectual debt of colonial depiction and its function to Greek thought.⁷⁶⁹ They argue, “It is from the Greeks that Europe acquired the concept of the barbarian.”⁷⁷⁰

Following the British military invasion in 1832 and the missionary imposition in 1839 and including the present colonial rule by India and Myanmar, the Nagas have been the subject of myriad colonial representations and stereotypes. Colonialism, whether past or present, thrives on inventing mythological narratives and constructing stereotypical

alone. I do not use his book to deny the existence of decapitation among the Nagas in the past. Rather, his book has its usefulness in examining the body of literature on the so-called “headhunting” among the Nagas.

⁷⁶⁵Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2005).

⁷⁶⁶Biber, “Cannibal and Colonialism,” 625.

⁷⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 635.

⁷⁶⁸Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 79.

⁷⁶⁹Davies, Nandy and Sardar, *Barbaric Others: A manifesto on Western Racism* (London; Boulder: Pluto Press, 1993), 2.

⁷⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 26.

images of the colonized. It is no wonder that the Nagas have a plethora of such portraits emerging out of their long and incessant history of colonization. Of all the invented images, being labeled as ‘headhunters’ by the West and perpetuated by India has had and continues to have profound psychological, social and political consequences.⁷⁷¹

In addition to blanket terms for the Other – such as primitives, savages, barbarians, pagans, heathens and wild tribes – most Africans, Polynesians, New Guineans and Native Americans were said to be cannibals of one type or the other. These images signify stagnation or a lack of progress in the evolutionary scale of time. With regard to claims of cannibalism among colonized peoples, Arens made this observation:

...the idea that Africans, Polynesians, New Guineans, American Indians are or were man-eaters until contact with the benefits of European influence is assumed to be in the realm of demonstrated fact [and] beliefs of this sort about representatives of our cultural tradition are dismissed out of hand as prejudice and racism, while similar notions about others already defined as categorically different from us are treated as facts.... Concretely, the widespread African belief that Europeans are cannibals or use human blood for evil intent is interpreted as an indication of African ignorance.⁷⁷²

Why was and is it necessary for the colonial powers to fabricate colonial portraits? And how does this affect the colonized psyche? Colonial portraits are fabricated for various reasons. The characterization of Nagas as ‘headhunters’ had political purposes. For colonization is about depicting the colonized as savage, primitive, violent, filthy, diseased, sinful and lost, and, then, justifying the act of colonization by talks about progress accomplished, the savage civilized, disease cured, standards of living improved,

⁷⁷¹Susantha Goonatilake argues that even after the formal abolition of slave trade and slavery, colonial prejudices continued to affect “the self esteem and self perception of the blacks themselves.” See Goonatilake, *Crippled Minds: An Exploration into Colonial Culture* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1982), 75.

⁷⁷²Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, 19-20.

the pagans saved or the heathen natives christianized.⁷⁷³ Colonial portrait distinguishes the colonial citizen from the colonized subject, the civilized from the savage. In order to civilize, the colonized must first be ‘uncivilized’ or ‘primitivized;’ otherwise, the project of civilizing mission cannot be implemented. Memmi rightly pointed out that “the existence of the colonizer requires that an image of the colonized be suggested. These images become excuses without which the presence and conduct of a colonizer...would seem shocking.”⁷⁷⁴

Ignacio Martin-Baro argued that “stereotypes justified one people’s dominion over another, or the oppression of the popular majority by an oligarchic elite.”⁷⁷⁵ The espousal of dreadful terms such as cannibals and headhunters justifies and mitigates colonial atrocities against the colonized and enables colonial representatives to create an impression of hardships and dangers of civilizing the savages and representing the great ‘civilized’ empires. In a reference to his own people, Sioui wrote, “The cruelty of the Amerindian was simply political.”⁷⁷⁶ This reminds of Leo Frobenius’s argument that “the idea of the barbaric Negro is a European invention.”⁷⁷⁷

Valor or heroism too underlies the fabrication of colonial portraits. Western literature that describes the Nagas portrays headhunting as the means by which Naga males displayed their masculinity; that is, it was an activity that is exclusively male and was their means for winning mates. Contrastingly, White people’s desire and obsession to undertake trips to supposedly unsafe and exotic lands, such as the Naga Hills, could be

⁷⁷³See Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*.

⁷⁷⁴Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 79.

⁷⁷⁵Martin-Baro, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, ed. Adrianne Aron and Shawn Corne (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 84.

⁷⁷⁶Sioui, *For An Amerindian Autohistory*, 55.

⁷⁷⁷Quoted in Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 53.

considered a space for contesting White heroism, because the Naga Hills was supposedly a ‘headhunter’s paradise.’ So, one who has been to such a ‘dreaded and dangerous place’ and returned with his head on his shoulders to share the exotic experiences has done an admirable job.

This spirit and act of ‘heroic’ exploration and adventure to unfamiliar and ‘dangerous’ places earned them social status, respect and fame. And the Naga Hills provided such a space for earning social recognition and fame that they could not otherwise earn in their own society. For example, Hutton, Mills and Furer-Haimendorf all who studied and wrote about the Nagas became ‘authorities’ on the Nagas and ended up with teaching profession in some of the most prestigious universities in Europe.⁷⁷⁸ Naga skulls were intensely sought for by Western explorers for exhibitions and study in the West.⁷⁷⁹ The skulls became trophies to prove the spirit of heroic adventure that elucidated and validated the existence of barbarism in the colonized world and the role of the West in civilizing the benighted world. Both British and American colonial agents were entrusted with the responsibility of ‘civilizing the savages.’ Accordingly, it is not totally unfounded to claim that the objective of using the term ‘headhunters’ was political and religious – that is, to gain admiration, attract favor, sympathy and financial support and to justify the cruelties inflicted during the civilizing mission.

⁷⁷⁸Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf became Professor of Asian Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; J.H. Hutton retired as Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge; J.P. Mills was Reader in Anthropology at the School of Oriental Studies in London. In particular, Mills and Hutton, who were colonial administrators and not anthropologists by training, are often mentioned as ‘authorities’ on Nagas. Undoubtedly, these people possessed personal ability to climb the social ladder, but we cannot deny that their connection with and writings on the Nagas enhanced their success in life.

⁷⁷⁹For one such study, see George Thane’s “On Some Naga Skulls,” *The Journal of Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 11 (1882): 215-19.

The colonizing of the mind

Expansionism is closely associated with colonial ideologies. Ideologies are spread by propaganda and propaganda then becomes ammunition in the hands of the colonial expansionists, who fire it in barrages to win the mind.⁷⁸⁰ John MacKenzie defines propaganda as “the transmission of ideas and values from one person, or groups of persons, to another, with the specific intention of influencing the recipients’ attitudes in such a way that the interests of its authors will be enhanced.”⁷⁸¹ Colonial portrait as a colonial propaganda served to colonize the mind of the colonized. The barrage of false and derogatory stereotypes ascribed to the Nagas and the invalidation of their culture by those who represented the West were intended to colonize the Naga mind and then to generate conversion and change. The incessant Western message stating the inferiority and savagery of the Nagas and their culture became a drumbeat that echoed within the Naga psyche, such that today the people exhibit the pathology of imitative desire for the culture of their colonial master.

This colonizing of the mind is described very well by the Nigerian writer Chinweizu in his seminal work, *Decolonising the African Mind*. He believes that colonizing the mind is a form of psychological warfare, aimed at persuading the colonized of the inferiority of their own culture vis-à-vis the colonizer’s and thereby separate them from their culture.⁷⁸² In the better known work by Kenyan scholar Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, Thiong’o argues that the imperialistic force of the

⁷⁸⁰Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1963).

⁷⁸¹MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 3.

⁷⁸²See Chinweizu, *Decolonising the African Mind*.

West “is total” and “has economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for the people of the world today.”⁷⁸³ Thing’o calls this force “the cultural bomb” and describes its effect this way:

The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own.⁷⁸⁴

Colonizing of the mind, according to Fanon, is “the emptying of the native’s brain of all form and content.” Furthermore, he believes that it goes even beyond and argues that “by a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.”⁷⁸⁵ It is the incarceration of the colonized mind – the captivity of the mind.⁷⁸⁶ In a non-traditional sense, therefore, to colonize is to infiltrate, implant, establish or inhabit an idea, ideology, religion, belief or worldview in a new place, culture or upon a group of people. Musa W. Dube described colonialism as follows:

[It] is an ideology that takes diverse forms and methods at different times, seeking to impose its languages, its trade, its religions, its democracies, its images, its economic systems and its political rules on foreign nations and lands. The victims...become the colonized, that is, those whose lands, minds, cultures, economies and political institutions have been taken possession of and rearranged according to the interests and values of the imperializing powers.⁷⁸⁷

Colonization was hardly a people settling down in a certain place. The colonists brought with them their worldview and its values and infiltrate, establish or transplant

⁷⁸³Thing’o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), 2.

⁷⁸⁴Ibid., 3.

⁷⁸⁵Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 210.

⁷⁸⁶John Hawley, “Colonizing the Mind: ‘Leo Africanus’ in the Renaissance and Today,” in *Colonial and Postcolonial Incarceration*, ed. Graeme Harper (London; New York: Continuum, 2001), 53-66.

⁷⁸⁷Dube, “Reading for Decolonization (John 4:1-42),” *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, 3rd ed. ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (New York: Maryknoll, 2006), 297-8.

them. Colonization occurred on cultural, economic, psychological, political and religious levels. Mentally, the native's mind is transformed, and it takes on a new form of thinking and perceiving. Religious conversion is a part of this, which Haunani-Kay Trast has called the colonizing of spirit.⁷⁸⁸

A colonized person is, therefore, one whose mind has been captivated by the colonizer's cultural values. Colonial/Post-colonial scholars such as Franz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Ann McClintock, Albert Memmi and Ashis Nandy have each devoted space in their writing to address the state of mind of the colonized. Hawley refers to this state as the "captivity of the mind" produced by colonial education.⁷⁸⁹ For Fanon, a colonized person is one who is "dusted over with colonial culture."⁷⁹⁰ For Bhabha, the colonized is "almost the same, but not white."⁷⁹¹ For McClintock a colonized mind "is a flawed identity imposed on colonized people who are obliged to mirror back an image of the colonials but in imperfect form."⁷⁹²

The colonial transmutation of Naga culture essentially began with psychological colonization. One thematic connection between the agents of colonialism and proselytization is the assertion that the Nagas were uncivilized, barbaric and pagan in their entire way of thinking and living. This misconception necessitated the 'civilized' West to bring progress and Christianity to the Nagas and to supplant the Naga culture with the 'superior' Western scientific and christianized culture. The construction of colonial portrait both drove and informed the process of colonizing the mind, which in

⁷⁸⁸Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii* (Monroe: Maine: Common Courage Press, 1993).

⁷⁸⁹Hawley, *Colonial and Postcolonial Incarceration*, 59.

⁷⁹⁰Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 47.

⁷⁹¹Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 126.

⁷⁹²McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 62.

turn precipitated change and conversion among the Nagas. The civilizing process cannot take place as long as the colonized subjects remain proud of and attached to their cultural heritage and identity. In order to sever the subjects from their culture and to produce change and conversion, it is necessary to constantly inculcate in the mind of the colonized that their culture is evil, savage, irrational and deficient. “Colonizing the mind of the Other” is essential “for the purpose of reinforcing cultural dominance.”⁷⁹³

In its assessment of the current Naga socio-political situation, the editorial column in one of the Naga daily newspapers asserted that the intent of the colonizing of the mind was “to cloud and internalize the human spirit with fear and sense of worthlessness [and] to condition behavior to the status quo which [may then lead] to acceptance [and normalization] of the abnormal.” It further argued that the aim was to create an environment where the suppressed would fail to see and act “as makers of their own culture and history.”⁷⁹⁴ Once the mind is colonized or the colonized mind comes to believe in the invented truth that their way of life is illogical, deficient, unsophisticated and barbaric, the process of ‘civilization’ and conversion becomes possible, easy or even inevitable. So, the colonizing of the mind precedes the dismantling of culture and traditional community and their values. For the Naga, colonizing the mind has resulted in disintegration of their traditional and moral virtues. It has resulted in their enslavement to the modern culture of capitalism, consumerism, rapid conversion to Christianity and negation and abandonment of their own culture.

⁷⁹³Garrett Hongo, “Culture Wars in Asian America,” in *The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity in the United States*, ed. Joan Ferrante and Prince Brown, Jr. (New York: Longman, 1998), 53-4.

⁷⁹⁴Editorial, *Morung Express*, May 30, 2008.

Self-primitivization

Ashis Nandy has argued that colonialism not only “colonizes minds in addition to bodies” but also persists long after the demise of empires.⁷⁹⁵ C. S. Song agreed that colonialism “...perhaps never dies, [but] transforms itself from one form to another.”⁷⁹⁶ As a colonized people, who have languished first under one colonial master and then another for over a century and a half, the Nagas know well the impact of colonization on the individual as well as communal psyche. Long after the Western colonial forces departed the Nagas Hills the colonial portrait is sustained and perpetrated, keeping the Naga continually primitivized and their psyche in check.

The erstwhile ‘headhunters’ have been graduated to ‘former headhunters’ or ‘once headhunters,’ and some American evangelical Christians are notorious in the perpetuation of this stereotype. One prominent American church leader on his return from a visit to Nagaland remarked, “Once a nation of headhunters, the Naga people are now almost all Christian.”⁷⁹⁷ Similarly, in a recent issues, *Christianity Today* described the Naga homeland as “once notorious worldwide for its savagery,” now “the most Baptist state in the world.” It also carried a quip reportedly by a Naga: “Your head would be decorating this drawing room had you met my forefathers a hundred years ago.”⁷⁹⁸

This sustained colonial image and the numerous other stereotypes have resulted in debilitating psychological consequences for the Nagas. The internalization of the colonial

⁷⁹⁵Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), xi.

⁷⁹⁶Song, *Jesus and Reign of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1993), 109.

⁷⁹⁷Gregory Tomlin, “Amid Hostile Faiths, Naga People Rallied to Gospel Message,” *Baptist Press*, December 17, 2003. Paige Patterson, President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, TX) visited Nagaland in 2003, and reported his experience on the trip.

⁷⁹⁸Manpreet Singh, “The Soul Hunters of Central Asia,” *Christianity Today*, February 2006, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/february/38.51.html> (accessed March 5, 2007).

image has come to dictate their moral behavior and the development of their conscience.⁷⁹⁹ Embedded in their psyche, the colonial portrait has become the image through which the Nagas identify themselves which causes self-primitivization, self-negation and self-alienation. The introjection of this colonial portrait renders them guilt-ridden, which further renders them subservient and submissive to non-Naga authorities. Cesaire rightly argued that colonialism works cunningly to instill in the colonized fear, an inferiority complex and “to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkys.”⁸⁰⁰ It is not uncommon for the colonized to introject the colonial image. Writing about the Maoris, Obeyesekere observed:

And sadly, it seems that some Maori have taken over and selectively introjected European colonial notions, in this case, cannibalism, to proudly reinterpret it as a ‘traditional’ and admirable Maori custom. This is what one might call ‘self-primitivization,’ the process that occur during periods of unequal power relations whereby the native adopts the image projected onto him by the colonial Other, sometimes parodically and sometimes with seriousness or a combination of both.⁸⁰¹

Similarly, Karen J. Brison made the following observation with regard to the Kwanga of Papua Guinea:

...among the Kwanga of the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea, I was struck by the local people’s tendency to describe themselves in terms reminiscent of the Hobbesian myth of primitives as “ignoble savages” living lives that were “nasty, brutish, and short,” in a state of perpetual “warre” of all against all. In this kind of rhetoric, New Guineans were characterized as aggressive, jealous, and independent people who had lived in a state of perpetual violence until the “new law” of church, courts, and government brought peace under the higher powers of God and the law. The frequency with which expressions drawn directly from missionary rhetoric such as “in the light” (for Christians) and “in the dark” (for

⁷⁹⁹ Internalization is thought to be “the regulation of moral behavior or the development of conscience.” Julia Grabel, “Internalizing Problems During Adolescence,” in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, ed. Richard Lerner and Laurence Steinberg (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2004), 587.

⁸⁰⁰ Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 43.

⁸⁰¹ Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk*, 120.

non-Christians) cropped up in local speeches suggested that the Kwanga were borrowing images of their culture fairly directly from missionaries.⁸⁰²

Reminiscing Fanon's scathing criticism of colonizer project, Howard Adams, a Metis, wrote:

The native people in a colony are not allowed a valid interpretation of their history, because the conquered do not write their own history. They must endure a history that shames them, destroy their confidence, and causes them to reject their heritage. Those in power command the present and shape the future by controlling the past, particularly for natives. A fact of imperialism is that it systematically denies native people a dignified history. Whites claimed that Metis and Indians have no history or national identity, or, if they do, then it is a disgraceful and pathetic one. When natives renounce their nationalism and deny their Indianness, it is a sure sign that colonizing schemes of inferiorization have been successful.⁸⁰³

Once a proud people – proud of themselves, their culture and identity – the Nagas have so deeply internalized colonial projections that they now learn to primitivize themselves. Consequently, the Nagas are adding new dimension and interpretation in their evocative narration of their heritage and past history. And in doing so, they themselves have become complicit enablers in perpetuating colonial representations. For example, many contemporary Nagas callously and indiscriminately use the term 'headhunters' in speaking of their ancestors. In a political manifesto, entitled *The Bedrock of Naga Society*, a section of Naga politicians argued that the "main 'contact' between villages [before the British era] was through the savage practice of headhunting."⁸⁰⁴ Similarly, in November 1997 when the Nagas celebrated the 125th anniversary of the advent of Christianity in Nagaland, the theme chosen for the august

⁸⁰²Karen J. Brison, "Becoming Savage: Western Representations and Cultural Identity in a Sepik Society," *Anthropology and Humanism* 21, no. 1: 5.

⁸⁰³Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989), 43.

⁸⁰⁴*Agenda: Bedrock of Naga Society*; a booklet published by a Naga political party known as the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (I) in 2001.

celebration was “From Darkness to Light.” In a book entitled, *The Cross Over Nagaland*, a Naga writer wrote, “And the power of Jesus has changed the Nagas into an entirely different kind of people. The wild, warlike Nagas have been transformed beyond recognition into a peace-loving people in Christ.”⁸⁰⁵ The first chapter of the same book which focuses on the geography, ethnography and Naga history before Christianity is entitled “Night-Time in Nagaland”. He entitled his second chapter “The Sunrise” which describes the inception of Christianity in Nagaland. The dichotomy of night and day or light and darkness is unmistakable.

Unfortunately, these examples represent the attitude and mind-set of many contemporary Nagas on the ‘pagan’ culture of their ancestors. When carelessly used, any of the stereotypes, ‘headhunting,’ for example, can cause a great deal of misunderstanding in the minds of non-Nagas, who are not familiar with the philosophies and belief systems underlying Naga cultural practices. Consequently, such misunderstanding is bound to be detrimental to the Nagas.

Self-alienation

A colonial portrait often generates cultural autophobia within the colonized subject. The portrait then creates a desire to imitate the colonizer. When asked her opinion about pre-Christian Naga culture, a Naga woman reportedly said, “My forefathers were the most ferocious headhunters among the Naga tribes. We were living in the Stone Age. What could we do? We were like animals. Tit for tat. We didn’t know any other way of doing things.”⁸⁰⁶ This self-demeaning internalization of the ‘dark and barbaric’ past will undoubtedly engender hatred against one’s own cultural identity and

⁸⁰⁵Phuveyi Dozo, *The Cross Over Nagaland* (Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1983), 1.

⁸⁰⁶*Christianity Today*, February 2006.

values. Consequently, identification with the past becomes shameful and degrading; conversely, jettisoning or distancing from the past becomes liberating and provides a sense of having made progress. B.K. Roy Burman made the following remark with regard to the attitude of contemporary Nagas:

Recently, an educated Naga Youngman stated that his people would try to forget that till recently they were carrying on head-hunting or some such practices. So overwhelming is their feeling about these one or two erratic practices, that it becomes difficult for them to see beyond this and appreciate that there are basic values of humanism even in their past. They tend to feel that they were wallowing in the mire of shame and were redeemed by the Christian missionaries.⁸⁰⁷

Christianity is inextricably interwoven with Western civilization and progress. So, more than anything else, the cultural disconnection caused by conversion to Christianity has created an identity crisis and cultural alienation among the Nagas. In their attempt to rapidly convert and transform the Nagas, “Christian missionaries followed the policy of civilization by revolution. Every Naga was considered a heathen and was condemned and the missionary instilled in the converts a negative attitude towards Naga culture.”⁸⁰⁸ Furer-Haimendorf regretted that rather than bringing the Naga culture and Christianity into harmony, the missionaries set them at opposite poles. He then argued, “[S]eeing his own customs condemned by the missionaries, [the Naga] learnt to despise his own tribe and cultural inheritance.”⁸⁰⁹

Alienation from the past and self-degrading views about one’s culture and history creates guilt, shame and inner reproach. And this guilt-ridden inner conscious is ever

⁸⁰⁷B.K. Roy Burman, “Integrated Area Approach to the Problems of the Hill Tribes of north-east India,” in *The Tribal Situation in India*, 81.

⁸⁰⁸Abraham Lotha, *History of Naga Anthropology (1832-1947)* (Dimapur, Nagaland: Chumpo Museum, 2007), 46.

⁸⁰⁹Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 49.

ready to condemn and attack any imperfection in oneself. For contemporary Nagas, decapitation is now history. It is history in the sense that it is no longer practiced. Regrettably, however, because of the colonial stereotype, this aspect of the past is not only alienated from their present, but it is still relevant to present concerns. For example, whenever violence or killing takes place in Naga society, Nagas are quick to point to the past tradition of 'headhunting' and try to make a connection between 'bloodthirstiness' or 'warlike nature' in the blood or gene of the Nagas and the violence that is encountered. This misunderstanding about the past not only simplifies and misdirects a crucial problem at hand, but also inhibits an objective and analytical assessment of the problem of violence being experienced.

So, colonial portrait has created in the mind of the Nagas a demeaning and negative view of their past and alienated them from it; consequently, generating the desire to forget the past because they perceived it as evil. The colonial portrayal has distorted their image of who they were, who they are and who they ought to be. The prolonged colonial rule has profoundly affected and marred their attitudes, moral, religious and political concerns and psychological wellbeing. It is crucial that they learn to respect, love and appreciate themselves and their history so that they may regain self-confidence and self-pride and heal the inner wound that colonialism has inflicted. The process of psychological healing and emancipation from the captivity of the mind will begin only when the Nagas are able to gravitate towards a positive view of their past, deconstruct the myths surrounding their past from colonial designs and know the truth about their history and culture.

CHAPTER SIX: THE NOTION OF PROGRESS AND CONTEMPORARY NAGAS

When tribal people first met European soldiers different universes of understanding came into contact. But they did not meet, because the Europeans were not able to meet a different view of the world. Instead, they imposed their own understanding of order by force.⁸¹⁰

When the West forced its ‘civilized’ and ‘superior’ culture on the Nagas, especially with regard to religion, law and political administration, the Nagas suddenly found themselves ignorant and powerless against the arbitrarily imposed dominant paradigm. Many of their age-old values and traditions become somewhat outmoded. They found themselves at the mercy of the colonizers who had the knowledge and skills of a new way of life in areas such as education, religion, law and governance. While ignorance of the newly imposed paradigm disempowered the colonized, the knowledge of it afforded power and authority to the colonizer. As Musa Dube aptly noted, “the cultures of the empire are also used to maintain power over the colonized.”⁸¹¹

The pronouncement that Naga traditional myths, sacred stories and ways of knowing were pagan, irrational and primitive caused not only a sense of cultural void and confusion, it also disempowered everyone who relied upon them for guidance and strength in life. Because of this paradigm shift, it is not uncommon today to hear older

⁸¹⁰Felix Padel, *The Sacrifice of Human Being: British Rule and the Konds of Orissa* (Delhi; Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1995), 36.

⁸¹¹Dube, “Reading from Decolonization (John 4:1-42),” in *Voices from the Margin*, 299. Also, for an argument that knowledge/power form a couplet, see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

Nagas to say to educated youngsters, “I am like an animal because I am illiterate and ignorant. I know nothing about the new ways of living.”

In this final chapter I will discuss the current state of the Nagas as it has been created out of the adjustments in the lives and minds of the people. This is the consequent of the influence to which the Nagas have been forcibly exposed to the Western notion of progress. I will then present how the world of the Nagas has been profoundly disoriented and fragmented by the contact with the Western colonial world and its systems.

A colonial officer, who visited the Naga Hills in 1865 and 1883, made the following observation with regard to the Nagas and other “aboriginal races:” “‘Progress’ is in the air everywhere, and we shall soon lose much of the material out of which their past histories might have been recovered.”⁸¹² In the early 1920s, another British administrator also observed the remarkable rapidity at which the Naga culture was being transformed under the influence of the notion of progress and said, “Old beliefs and customs are dying, the old traditions are being forgotten, the number of Christians or quasi-Christians is steadily increasing, and the spirit of change is invading and pervading every aspect of village life.”⁸¹³

Today, it is not uncommon for Naga elders to lament and say, “*Khili na ghanyi hhang dija watha*” (You youngsters have gone insane/disoriented). Literally, *dija/kedija* means a state of actual insanity where a person is unable to function normally as a result of mental illness. It also means a state of profound confusion, disarray or disorientation where a person does not care about or abide by any rules, or simply does not know how to live life. Thus, “*Dija nu nhhang la*” (Don’t live a life of insanity/disorientation) is

⁸¹²Peal, “Fading Histories,” 11.

⁸¹³Hutton, *The Angami Nagas* (1969 [1921]), vii.

uttered as a reprimand to someone who does not abide by societal norms or has no sense of responsibility in life for oneself, family or community. In other words, it is a call to return to order and regulation by following the example of the ancestors. Today's Naga elders see confusion and disorder when compared to the past. They have seen disintegration of the traditional value systems that once guided and gave order to people who are now without direction or identity and who appear as if they are groping in darkness.

The misconceived notion of progress

Much like any others, the contemporary Nagas' understanding of progress is misplaced, and pursuit of it is destructive. Blind pursuit of modern western lifestyle, culture or development negatively impacts and endangers the very existence of the pursuer. It is mimicry at one's own peril and results in servile imitation that brings destruction to oneself, one's culture, society and environment. Simeon Namunu gives a description of the world of the Melanesians before the advent of progress, which applies as well for the Nagas:

Life, before the Europeans came, was surrounded with creative energies flowing through trees, grasses, streams and rivers, mountains, sea, sky and all the galaxies, animals, birds, and humans. The forests were untouched by logging, mining, and petroleum entrepreneurs. The ecosystem was viewed with awe. This is an ideal Melanesian vision of the beautiful earthly order, before the doctrine of progress and its negative deleterious energies were put into force.⁸¹⁴

The Naga notion of progress is quantitative rather than qualitative and its measure is almost entirely materialistic. The person who accumulates or hordes the most is envied and seen as having progressed the most regardless of whether this economic progress was

⁸¹⁴ Namunu, "Melanesian Religion, Ecology, and Modernization in Papua New Guinea," in *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology*, 251.

achieved through corrupt means or the misappropriation of funds meant for the common people. Obviously, this is larceny; however, due to moral disorientation such unethical and illegal acquisition of wealth is sometimes understood as divine favor. Consequently, this distorted notion of progress as material accumulation of tangible personal property has generated intense possessive materialism that has come to grip the Naga society. Materialism and consumerism have enslaved them and created dysfunctions that undermine the social fabric. Therefore, as Lasch insisted, there is an urgent "...need to subject the idea of progress to searching criticism."⁸¹⁵

What are the signs of blind pursuit of progress that contemporary Nagas are undertaking? A few such indications may be mentioned here. One sign of blind pursuit of progress is the exponentially increasing number of automobiles. Cars are dangerous and even deadly for the roads and conditions in the Naga Hills. Additionally, very few or no rules and regulations exist for drivers; so, with the increase of the number of vehicles, vehicular injuries and fatality have also gone up rapidly. Despite the consequences, owning a car is a symbol of social and economic advancement regardless of the means by which it is acquired. Whenever any sort of gathering takes place, the success of the crowd or the gathering itself is determined by the number of vehicles present. Likewise, the success of a family is measured by the number of cars parked in front of their house. Consequently, the already crowded urban dwellings are made worse by the presence of an excessive number of cars that it takes an hour or more to drive a distance of a few kilometers.

⁸¹⁵Lasch, *The True and only Heaven*, 14.

This sort of blind pursuit of progress does not bring ease and comfort but adds misery to life and needs to be discouraged; because progress or development is being pursued for the mere sake of development, without taking into consideration the long-term health, sustainability and stability of people, their land and environment. Unlike their ancestors, Nagas today attach monetary value to everything around them such as trees, rocks, land, fauna and flora, and create imbalance between human beings and the rest of creation. There is a prophesy among the Rengma Nagas that *asheseng wi* (in a distant future) human beings would make their teeth with iron and start eating rocks and woods.⁸¹⁶ This vision or foretelling of the destruction of natural environment seems to have come to fulfillment in the present generation. For this reason, Taiaiake Alfred, a Native American scholar, has implored colonized indigenous peoples, indeed all human beings, to work to decolonize themselves from the mentality and the structure of intense possessive materialism and the short-sighted generation of wealth that characterizes Western culture.⁸¹⁷

Another sign is the recently realized penchant for imported products, especially personal belongings such as shoes, clothes and gadgets. Because of the legal restriction on travels to Nagaland imposed by Indian government the Nagas hardly interact with Westerners or visitors from other countries. However, television, Hollywood movies and Western music have created an emulative craze for Western culture, fashion and styles, creating incongruity and mismatch between what the people wear and where or how they live. The fashionable and posh clothes many Nagas wear belie the realities of life when

⁸¹⁶Elders of Nsуну and Chunlikha, interviewed by author, Dec. 23, 2007.

⁸¹⁷Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 61.

juxtaposed with streets that are strewn with litter, covered by sewage water and an acrid stench. In stark contrast to their trendy and elegant personal belongings the living conditions are still quite ‘primitive’ and the infrastructure is no better. However, the acute visual dichotomy does not deter individuals from striving to possess the most expensive and trendy outfits and gadgets. Naga scholar Visier Sanyu made the following observation:

At the cultural level, an overflow of money and the introduction, through education, to western modes of dress, behaviour and thought has led to a superficial understanding and assimilation of certain aspects of Western Culture. This superficial westernization in matters of dress, food habits, music and other activities became popular.⁸¹⁸

This obsession for Western goods is a sign of self-alienation and a lack of trust in themselves and their ability; it is a sign of having lost their identity and self-esteem. Having learned to negate themselves, their identity and former values, deep down in their innermost recesses the Naga mind holds the belief that the foreign is better.⁸¹⁹ They have ceased looking within themselves for their innate gifts, skills and qualities. Instead, they look for an external source or answer to fulfill the restlessness within, albeit, unconsciously. The people have become, what Taiaiake Alfred calls, “hallow shells” without “the real and original people” because what makes them real, original and indigenous has been largely lost within the dominant culture.⁸²⁰

Additionally, the use of honorific or distinguishing titles, a totally foreign concept, has become widespread. Contemporary Naga leaders are obsessed with honorific titles and have forgotten the virtue and responsibility of serving or providing quality service to

⁸¹⁸Visier Sanyu, “What Nagaland State Did to The Nagas: A Historical Perspective,” in *Nagaland: A Contemporary Ethnology*, ed. Subhadra Mitra Channa (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1992), 271.

⁸¹⁹Noel Erskine argues that this happens when the mind is colonized. See his book, *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective* (Asmara, Iritrea; Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1998), xix.

⁸²⁰Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, xv.

the people they serve. Distinguishing titles, such as Rev., Dr., Er. (Engineer) and Ar. (Architect) are burgeoning among the so-called educated and professional Nagas. Furthermore, there is a stiff competition for 'designation wearing or display.' Cars with red designation labels are very common. Elected leaders and bureaucrats are in a rush for 'VIP' lights, sirens, escorts and designation plates, because having these distinguishing symbols signal that the person has made progress or advanced ahead of others. These are indicators or signs that one is above the common people and is entitled to certain privileges that commoners do not have. These elements are strong indications of a colonized mind and distorted worldview that are unashamedly exhibited in the attitudes and behaviors of the people in their dealings with each other.

Finally, infrastructural progress or developmental advancement that would have communal benefit is all but non-existent. Individuals compete to increase personal wealth and care very little or none for the collective good. As such, communal property is misappropriated for personal gain. For example, the number of private schools has been mushrooming lately at the expense of public schools. The same is true with public health-care system. With the public health-care centers disregarded and almost abandoned in terms of service and utility, private clinics or health-care centers, owned by government employed doctors, are booming and thriving.

Similarly, collective property or public systems such as roads, electricity and public water systems remain largely nonfunctional, because no individual can own any of these privately for personal gain. There is no incentive for improving public services. Rather, funds meant for the construction, maintenance and improvement of these services are embezzled to augment personal income and property, because progress is perceived

as an individualistic material accumulation by whatever dubious means. The insatiable desire to pilfer the public coffer for personal gain impedes improvement for the common good. This pursuit of material progress has worked to negate any desire to seek the welfare of the whole. In other words, the notion of quantitative progress has eclipsed qualitative progress such that Naga society is beset by volatile and unsettling forces and chaos.

In light of present circumstances it is paramount that the Nagas, especially the leaders, get one thing right; that is, *progress, correctly understood, is qualitative rather than quantitative*. Real progress should be measured by the degree of justice, equality, peace and advancement of moral virtues in a society. It is an advancement of the common good, communal peace and happiness rather than the accumulation of ill-gotten gains. Progress is not acquiring everything one wants. Rather, it is having what we need and striving to achieve equitable distribution. With reference to what progress truly ought to be as opposed to the popular modern Western understanding, Tom Wessels observed:

Most of the indicators used for supporting our reigning paradigm of progress relate to materialism. Yet, I believe that materialism is much too limited an indicator with which to mark progress. Much more important trends of progress relate to the physical well-being of citizens, their emotional well-being, and community well-being....⁸²¹

Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi observed that there are two types of progress: “economic progress” and “real progress.” Gandhi described economic progress as “material advancement without limit” and real progress as “moral progress.”⁸²² He argued that material progress cannot generate moral progress because economic progress

⁸²¹Tom Wessels, *The Myth of Progress: Sustainable Future* (Burlington, Vermont: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 93.

⁸²²Raghavan Iyer, ed., *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 94.

“is antagonistic to real progress.”⁸²³ Gandhi likened “the modern materialistic craze” to “going downhill in the path of progress,” and in his critique of the West’s materialist culture he argued that their worship of “the monster-god of materialism” has stunted their spiritual growth.

If progress is qualitative rather than quantitative, can it be claimed that today Nagas have made progress from their traditional state of ‘barbarism’ and ‘savagery’? Put another way, is Naga society more virtuous and moral today than they were in their so-called ‘headhunting’ days? Have justice, equality and peace improved consequent to exposure to West’s ‘civilized’ culture? If modernization, westernization or technological advancement is a sign of progress, how do we explain and justify the degeneration of moral virtues in the contemporary Naga society?”

Given the present state of moral breakdown, widespread corruption and general disillusionment, the Nagas have made a slight gain in quantitative progress, but they have otherwise regressed profoundly. Their enslavement to the culture of materialism and consumerism has caused moral standards to degenerate rapidly. The traditional culture which was grounded in strong spiritual, family and community values as well as close relation with nature has succumbed to materialism and consumerism, which in turn has resulted in social disintegration, environmental destruction and violence. Consequently, a way of life that evolved and perfectly adapted over countless generations to the social needs and to the environment in which they lived, has nearly vanished over a few generations.

⁸²³Ibid., 97.

“Feasts of merit,” distributive justice and penchant for affluence and materialism

Pradip Prabhu observed a common characteristic among the tribal peoples in India with respect to their simplicity, contentment and non-accumulative culture. He wrote, “There is something in the tribal philosophy which has kept these people free from the unseemly greed for material possessions. Such greed does not fit them in their philosophy.”⁸²⁴ He observed some philosophical beliefs that underlie the lack of possessive materialism. First, in their view material goods are “‘grievously oppressive’ and even physically burdensome.” Second, they also believe that “surplus production depletes nature’s abundance, undermines subsistence, and creates a production crisis.” Third, for them “the concept of personal property does not exist; even food is a common possession, and life always remains corporate and cooperative.”⁸²⁵ However, these traditional beliefs are being forcefully undermined by progress as it is characterized in the drive for material accumulation or the desire for it.

Traditionally, Nagas material wealth mainly consisted of three things: parcels of arable land, the number of rice barns and domesticated animals, which are all essential to livelihood and existence. The wealth generated from the land had a specific purpose which Western writers called “Feasts of Merit.” Feast of Merit refers to a system of a social exchange in which feasts were held in successive stages, as many as twelve. Beside the feasts that were given to entire village, there were some feasts served to relatives and others to the elderly. It was never imperative, though, that the provider completed the

⁸²⁴Prabhu, “In the Eye of the Storm: Tribal Peoples of India,” in *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology*, 57.

⁸²⁵*Ibid.*

entire series. Most families ended up with one or two feasts in a life time, because each successive stage is more economically exacting or challenging than the one before.

Hosting a feast brought honor, and the host was accorded social validation in the form of cultural rights to wear certain ornaments, headdresses, specifically designed shawls or to decorate a house with wooden crafts. For this reason, Western writers have termed these feasts as “Feasts of Merit” or “demonstrations of wealth”.⁸²⁶ The main motivation to offer feasts was driven by reciprocal generosity. It was the utmost desire of every family to host a feast for the entire village at least once in a lifetime, because it was an act of social reciprocity where generosity was exchanged and contribution was made towards community building and social cohesion. As the feasts were for one and all, it was also an opportunity to reconcile and mend relations with all members of the community. On the occasion of the feasts, friends and relatives from other villages were also invited, and gifts were exchanged and relationship was cemented. As a gesture of sacrifice in order to let others eat well, the host abstained from the lavish feast offered to the community and observed a simple diet during the ceremony.

In traditional society, honor was not accrued through individual achievements; rather, it was bestowed according to one’s service to the community. Feeding the community so that everyone ate his/her fill brought honor to the host of the feast. In other words, the activity of an individual that did not help the community did not deserve honor. The accumulation of wealth had negative repercussions on oneself and one’s clan unless such generation of wealth was for the purpose of sharing with the community through the provision of communal feasts. Naga writer Charles Chasie rightly noted that “in

⁸²⁶West, *The Most Dangerous Legacy*, 17.

traditional society, wealth was a means to serve the community and gain social prestige; in modern times, it became an end in itself.”⁸²⁷ Thus, the aspiration to become wealthy had a specific goal, that is, to feed the community.

Honor was not accorded on the basis of the amount of wealth, but on the basis of what was distributed and shared with the community. The more a person provided the more honorable he/she to the people. That is why the series of feasts got more exacting and more honor was bestowed to the host who went higher in the scale. Simply put, accumulation for its own sake was considered shameful and magnanimous sharing was honorable. Referring to the practice among his own people, Tinker stated, “While stature and importance are typically measured in the West by the individual accumulation of wealth (along with its corollary power), stature in the Indian world is more readily measured by how much one has ‘given away.’”⁸²⁸

The role of shame in ordering traditional Naga society needs to be expounded here, because it is paramount in regulating personal and social behavior. It serves as the conscience of the people and plays a vital role in charitable giving, distributive justice and the historical absence of homelessness and begging in society. The absence of an oppressive law enforcing agency similar to Western societies is compensated by the concept of shame in a traditional Naga society.

Shame is not necessarily negative as it is often maligned in Western literature. It can be and is a virtue. In speaking of the role of shame in Japanese culture, Ruth Benedict wrote, “Shame, they [Japanese] say, is the root of virtue. A man who is sensitive to it will

⁸²⁷Chasie, “Nagaland in Transition,” in *Where the Sun Rises When the Shadows Fall: The North-east*, ed. Geeti Sen (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 259.

⁸²⁸Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance*, 19.

carry out all the rules of good behavior. ‘A man who knows shame’ is sometimes translated ‘virtuous man,’ sometimes ‘man of honor.’”⁸²⁹ Shame is culturally rooted and community based in that an individual’s perception and sense of shame are intimately associated with his/her cultural upbringing within a given community.

The outcome of *kezhüghi keya* (earning shame) can be negative if an individual is shamed because of crossing a socially demarcated boundary. A person earns shame on herself/himself and on the family by failing to conform to a socially acceptable norm. ‘To be shamed’ or ‘to put to shame’ because of deviation is negative shame. An individual who has no shame earns *anyang kekenyeng* (dirty name).⁸³⁰ In other words, a person who has no sense of shame is a shameless person and is viewed negatively in the eyes of public, because to have no sense of shame is shameful. Put another way, a person who commits a shameful act and does not show an appropriate sense of shame is a shameless person. And because the person is shameless, he/she indulges in shameful acts and remains shameless. Consequently, such an individual is put to shame in the eye or opinion of the public. More importantly, an individual’s action is reflected on his/her community. As such, in a shame culture, unlike in a guilt culture, when an individual in a community indulges in a shameful act, everyone in the family, clan, community or even tribe, is shamed by association. Thus, there is a mitigating fear of causing embarrassment or shame on others by one’s shameful deeds that serves to restrain individuals from engaging in misbehavior and/or offense.

⁸²⁹Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1946), 224. Benedict argues that the Japanese culture was a ‘shame culture’ whereas the U.S. culture was a ‘guilt culture.’ Psychoanalyst Stuart Schneiderman describes the difference between a shame culture and a guilt culture and argues that Americans could benefit from a greater sense of shame. See his book, *Saving Face: America and the Politics of Shame* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1995).

⁸³⁰In fact, *kekenyeng* is more than dirty; horribly revolting or unspeakably disgusting could be a better transliteration.

Thus, a person of shame or one who possesses a sense of shame avoids shame by shunning shameful acts. Shame prevents an individual from indulging in or committing acts that are socially considered shameful. Shame is here positive because it prevents an individual from engaging in negative or shameful deeds. So, positive shame is being sensitive to public opinion or one's standing and reputation in the eyes of societal members. Shame enables a person to keep one's honor intact and unchallenged by others. A person of shame is one who refrains from deviation and would do anything to conform to social norms prescribed for all community members. In other words, shame culture seeks to maintain its boundaries. Today, however, this concept and practice related to shame is beginning to gradually erode as people move away from their close-knit community to unfamiliar urban settlement where individuals are strangers to one another.

Shame is imperative in all aspects of life in Naga culture. However, suffice it to say here that a sense of shame informing the values of a community promotes sharing, hospitality and distributive justice. The concept of shame is a cultural mechanism that enables the community to prevent its members from begging or becoming homeless, because begging or homelessness is conceived as a shamefully scathing indictment of a shameless society or group of people. In other words, the burden of shame is not placed on the one who begs for a living. It is placed on the community who has the means to help but choose not to.

Westernization of Naga culture

Clemmer, in his study observed that the Hopis were being pulled by “two opposite poles: the pursuit of progress and opposition to it.”⁸³¹ Most, if not all, non-Western cultures partake in this debilitating and helpless experience, and the Nagas are not immune from this predicament. With reference to the Nagas, Chasie observed, “The advent of the [Western colonization], and exposure of the Nagas to the outside world, turned Naga society upside down and ushered in profound changes that would leave indelible scars that could never be erased.”⁸³²

Although there is a growing awareness among some Nagas of the importance of preserving cultural identity and values, the overwhelming majority are after the pursuit of progress. A popular belief among the Nagas is that progress is the result of divine favor bestowed by God. And the material wealth and progress of Western nations, the United States in particular, who introduced Christianity and ‘civilization’ to them is considered the proof for this belief. I will describe below some aspects of progress that have come to westernize the Nagas and shape the course of their life and history.

Educationization

‘Educationization’ is used here to refer to the introduction of Western concept and practice of literacy and education, which have consequently served to transform the non-literate Naga culture. When the American missionaries first went to the Nagas in the late 1830s with the desire to introduce literacy and Christianity, the latter reacted with either indifference or resistance: “Who wants religion from a foreigner, and who will alter the

⁸³¹Clemmer, *Roads in the Sky*, 9.

⁸³²Chasie, “Nagaland in Transition,” 255.

customs of their fathers to receive books?”⁸³³ This attitude regarding Western culture gradually shifted as the Nagas realized the social and economic advantages that accompanied literacy and Christianity in the newly emerging socio-cultural paradigm. Accordingly, the introduction of education by missionaries was poised to transform permanently the way of life that the Nagas had known for all their lives.

The traditional Naga society had no formal education system as it is understood and practiced in the West. Education was conducted through oral transmission and learning by experience. It was participatory and practical and took place in the context of the home and larger community. Priority and emphasis was given to formation rather than information, that is, formation of character over information of a body of knowledge such as facts and ideas. As such, theory was of little use, because the purpose was to develop skills and character rather than impart a certain quantity of essentially abstract knowledge. The Nagas did not know or make separation between theory and practice. Theoretical knowledge did not concern with abstract thoughts but with the real and practical needs and experiences of the community. Intense debate and rationalization was unknown, because in a community based society such activity was considered to be self-promoting and not conducive to harmonious existence.

The Nagas hardly taught anything that was irrelevant or immaterial because the objective of education was to make an individual fit for societal role expected of him or her. For this reason, traditional education was inextricably integrated with the socio-economic, artistic, religious and recreational life of the community. Each person was an integral part of the community and as such was taught to be responsible person to the

⁸³³Bronson (Dec. 21, 1840) in Barpujari, *The American Missionaries*, 238.

family and village, thereby contributing to the cohesion and harmony of the whole. Thus, contrary to Western education, traditional education was not aimed at producing change, but to yield conformity.

In addition to parents, a child was almost always in the company of a host of close relatives who took on the responsibility of nurturing the child. In other words, the education of the child was a communal effort. Misbehavior could bring reprimand and discipline from nearly any adult, because each boy and girl is a child of not only biological parents but of the community as well.

If there was a Naga institution that could be considered to even remotely resemble a Western school it was the *morung* (a men's institutional house). A *morung* is an institution in which learning took place in the context of communal living, and as such, the philosophy and structure of Naga *morungs* and Western schools were in fact quite different. The training of a child in a Naga *morung* was inherently utilitarian in that children were taught the art and skills of daily living and familiarity with social norms and mores. Education within the *morung* was understood as sharing or 'communication of life' rather than 'communication of knowledge.'

With regard to the history of modern education and the Nagas, American missionaries were in the forefront of introducing Western education to the Nagas. So, education and Christianity were two faces of the same coin and served as a conduit through which one could attain progress and civilization. Initially, education meant merely enabling the Naga to become literate, which had a religious motive – "to develop literacy in order that the Bible could be read."⁸³⁴ Those few Nagas who the missionaries

⁸³⁴West, *The Most Dangerous Legacy*, 17.

considered intelligent enough were sent to Assam to receive higher education. So, the school was the nucleus of proselytizing practices and Christianity, where mission schools produced young Naga converts who were then trained for religious positions as preachers and teachers. Their attachment to White people through education and employment created alienation from their own community and culture. They tended to consider themselves as a class of their own, with superior knowledge and achievement.

Today, most Nagas generally believe that success in education is a divine blessing for having accepted Christianity. The higher rate of educated individuals associated with tribes that first accepted Christianity is often mentioned as evidence. This erroneous religious belief blinds the people from seeing the fact that Christianity and education were intentionally intertwined to pursue a set of objectives. So in a highly christianized society like the Naga society the tendency to christianize or spiritualize sociological trends, patterns and events often looms large.

Also, in contrast to traditional education, the modern education system among the Nagas remains largely irrelevant and meaningless; rather, it breeds social problems, because it is not only Western import, but also highly examination-oriented. This is because, as Vine Deloria, Jr. argued, “modern education places immense reliance on the standardized tests as a measure of the worth and accomplishments of the individual.”⁸³⁵ Paulo Freire called this the “‘banking’ concept of education,” a system in which “students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.”⁸³⁶ The current system of education lacks cultural relevance to the needs of the learner or society and does not take into account the

⁸³⁵Deloria, Jr., “Knowing and Understanding: Traditional Education in the Modern World” in *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader*, ed. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner and Sam Scintia (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), 141.

⁸³⁶Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York; London: Continuum, 2003), 72.

applicability of what is being taught and learned and has miserably failed in meeting the needs of the society.

Deloria, Jr. contended that the Euro-American system of education amounts to indoctrination because “it insists on implanting a particular body of knowledge and a specific view of the world that often does not correspond to the life experiences that people have or might be expected to encounter.”⁸³⁷ The school curriculum contains very little or no Naga culture and history. In a world that is almost completely shut off from the West by India, students are taught White middle class ideals and values relating to economics, law, politics, science, and philosophy, which have little practical relevance to a largely agrarian Naga society. Students compete to learn and write examinations on European history, Renaissance, Western industrialization, American democratic system, Keynesian economics and English literature, to name a few. This is in addition to learning Indian history and culture.

Education is oriented towards acquisition of mostly irrelevant factual information with very little towards comprehending the meaning or implication of what is learned or taught. This social and cultural irrelevance means that students often lack the motivation to study. They have difficulty in relating what they learn to their frame of reference and in making it a part of their knowledge or themselves. Therefore, there is an urgent need to examine the basic organization of educational structures and systems and the philosophical foundation on which they rest. Some impacts of the introduction of education will be accounted here.

⁸³⁷Deloria, Foehner, and Scintia, *Spirit and Reason*, 138.

1. Social polarization and stratification

Colonization and missionization engendered imbalance in Naga society. Education and employment for a select group created social divisions and asymmetry in structures of power and wealth. Western education also brought bureaucracy and elitism to a formerly classless Naga society. With reference to indigenous peoples' experience, Linda Tuhiwai Smith argued, "Colonial education was also used for creating new indigenous elites."⁸³⁸ Today, there are binary oppositions that characterizes Nagas society: the 'haves' and the 'have-nots,' the educated and illiterate, the employed and the unemployed, and the government employees and traditional subsistence cultivators. The illiterate, the poor, the unemployed and the subsistent workers are seen as 'backward' and 'primitive' village dwellers, who are trapped in tradition. In contrast, the educated, the government employees and the wealthy are believed to exemplify progress, symbolized by their urban homes and lifestyle, educational degrees, government job and material possessions. Chasie observed, "The bureaucrat, and his lifestyle, also became the 'role-model' for many. Focus shifted from values to symbols of achievement while money became the measuring yardstick."⁸³⁹

Consequent to this stratification of Naga society, widening socio-economic disparity has emerged rapidly particularly between the educated employed in urban sectors and the subsistence cultivators in rural settlements. As the Nagas have continued their obsession with progress, traditional consciousness and the practices of communal caring and equitable distribution of resources begin to diminish. Lavish funds from the

⁸³⁸Smith, "Colonizing Knowledges," in *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspective*, ed. Roger Maaka and Chris Andersen (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2006), 97.

⁸³⁹Chasie, "Nagaland in Transition," 259.

government of India, aimed at exploiting the spirit of nationalism and driving a wedge between Naga leaders and the people, are being grossly misappropriated by the elite few. Roger Keesing and Andrew Strathern observed that invariably “where colonialism has incorporated classless societies into the world capitalist system, class relationships have been created”⁸⁴⁰ and this is being painfully experienced by the Nagas.

2. Disruption of balance of authority

Western education also has proved disruptive of the traditional balance of authority by contributing significantly to the disintegration of traditional gerontocracy. I use ‘gerontocracy’ to refer to the tradition of respecting and valuing the experience, wisdom and instruction of the elders in society and not any formal government or rule by elders. Education and the shift of the socio-political paradigm served to nullify the elder’s social position and influence.

Most British officers and American missionaries were young individuals, keen on exploration and adventure, who wielded enormous authority and power in an extremely unequal power relationship in a colonial context. Not surprisingly, they also elevated young literate Nagas to leadership positions. Most, if not all, educated Naga individuals were also Christians, who believed that they were no longer bound by traditional socio-religious rules. Because of their new found privileged position, they shifted their allegiance and loyalty to their Western colonial and/or missionary masters.

Indeed, this paradigmatic shift rendered the older Nagas redundant in that their wisdom was no longer efficacious. Their status dropped and their contributions were minimized amidst social changes. Consequently, their self-esteem and self-worth also

⁸⁴⁰Keesing and Strathern, *Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 361.

declined. Naga parents often say to their educated children, “Do not skin off your parents.” This admonition is not only to point to the depletion of parents’ life-long earnings for the education of the children but also to the fact that modern education often causes the diminishing of traditional and empirical wisdom rooted in the parents and elders.

3. Unemployment

Unemployment is a condition unknown to the pre-colonial Nagas. In pre-colonial society, every Naga was employed, because a good share of their traditional education was devoted to ensuring that each person acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to provide a livelihood. In gaining this education, it made the person feel valuable and meaningfully belonged to their social group and no one suffered psychologically from being socially stigmatized on the ground of being unemployed. With the inception of Western education, the reality of unemployment and its associated socio-economic and psychological ramifications begin to affect the unemployed Nagas as well as the society in general. For many educated unemployed, education has become an end in itself, i.e., education has become simply a means to acquire a school degree, leading to frustration, despair and a loss of self-esteem and self-worth.

The foundation on which the modern education system was laid is flawed and has a negative impact on contemporary Nagas, because the system did not encourage adapting education to the specific Naga cultural setting. Western education was not aimed at strengthening the existing cultural values and practices, but to disrupt and transform the culture and the mindset of the people. So, it was not only transplanted, but also was needed for the colonizing of the Nagas. While the missionaries needed literate

Naga teachers and preachers to assist them in proselytization, the British needed educated Nagas as agents to enforce colonial rules. Consequently, educated Nagas were not only critical agents in the westernization and modernization of the Nagas, but also were the first colonial instruments and native accomplices.

A colonial administrator in the 1850s observed that “the motive which brings the [Naga] boys to the schools is simply the prospect of getting Government employment.” He further remarked, “The one cry with the higher classes is: ‘you have given us education under the promise of employment, and unfitted us for an agricultural life, and you do not fulfill your promise.’”⁸⁴¹ A similar observation was made by a missionary in the early 1920s. In his remark below, he wrote:

...a number of the boys who have been in the Mission School consider themselves above manual labour. They have observed that the missionaries and officials, and the high-caste Assamese, who are teachers in the school and as Government clerks, do not perform manual labour. Moreover, these exempted persons are able to read books; they are educated. Then why should they themselves not become exempt from labour after learning to read? When the boys have been in school for some time they invariably adopt the custom worn by the educated Assamese. They abandoned the distinctive Naga hair-cut and dispense with the customary ornaments. This change in outward appearance decreases their isolation and they come to be closer related to the educated Assamese, and then manual labour become more distasteful. Some of these boys will care for the missionaries’ ponies.... Since this particular kind of work came with the advent of the Europeans into the Hills, these boys with the book-learning no doubt consider it a superior form of service which will give them a position of superiority in the group.⁸⁴²

The colonizers and missionaries consistently and persistently propagated the idea that the Naga’s subsistence living was primitive and so labor intensive that no civilized person “could stand the life for a year.”⁸⁴³ Young Nagas were strongly encouraged to submit to the new education system as the only escape from the ‘backward’ life. Those

⁸⁴¹Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, 26-8.

⁸⁴²Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, 196-7.

⁸⁴³*Ibid.*, 197.

who did were offered paid employment. Subsequently, over the decades the belief that education is the vehicle in which one moves away from the primitive and into the modern has become deeply engrained in the Naga psyche. Terhuja, a Naga leader, observed:

The first educated people were Christians and they had better facilities for employment and advancement. This often created a desire in the people to get education and Christianity.

It is the desire of all parents to send their children to schools. The sense of value has changed to such an extent that a man would rather give a good education to his children than spend the amount on traditional community feasts.⁸⁴⁴

Due to this attitude about and the expectations from education the rate of literacy among the Nagas rose from 19% in 1960 to 67.11 % in 2001, translating into 44,960 educated unemployed youth in 2006 in the state of Nagaland alone.⁸⁴⁵ Today, there is no private sector to offer employment opportunities. Educated Nagas continue to think subsistence living as beneath them and do not consider self-employment honorable. Consequently, trade and commerce are almost entirely dominated by non-Naga immigrants, who follow the money-trail from India and drain resources away from the Nagas. With the only government jobs available Nagas bureaucrats and politicians become disproportionately powerful and widespread nepotism, tribal favoritism and venality are the norm.

Professionalization

There was no such thing as job specialization in traditional Naga society. All Nagas engaged in similar work, that is, growing their food. Any expertise or special skills beyond self-sustenance was used to benefit the community. For example, a traditional physician or a midwife might be called to help at any time or anywhere, but she/he would

⁸⁴⁴Terhuja, "The Christian church among the Angami Nagas," in *The Tribal Situation in India*, 298.

⁸⁴⁵This figure of unemployment is provided by the Nagaland state registry of employment. The estimate could be much higher, because many have lost hope and simply do not care to register. According to the 2001 census record, the total population of Nagaland is 1.99 million. "44,960 unemployed in Nagaland," *Nagaland Post*, March 17, 2006, <http://www.nagalandpost.com/Statedesc.asp?sectionid=7572>.

never trade her/his service as means of livelihood, because it was understood that the community was responsible for the wellbeing and health of every individual member. In reference to the Native Americans, Vine Deloria, Jr. wrote: “The Indian religious leader views his religious powers partly as a blessing and partly a curse because of added burdens of social responsibility.”⁸⁴⁶ Similarly, all traditional Nagas, not just religious leaders, gifted with special abilities felt the same way.

Except for special abilities such as healing, delivering babies and foreseeing/foretelling, most traditional Nagas knew everything necessary for living, making them self-sufficient and independent. Where an individual lacked any such skills, some member of the extended family could easily provide assistance. However, it was unlikely for the average person to lack the knowledge and skills that were necessary for life. Some works were split between genders, such as weaving and knitting for women and crafting and hunting for men.

With capitalism came the complication and professionalization of livelihood unknown to the Nagas. Modern professionalism is often characterized by the desire for socio-economic gain for the individual. As such, professionalism promotes individualistic tendency as it is driven by the desire for accumulation. Unlike in the traditional society where individuals with special skills offered their service freely to the community even as they engaged in growing food, modern Naga professionals offer their services not only as a means of livelihood, but also for accumulation. As a result, for example, healthcare which was always available for free has now become a booming business among the

⁸⁴⁶Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 213.

Nagas. Today, most Naga physicians employed by the government also own private healthcare services in order to make more money.

The introduction of specialization in modern education has also generated unemployment among the Nagas. Because of the irrelevance of the training, many educated Nagas find themselves at a loss after completing studies. For example, dentistry, veterinary medicine and computer engineering, to list a few, do not have much relevance to a largely agricultural and rural Naga society where such types of expertise are rarely needed. Even when employed by the state government these sorts of professions end up contributing minimally to society. So, the modern Western idea of professionalizing work has not only eroded the traditional communitarian values, but has also become a factor contributing to social problems such as unemployment and unnecessary waste of human and monetary resources in getting professional trainings that are contextually irrelevant and useless.

Urbanization

For time immemorial, the Nagas had lived and continue to live in small close-knit communities; cities or large settlements were all but unknown. The village had and has always been a significant element of their identity. In villages, communities are small which ensures that everyone has adequate resources to survive and that there is less competition. In these small communities, a strong sense of communal care or ‘take-care-of-one-another’ always exists and conforming to social norms is implicitly required of all through public opinion and familiarity among community members.

In small scale settings, everyone knows who is who and each person is related to every other person through friendship, kinship or both. Inter-marriage among members of

different clan groups through the generations binds the community as one big family. This blood-relationship is paramount and honored for generations. Living in an environment of familiarity and connections with all societal members reduces crime to almost non-existence. In other words, the fear of being raped, kidnapped, robbed or harmed is absent. So, living in such close-knit villages has many advantages. Below is Bodley's observation on life in small-scale cultures:

Small-scale cultures with reduced complexity have enormous human advantages, especially because people living smaller, lower-density populations may be able to enjoy greater democracy, freedom, equality, and security than people living in large, tense populations, where they usually are divided sharply by differential access to vital resources, wealth and power. In small-scale cultures, where all households have assured access to food and shelter and the rewarding experiences offered by their cultures, there is less cultural incentive to accumulate wealth.⁸⁴⁷

The contact with the West brought disruption to this traditional way of life, especially when the British established a centralized 'power center' in the form of colonial administrative headquarters. The first such place in the Naga Hills was established in Kohima and remained the colonial administrative headquarters until 1947. Gradually, the British established other smaller sub-headquarters and population began to swell around these centers with the influx of both Nagas and non-Nagas. Educated Nagas were drawn to these urban settlements. Urbanization created concentrated economic and political power in the hands of a few in urban sectors who made decisions that effected people in far flung rural areas. As a result, people in villages lost the traditional practice of independence and the ability to decide for themselves.

⁸⁴⁷Bodley, "Victims of Progress," in *Genocide: An Anthropological Reader*, ed. Alexander Laban Hinton (Malde, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2002), 138.

Today, Nagas perceive living in urban or urbanized environment as having made progress. In contrast, living in a village is considered a sign of stagnation or being primitive. As Naga society becomes more and more bureaucratized, and as power and wealth are concentrated in urban centers, young educated Nagas, in search of progress, are lured away from villages. With the growth of urban settlements, crimes previously unknown in society have become almost daily occurrences. Urbanization, therefore, has come to not only reshape the actual landscape of the Nagas but it has also had profound effects on the psychology, values and mindset of the people.

Additionally, the mountainous terrain and the annual torrential rainfall make the Hills unsuitable for large settlements. Naga villages rarely experience mudslides, because they are situated so as to be protected by trees, plants and grasses. However, due to the absence of trees, plants and grasses, urban settlements are subject to frequent mudslides which cause great damage and even death.⁸⁴⁸

Capitalization

I use ‘capitalization’ to refer to the transformation of the Naga traditional economic concept and practice by the introduction of capitalist ideology. Traditionally, the Nagas were subsistence cultivators. To some extent, they also supplemented their harvest with bartering for items that were not readily available such as salt; the exchange of items was never done as a profession or with profit motive, and the idea of making profit did not exist. In other words, the traditional Naga economy was a zero-growth

⁸⁴⁸ At a recent seminar on mudslides management in Northeast India, experts cautioned that as much as 88% of Nagaland remains susceptible to mudslides. The frequent occurrences of mudslides are attributed “to adverse geomorphic and geological conditions, heavy and prolonged rainfall, indiscriminate cutting of slopes, unplanned developmental activities, and deforestation.” See “Nagaland is landslide-prone region,” *Morung Express*, May 5, 2009; available at <http://www.morungexpress.com/local/22676.html> (accessed May 6, 2009).

economy concerned with daily sustenance and not accumulation or excessive production aimed at generating wealth.

As subsistence agriculturalists, the Nagas were economically self-sufficient and independent. Rice, the staple food, was grown and given more importance and other crops and vegetations, although important, were considered peripheral. Terrace cultivation was also practiced, but most Nagas practiced swidden or shifting cultivation as their means of livelihood. In addition to growing rice and raising livestock, they also relied on hunting, fishing and wild vegetations to supplement their supply. However, these were seasonal and leisurely activities.

Consequent to colonization was the introduction of an economy based on monetary or cash value to a culture that had known none earlier. This introduction meant the concept of wealth also changed. Until then, an individual could barter for or work in exchange for items she/he needed. At the same time, manufactured goods were also brought in. However, in order to buy these goods one had to have money. Colonial jobs served as a mechanism through which the Nagas could make money. To get a non-traditional job, one needed to be educated and christianized, and this could only be accomplished by attending a mission school. Schooling ensured an upward mobility both economically and socially, for only the educated could receive employment from the British government or the American missionaries as a teacher or preacher. So colonization first created the condition (that is, the dependence on manufactured goods and cash based economy) and then the mechanism (that is, making money by means of employment) which not only brought about social and economic transformation but also ensured the subordination of the Nagas and a relationship of dependency on the colonizer.

Today, there are two distinct forms of securing a livelihood among the Nagas. There is the illiterate and half-literate Nagas who depend on subsistence cultivation.⁸⁴⁹ These people are economically independent in terms of their primary needs such as their 'daily bread,' but are cash strapped. There is the second group that depends on government employment. A huge percentage of this people rely on their monthly salary, which is not nearly enough. Before the monthly paycheck arrives, many will have already taken groceries on credit from Indian store owners. Their first priority on receiving their wages is paying what they owe the store owner otherwise they would be refused credit in the future. Not only do many government employees live paycheck to paycheck, they also rely heavily on export from out of state for their daily needs. So, to a once self-sufficient economy, the imposition of colonial economic system has brought financial insecurity and dependency on cash, imported food and manufactured goods.

Individualization

One of the impacts of the notion of progress is the rise of individualism and the waning of communitarian values. In traditional Naga society, an individual's identity was embedded in the community, and apart from the community a person hardly had an identity. For example, 'Who are you?' was not important or relevant. Rather, importance was given to 'what is your village? Who is your family?' Even in the use of words, it was and is considered unwise and unacceptable to use the first person pronoun and its possessives – 'I', 'me', 'my' and 'mine' – when referring to something that positively reflects on oneself. The use of 'we', 'us', 'our' or 'ours' is considered acceptable in such

⁸⁴⁹By 'literate and half-literate,' I am referring to Nagas who have the ability to read written words. Nevertheless, they cannot 'read' the land, the sky, the season or know stories of their people as their ancestor did. They are literate in a modern sense, but 'orally illiterate' in a cultural sense.

a case. For example, it is normal for a married man to say to another man, “Our wife got a job.” This, however, does not mean that the two men have the same woman as their wife. This means that ‘my family is related to you just as yours is to me.’ So, the avoidance of reference to oneself and the usage of first person collective pronouns have a communal reason to it.

Other cultural mechanisms or practices also served to solidify social cohesion. One such system was and is the use of relational titles.⁸⁵⁰ Traditional Nagas had relational titles for almost all the diverse human relationships within the community, which are now being outmoded and forgotten gradually. The use of relational terms when addressing one another is crucial. As such, the knowledge of personal name is not so important as the knowledge and appropriate use of relational terms, because a person can call out to someone by using the relational name without necessarily using the personal name. It is unacceptable the other way round. Unless it is a child, it is disrespectful and inappropriate to call someone by their personal name alone. The personal name must be qualified with a relational title. Nagas did not, however, use honorific titles.

This practice reinforces communal relationship because an individual is culturally required to know what his or her relation is to the other. Before calling out someone by name, a person is compelled to think, “What is my relationship with him/her?” And after having thought and figured out the relationship, the person then uses the appropriate relational term to address and relate with the other person. To address someone wrongly is a shameful act and would invite an appropriate reprimand, especially from one’s parents and/or elders.

⁸⁵⁰Some traditional values such as this and others do exist today but in a much weaker form.

The use of relational terms is an act of reminding each other of communal relationship and responsibilities towards one's fellow members. Moreover, it is not simply about reminding or learning to use the right term to address one another. The practice is accompanied by certain obligations and an appropriate attitude of respect for the other, depending on the relationship. For example, a man should not use vulgar language or sexual innuendoes in the presence of someone whom he calls *atsüghüwa* (a women belonging to the man's clan). Likewise, a woman should not use such words in the presence of an individual she calls *apaghawa* (a man of the woman's clan). To do so is a gross disrespect to the relationship that binds the two. The same protocol must be respected and observed by others who are in the presence of a male and female who belong to the same clan.

Additionally, in every Naga society, there are traditional ways in which the handicapped and the elderly are looked after by the community. Naga scholar Akumla Longkumer described the traditional Ao Naga communal life as follows:

One of the distinctive features of the village administration in the area of social welfare is the care of the poor and the widows. It is the duty of the able men to repair and rebuild the widow's houses. The widows and the old ones always have a share in the corporate catch of the village during hunting and fishing.

In case of any severe sickness or misfortune in any of the families, due attention is given to the need of the sick family, such as jhumming or cleaning rice fields, collecting fire wood, etc. The village acts as a unit in all things, and if anyone fails to attend a village function he is punished by its elders. There is but little room for any individualistic tendency. It was not some strong individual but it is the custom and tradition that overrule all the individualistic tendencies.⁸⁵¹

One such similar practice among the Rengma Nagas, which unfortunately is on the verge of complete loss, is the practice of taking care of the 'nutritional' needs of the physically

⁸⁵¹Longkumer, *A Study of the Revival Movement in Nagaland* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981), 8-9.

weak. Where subsistence cultivation requires hard work, it is traditionally believed that meat consumption is essential once in a while for keeping oneself healthy. Certain portions of meat are restricted for consumption by the healthy and the young and must be given to the weak. Portions of meat, like the tongue, liver, brain, tail and genital and reproductive parts, are to be given to persons who are mentally or physically unable to obtain meat.

“The sum of these communal values,” as Dwight Hopkins rightly observed, “detest competition as a regulatory norm or a necessary fundamental in community.”⁸⁵² Emphases on collective good serve to tramp self-aggrandizement, self-assertion, self-propagation and self-promotion. Besides, a sense of shame and honor inhibits an individual from seeking personal advancement at the expense of the community. So, in addition to the long period of subjugation and oppression that makes the Nagas subservient and passive, coming from the culture that discourages self-assertion and self-promotion, many contemporary youngsters find themselves at a disadvantageous position in a competitive, globalized and individualized modern society where progress or upward mobility requires self-assertion and self-promotion as indispensable.

As it is with any other indigenous peoples around the world, since the contact with the modern Western notion of progress the Nagas have been changing rapidly. The communal value is fast losing ground to or being inundated by the ideals of individualism. John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene rightly argued that “The era of individualism is happening simultaneously with the new era of globalization [and as] we globalize,

⁸⁵²Hopkins, *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (Mineapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 88.

individuals, paradoxically, become more important, more powerful.”⁸⁵³ Indeed, among contemporary Nagas, certain individuals are richer and more powerful than an entire village. This is, however, no longer seen as a scandal, but having achieved progress.

Perry argued that in the nineteenth century “the idea of progress through rationality lost ground to the idea of progress through competition,” which finally became a paradigm for the modern West.⁸⁵⁴ This “idea of progress through competition” came to hold that “competition is an inexorable law of nature” and that in the competitive arena some are more fit to live than others.⁸⁵⁵ Among the Nagas, it is not only intense possessive materialism that is fostering an individualistic progressive outlook. A Western copied educational system, its content and ideals are driving them towards individualism, for while the non-literate older generation bemoans the breakdown of communal values, the degree of individualistic influence and tendency is greater among the educated Nagas. Additionally, with the advent of Christianity the idea of personal salvation, with its associated teachings of personal responsibility with regard to one’s actions, was popularized and became a strong theme. These and other such Western concepts began to undermine the traditional sense of communal consciousness and existence.

As individualism forges ahead, the spirit of community is being weakened. With respect to the growing tendency toward individualism among the Nagas, M. Aram observed that undoubtedly “the trend [among the Nagas] is towards an atomized society of the modern type.” He wrote:

With the impact of modern life and culture, there is a strong trend for the Naga people to become more and more individualistic. The average Naga is more

⁸⁵³John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000* (New York: Morrow, 1990), 299.

⁸⁵⁴Perry, ...*From Time Immomerial*, 30.

⁸⁵⁵*Ibid.*

concerned about his individual advancement and welfare. Formerly, the Naga villages were well-knit units with strong social cohesion. Today there is a loosening of the community structure and the individual is more and more on his own.⁸⁵⁶

Homelessness and begging or living on alms are not a part of any Naga history. However, deeply entrenched in the idea of progress and significantly influenced by the competitive trends of globalization, the Nagas are fast substituting the traditional ideals of cooperation and mutual assistance for those of the ideals of 'survival of the fittest.' Therefore, as the penchant for progress and competition for individualistic accumulation heightens the traditional values of mutual care is likely to disappear faster than expected.

Christianization

At the beginning of the contact between Nagas and White invaders, the effort to christianize the Nagas was a cooperative undertaking of the American and British colonial agents who made "a two-pronged attack" on the traditional Naga society.⁸⁵⁷ However, schism began to emerge gradually between the two interest groups. The later British colonial administrators had the desire to keep the Naga culture as pristine as possible, and they saw the effort of the American Baptist missionaries to foster conversion and progress as a threat to keeping the Hills as a 'colonial zoo' or 'human museum.'

On the other hand, besides proselytizing and establishing schools, the missionaries implemented the creation of 'Christian colonies,' with the object of transforming the Naga converts as rapidly as possible.⁸⁵⁸ 'Little Christian colonies' were

⁸⁵⁶ Aram, "The Emerging Situation in Nagaland and Some Suggestions for a National Policy," in *The Tribal Situation in India*, 127.

⁸⁵⁷ West, *The Most Dangerous Legacy*, 17.

⁸⁵⁸ "Little Christian colony" is used by Mary Clark to refer to a 'Christian' village that was established by her husband and herself. Clark, *A Corner in India*, 145. Even to this day, some Nagas

created because of fear that the converts might relapse to their old ‘demon worship.’ So, the new converts were separated with the object of cutting contact with their non-convert family and community members and their ‘heathen’ way of life. Conversely, the segregation was aimed at christianizing the Naga converts, i.e., inculcating and training the converts in Western Christian values and lifestyle. The Christian colonies were often referred to as the abode of light, progress and civilization as opposed to the abode of darkness, evil and barbarism. In villages where Christians and non-Christians co-existed, the dichotomy between the two groups became apparent. Missionaries created a microcosm of the Christian West by superimposing their own rules on the converts. As the demand for schools increased observance of Christian rules by the entire village became the prerequisite for establishing a school.

Historically missionization is done by the more affluent societies to the less affluent ones. So, from the very beginning the Nagas perceived of the missionaries as agents of progress. While the missionaries frequently complained about the lack of daily necessities, the Nagas wondered why the White missionaries always craved for huge houses.⁸⁵⁹ Christianity was an important force in westernizing the Nagas. In fact, it was in itself a form of westernization, because what was thought to be Christianity has an enormous baggage of Western culture. The missionaries brought money with them and introduced monetary culture that paved the way for the inception of the Western culture of materialism and consumerism among the contemporary Nagas. They not only set up

continue to use the term ‘Mission Compound’ for their village that was founded for the purpose of becoming “Little Christian Colonies.” This same method of segregating the converts and forming “praying towns” was adopted by European missionaries in the process of what is called “the cultural genocide of the Native Americans.” Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 22, 24.

⁸⁵⁹Clark mentioned that the Nagas who built a house for her and her husband asked, “How can two people live in so many rooms?” while others exclaimed, “So big! So long! So high!” Clark, *A Corner in India*, 25, 32.

schools and trained students, but they also provided employment, promoting a culture that increasingly became dependent on money.

Also, as a result of the aggressive missionary effort, contemporary Nagas share a christianized culture that mirrors the West. To analyze the impact of the christianization of the Naga culture, I will point out some contrasts between the Naga traditional religious beliefs and practices and Christianity as it is understood by contemporary Nagas.

As opposed to the Christian concept of a male deity, the pre-christianized Nagas held a divine being that was conceived in feminine terms. Among the Rengma Nagas, the word for the deity is *Anyiza* (“mother of humanity”). *Anyiza* is a compound word, where *anyi* means humanity and *za* is an archaic form for mother. Likewise, in Angami Naga language, the divine being is referred to as *Kepenuopfü* (literally, “birth spirit”). Not only does the concept imply female (i.e., birth), it is also feminine as *pfü* is a feminine suffix.⁸⁶⁰ An Angami Naga pointed, “[Ukepenuopfü] was a female God, not a goddess. When the missionaries came to our land they made her a male God and used her name to translate Jehovah.”⁸⁶¹ Today, both these terms have been ‘christianized’ and are being used to refer to the Christian God understood as a male deity. This is an example of how Christianity has revolutionized, colonized and altered the religious mind of contemporary Nagas.

Furthermore, the concept of God was never formulated at length; nor was it a basis for argument, division, conflict or war. This was because the concept of the divine was left to the experiences of the individual in the context of communal life and nature.

⁸⁶⁰ See Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*.

⁸⁶¹ Visier Sanyü, “Voice of the Voiceless: Trust building in a divided World,” <http://www.kuknalim.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8009&mode=&order=0&thold=0> (a speech given on the World Indigenous Day, 9 August 2007; accessed September 8, 2008).

This reminds us of the response of “Chief” Joseph of Nez Perces: “They [i.e., the White men] will teach us to argue about God...We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that.”⁸⁶² Among the Nagas, no school or teacher existed from where or whom they learned about the divine being. The so called “religion” was never taught. It was not a dogma or a set of established beliefs; rather, it was a way of life. The traditional Naga religion did not owe its origin to a single individual. In other words, it was not an account of one person’s life and teaching as it is in the case of Christianity and some other religions. Rather, it was represented by the communal life, wisdom and experience of a group of people over a long period of time. Therefore, conversion was understood as a total rejection of one’s own community and tradition and viewed with great seriousness.

There was no concept resembling heaven or hell in the indigenous Naga religion. It was believed that in death a person would be exactly what he or she was in life – live in the same village with the same villagers and family and do the same thing – albeit, in the world of the dead. So initially, the idea of converting to Christianity with the object of getting to heaven was dreaded because of fear that it would mean eternal separation from one’s ancestors who, in the judgment of missionaries, were in hell. Given a choice, the right choice was to go to hell and be with one’s dead relatives and community members. As oppose to this kind of communitarian religious tradition, the concern of the missionary religion was largely individualistic and eschatological in its religious orientation. It placed a strong emphasis on personal eschatological salvation, even at the expense of physical separation from one’s societal members and traditions.

⁸⁶²Dee Brown, *Bury my Heart in Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971 [1970]), 252.

There is no Naga word equivalent for religion or culture. Both are referred to as *abami yeng* (ancestral law/rule) or *kahhang yeng* (law/rule of life). *Ayeng* also connotes a habit or a particular way of behaving. As such, ‘believing’ and ‘behaving’ are inseparably linked. For traditional Nagas, ‘religion’ was learned by practicing, rather than by listening to a teacher or attaining a religious institution. Religion being a communal lifestyle, giving it up or ceasing to practice it had a tremendous social and cultural consequence. Abandonment one’s religion caused disintegration of social life, loss of language and alteration of worldviews and values. Thus, disorientation and confusion follow conversion, whereby creating social and psychological dysfunction.

Unlike Christianity, the Naga religion did not have a missionary tendency or seek to make converts; rather, it was passed on to successive generations through oral narrations, observations and finally by doing it. As such, there was no concept of mission or conversion. There was no designated worship place, written worship songs, fixed prayers, text, creed or a religious expert to help delineate and expound it. Its important elements consist of myths, rites, ceremonies, songs, proverbs and dances.

Every traditional Naga was a deeply religious being and the thought of oneself as an atheist, agnostic, skeptic, unbeliever or non-religious never existed. With regard to Traditional African Religion, John Mbiti made a similar observation: “...God is no stranger to African peoples, and in traditional life there are no atheists.”⁸⁶³ For traditional Nagas, all of life experience was considered religious. In other words, religion permeated all of life. And the concept of life as inseparably interwoven as a whole was a dominant unifying force that united the Naga not only to the community, but also to nature around

⁸⁶³Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 29.

human beings. The compartmentalization of ‘things sacred’ and ‘things secular’ never occurred to a Naga. As such, Christianity secularized the once thoroughly religious Naga society by introducing the concept of the secular and the sacred or the natural and the supernatural. So that today the Nagas, who once knew no concept of ‘things secular’ but considered everything sacred or religious, have come to radically compartmentalize their life to ‘things secular’ and ‘things sacred,’ at the point of verging on a Gnostic dualistic teaching.

This Western concept has created in the mind of many Naga Christians Sundays or religious holidays as holier than other days and ‘religious’ works as holier and greater than ‘secular’ works. This misconception further breeds rampant corruption in what is understood as the ‘secular’ sphere. Then, on a Sunday or in the ‘religious’ sphere the same people who indulge in corrupt and wicked acts seek to assuage their guilt by offering a part of their ill-gotten gains to ‘God.’ This arbitrary division of life also has rendered religion or religious beliefs helpless and hollow in the regeneration of society as the emphasis is misplaced on personal regeneration and salvation of the individual soul. The theology of the church, in most part, has remained vertical (i.e., between God and a person) and has little horizontal or social dimension.

Amid rampant corruption, unending political violence, bloodshed, fratricidal feuds and killing, and despair, this propensity of the Naga church to uphold “vertical religiosity” and to overlook or neglect “horizontal religiosity”,⁸⁶⁴ accentuates the Marxist notion of religion as the “opiate of the masses.” Thus, the once ‘this-worldly’ religious

⁸⁶⁴ Martin-Baro defines “vertical religiosity” as “believing in God as being in heaven and a salvation beyond this world” and “horizontal religiosity” as a “belief in God as a brother and salvation in this world.” Martin-Baro, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, 147.

worldview of the Nagas has become increasingly ‘other-worldly’ and less relevant to this-worldly existence.

Democratization

Democratization is used here to point to the negation of Naga system of social ordering and the imposition of Western form of government.⁸⁶⁵ In other words, it is being used to refer to the obliteration of the indigenous form of social ordering and the introduction of a colonial one. The attempt at ‘democratizing’ the political processes of the non-Western world has recently gained such notoriety and reminds us of a nuanced and ongoing colonial mission.

The introduction of Western institutions of government and politics rested solely with the British administration. However, the rule of the British over the Nagas was one of self-contradiction and inconsistency. At the beginning, the British government began with the strong view that the Nagas needed to be civilized and transformed. Later, however, the government advocated for keeping the Naga Hills from minimal modern impacts and maintaining its exotic state. And for this reason, the policy shifted to that of non-interference which further led to the introduction of a legal mandate called “Inner Line Permit” in 1896 that restricted the Naga Hills free passage to White explorers and plains Indians. This policy of non-interference, however, contradicted the imposition of the Western system of government administration, which was rigorously enforced to subjugate the Nagas. So, the desire to maintain the exotic state was contradicted by selective transformation that worked to the advantage of the colonizer. An obvious

⁸⁶⁵When referring to the traditional Nagas, I will avoid using government; instead, I will use social ordering, governing system or governance.

example is the creation of a system of centralized power and control, contradictory to the Naga practice. I will discuss this in a short while.

It was thought that no form of governance existed among the Nagas, because, in the assumption of a colonial officer on the Nagas, “no regular Government can be expected to exist amongst wild uncivilized tribes who are ignorant of the use of letters or the art of writing.”⁸⁶⁶ An American missionary to the Nagas said, “...the wild men not infrequently come from across the border and beg the English official to take them under his government and protection, for he knows...that he cannot govern himself.”⁸⁶⁷ Undoubtedly, a form of government equivalent to the West did not exist. Nonetheless, the Nagas were not without any form of governing system or unable to govern themselves. So, the claims above unmistakably exhibit the fixation of the Western mind and its inability to see beyond the biased cultural focal lens.

To understand the process of democratization better, I will describe some of the salient features of social ordering practiced in traditional Naga society. Although the Nagas are often referred to as tribal people, the concept of tribe is a colonial construct. “The term ‘tribe’ as coined by the British was an administrative and even political category [which] has come in handy as a lever to exploit ‘tribal consciousness.’”⁸⁶⁸ The Nagas were ‘villagers’ and not ‘tribals’. Every village was an autonomous sociopolitical entity or ‘village state.’ Even in a more autocratic system practiced by some Nagas, each village was an independent unit. So, in the discussion of the ordering of society, it is

⁸⁶⁶Mills, *Report on Assam*, cxlii.

⁸⁶⁷S.A. Perrine, “The Value of the Wild Men of India,” *BMM* (1901), 212-13.

⁸⁶⁸Singh, *The Tribal Situation in India*, xxi.

helpful to think in terms of village governance rather than in the modern sense of a nation-state political institution or government.

On the subject of governance, a Naga writer wrote: “In the past the Nagas had efficient systems of administration. Democracy in its purest form existed among them. A system so suitable to them [has] lasted through centuries which formed an integral part of their life.”⁸⁶⁹ Three types of governing the village existed in the traditional Naga society. Among a few tribes, a governor or overseer, such as the *ang* of the Konyak Nagas, could have supremacy over several villages. Among others, such as the Ao Nagas, a group or council members, known as *tatar*, was chosen by a village to oversee the functioning of the community. Their function is limited to their village only. The most predominant and common form of ordering society, however, could be termed as “democracy by consensus.”⁸⁷⁰ This practice reflects the communitarian virtue that was highly valued among the Nagas. However, consensus does not mean that every villager participated and consented in the decision making, which is not feasible in any society. It means a willingness and readiness to set aside differences and cooperate for the sake of the larger whole. For this reason, the Naga society was much less contentious and polemic than it is today. Because most Nagas followed this last system of governance, it will be emphasized in the following discussion.

The Naga form of governance was neither a multi-party nor a one-party system. It was a non-party system. Although, sometimes rivalry between or among clans could take

⁸⁶⁹Y.L. Roland Shimmi, *Comparative History of The Nagas: From Ancient Period Till 1826* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1988), 131.

⁸⁷⁰Some African scholars have made a distinction between the traditional African “consensual democracy” and the Western-imposed “adversarial democracy.” For further reading, see K. Wiredu, “Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-Party Polity” in *The African Philosophy Reader*, ed. P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 374-82.

a form of modern party politics, it was nothing comparable to the modern party politics. Politics and institutional government as we know today is a foreign concept to the Nagas. In fact, politics and government as we know today did not exist. There were leaders who led the community and provided guidance and decision on customary practices when necessary. However, no one fulfilled these communal roles as a profession or for a living. No institution existed to which the Nagas were required to pay taxes. The needs of the community members were taken care of by the fellow members themselves, not by an institution; thus, such a communal practice eliminated the need for impersonal institution to take care of societal members.

Traditional Nagas were classless and casteless people, and in most cases leaders were not conspicuous by their lifestyle or by what they possess. They became noticeable only when there was a crisis or when their role or involvement was required. Unlike today's leaders, they did not distinguish themselves from the masses or segregated themselves from the commoners. Rather, they led their lives just like any other member of society. In other words, egalitarianism was a high practical ideal among the Nagas. Describing his observation of the traditional Naga society, one American missionary wrote,

The Naga villagers do not grovel before their headman; formality is conspicuous by its absence, while a spirit of equality is manifest.... As the European observer walks around in a village he cannot distinguish a headman from the other individuals by their conduct toward one another. The headmen, the *gaonburas* [villager elders], however, come forward and make profound bows, which they have learned from their dealings with the native underlings of European officials.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁷¹Smith, *Ao Naga Tribe*, 7-8.

Every village had its own way of choosing or appointing its leaders. Often a person of influence and wisdom, endowed with natural leadership ability emerged to lead others. At any rate, a person of wisdom, integrity and honesty was sought for in choosing a leader. The Rengma Nagas chose or appointed their leaders through the process known as “*pi jisha thsünang*” (literally, to make or put to cry). When searching for the most qualified leader, a handful of men thought to be qualified to lead were persuaded to ‘cry’ out their vision for the village. This was not done in a formal meeting or gathering, but during a hushed hour in the morning or evening, when the prospective leaders would stand outside their houses and in their own appointed time and cry out to the public their leadership vision. After the *kejisha* (crying), the villagers would discuss it informally in their work places and a consensus would emerge several days after and the leader was then informally acknowledged.

It was often thought by Western anthropologists, especially the so-called “ladder” theorists, that societies evolved from stateless societies to chieftainship to the emergence of social classes and sophisticated state societies. This political evolution was then thought to be a sign of emergence from the depths of savagery and barbarism to civilized nation-states or “civil” government. One of the reasons for failure to see any form of “civil” government among the Nagas by Westerners is the absence of hierarchy and class structure associated with “civil” government in the West. It was hard in their mind to conceive how internal order could be maintained without an institutional government and politics. And the failure to see a Western style of hierarchical structure led to the misconception that no “civil” government existed, which only the civilized could have.

Having a civil government was then understood to have made progress in the evolutionary stage of culture. This misconception led to the imposition of the Western structure of government to a 'stateless' Naga society. With respect to the destruction of indigenous way of administration and the imposition of British rule, one of the last colonial administrators, Mills, admittedly noted as follows:

British rule has put an end to the power of the chiefs, to the great loss of the tribe, and it is impossible to revive it. The habit has grown up of rushing to court with complaint, and the courts have lent far too ready an ear. A chief's power is bound to disappear if the aggrieved party can always appeal to an alien law administered by a magistrate who has the best intentions in the world uncombined with knowledge of indigenous custom.⁸⁷²

The traditional Nagas were 'minimalists' as far as repressive law and its enforcement agencies are concerned. Except for serious crimes, which were rare, no punishment existed. The sense of shame or loss of honor in the eyes of societal members and consequent disapproval by the community served as punishment for misbehavior. Cultural mechanisms were in place for social control and pressure to conformity. Conformity to social norms was honorable; deviance was shameful in public opinion.

In large part, the regulation of personal and communal moral conduct was internally enforced by the teachings of tradition. In other words, the traditional moral conscience and values served to under gird the moral actions of the people. Rules were hidden below the surface, interwoven in culture. They were implicit in behavior and deeply engrained in the habit. So, the need for an externally repressive law or policing of its societal members did not arise. Consequently, no prison or police existed in the traditional society.

⁸⁷²Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, 140.

In contrast, one of the first things the British did after gaining supremacy over the Naga Hills was the introduction of British legal and prison system. Under the English law, Naga ‘criminals’ were tried and sentenced to prison. Those who in the judgment of the British committed serious crime were unfairly exiled to as far as British prisons in Andaman Island, adjacent to Sri Lanka. In general, ‘the wild tribes’ of the Naga Hills were suppressed and subjugated with the help of a few White officers and British Indian armed forces.

Taxation of Nagas, known as “house tax,” was another alien rule imposed by the colonial government, which was a system of subjugation and control.⁸⁷³ It not only generated monetary benefit for the functioning of the empire, but also symbolized the supremacy of the British over the Naga soil. It was a legal symbol affirming the Nagas as British subjects and a signification of power and rule over the taxed and colonized subjects. So, wherever the British troops set foot, they levied taxes on the Nagas, which caused revulsion and resistance.

Furthermore, taxation compelled the Nagas to engage in money-making trades, such as selling and buying in order to pay tax. It eroded the barter system as making or earning money became a necessity. The British had the money; the Nagas had to pay tax. Consequently, the Nagas were compelled to work for the British in order to make money for their tax dues. So, the system of taxation served the subjugation of the Nagas economically and politically. The imposition of tax law also compelled the Nagas to sell commodities to the British that they and their soldiers needed to occupy the Naga Hills.

⁸⁷³House tax was levied on all Naga households, except for a few villages that favored the British with a peaceful reception instead of hostile reaction. Earlier, taxes could be paid in kind, such as rice, clothes and other items that helped sustain the British and their troops. However, later on money became the standard form of taxation.

Finally, the British rule brought an end to village autonomy, which was people-centered and a decentralized form of governance. In its place, the British created a system that centralized power and controlled the Nagas. In the British system, the Crown is supreme or sovereign; in the Naga system the people were sovereign. The superimposition of the centralized and hierarchical structure of administration was a strategy aimed at increasing government revenue and political monopoly over the colonized Nagas, and this new power paradigm became one of the most potent factors in effectively controlling the Nagas. With a limited number of White officers representing the Empire in far flung regions, the best way to control the native population was through centralization of power. Until then, most Nagas had never known or experienced a strong and repressive hierarchical and centralized administration. So, this paradigm of power pyramid not only affected them in the past, but also is responsible now for the buildup and misuse of power and misappropriation of public funds. Among contemporary Nagas, this new and foreign system of centralized government lacks check-and-balance mechanisms. As such, the system accumulates unrestrained and excessive power in the hands of a few who then blatantly disregard the wishes and will of the people and yet get away with impunity.

In addition to the presence of colonial soldiers, comprising mostly Naga neighbors, the British created two categories of native colonial representatives to administer colonial hierarchical rules. At the village level, it was called *gaonbora* (GB – village elder/headman). The GBs served the colonial administrators in collecting taxes and enforcing the colonial law at the village level. The second group is known as the *dubashi* (DB – interpreter). The DBs were a step higher in the rung of colonial hierarchy.

Literally meaning “men of two tongues,” the role of the DB was to serve as a go-between colonial officers and village GBs, because most GBs could not speak Assamese, which served as the main language of communication. Each DB was in charge of several villages. As colonial representatives, both the GBs and DBs were directly accountable and responsible to White colonial officers.

Today, the literal colonization of the West has ended, but the scar of colonization continues to haunt the Nagas. Colonial paradigm left behind by the colonizers continues to serve the colonization of the Nagas and force them to continuously depend on the West for the ‘perfection’ of their ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’. However, the imposed foreign model of institutional government and politics is extremely wasteful and requires a high economic expense. The Nagas, like most other cultures, do not have the economic means to adopt and effectively implement these systems. And so, although their present forms and terminologies of politics and government are direct copy of the West and sounds very Western, the mechanism of delivery is almost nonfunctional.

Furthermore, only the educated elite have the knowledge of the transplanted system, albeit inadequate, and so the system cannot be effectively implemented because the vast majority has no knowledge and participation in it. And because of the lack of knowledge and participation, many Nagas do not feel psychologically or emotionally connected to the system or feel responsible or a party to it. These factors further create a sense of indifference, if not malaise, amidst chaos, despair, suffering and a dismal situation that requires an urgent solution. Besides, it also opens up the opportunity to abuse the system by the few who maneuver it to their advantage. As a result, the contemporary Nagas are left lacking in what Piotr Sztompka called “civilizational

competence,” defined as “a complex set of rules, norms and values, habits and reflexes, codes and matrixes, blueprints and templates the skilful and semi-automatic mastering of which is a prerequisite for participation in modern civilization” and are left behind with “civilizational incompetence.”⁸⁷⁴

With reference to the Naga society in the aftermath of the White invasion, Chasie observed that the Naga society has been frequently overtaken by the current of modernizing events and “that changes have come too suddenly and too fast, without opportunity to digest and assimilate them,” presenting them with no opportunity for an informed process of choice for change.⁸⁷⁵ He also noted that “as a result of these sudden changes and difficulties in coping with them, the Nagas emerged from the colonial period confused and unsure of themselves – only to find themselves engulfed in another violent conflict with the new Government of India.”⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷⁴Sztompka, “Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Post-Communist Societies,” *Zeitschrift fur Sociologie* 2 (1993): 118.

⁸⁷⁵Chasie, “Nagaland in Transition,” 256.

⁸⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 257.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE LIES IN THE PAST

*A people without the knowledge of their past history,
origin and culture is like a tree without roots.*

–Marcus Garvey

History is a means of access to ourselves.

–Lynn White, Jr.

*Dwell on the past and you'll lose an eye.
Forget the past and you'll lose both eyes.*

–Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The Nagas, whose land was invaded by Euro-Americans in the nineteenth century and were significantly influenced and transformed by the invaders and their worldview, have undergone profound change. Thanks to the persistent onslaught of the West over several generations and the ongoing influence being exerted by modern media, technology and other trends of globalization, the ‘seed’ of transformation sown by the early invaders continues to spread more than half a century after the political decolonization from the West. Consequently, the longer the distance from the time of the first contact, the greater loss of culture and diminishing of identity the Nagas suffer, and unless the Nagas make a concerted and determined effort to reclaim what is left of their culture, the Nagas will soon left with no cultural root and identity from the past.

Under the guise of ‘pacifying the headhunters’ and promoting progress, the British East India Company invaded and appropriated land belonging to the Nagas for tea plantations. For Nagas the land provides them with not only physical sustenance but also

transcendental nurturance for their customs, beliefs and tradition. So, the appropriation of their land for tea plantations generated raids into British plantation settlements, which provided an excuse for the British to gradually expand their occupation of the Naga Hills. Most Nagas gradually yielded to the advancing imperial power and lost their political autonomy. The British Empire soon created a hierarchy of power structure and promoted administrative integration and effectively controlled the Nagas until the end of World War II. This pyramid of power structure and administrative integration, which have become the standard of governance for contemporary Nagas, is in utter contrast to the traditional autonomy of every village and a loose and egalitarian social structure practiced by traditional Nagas for time immemorial.

The involuntary contact with the British force was soon followed by the intrusion of American Baptist missionaries at the behest of the British. The American missionaries were called upon to christianized the Nagas. Like their early British counterparts, the American missionaries viewed the Naga culture as inferior and demonic. They characterized the Naga Hills as an ‘abode of darkness’ and assumed the responsibility of bringing ‘light’ to the Nagas. In their effort to proselytize the Nagas, American missionaries introduced literacy and education through which they also introduced Western Christianity and Euro-American cultural standards, values and ideas. The perception of pre-Christian Naga cultural practices as demonic has been destructive, to say the least, because it entailed giving up almost every element of Naga culture in order to accept Christianity. In many cases, besides giving up cultural practices that were perceived as ‘sinful’ by missionaries, a convert was required to physically isolate from family and community and live in a ‘Christian colony’ or ‘mission compound.’

For more than a century, the colonizers infantilized the Nagas and promoted the idea that the Nagas were inferior, barbaric and primitive. This colonial depiction was accompanied by the introduction of Christianity, education and Western values aimed at coercing the Nagas to change from their traditional ways of living by altering their beliefs, values and cultural practices. So the persistent drumming of negative images has come to undermine the self-worth, self-esteem and identity of the Nagas and to precipitate the vanishing of their culture and identity.

The future lies in the past

As the aphorism goes, tomorrow began yesterday. Therefore, it is in knowing the truth about the past we can begin a process of not only knowing who we are, but also wisely living the present and befittingly informing and shaping our future. Consequently, for contemporary Nagas, the future lies in the past. Liberation from the notion of progress will entail going to the past and reclaiming the core values of the past tradition. Continuing in the path of progress as the future course will only intensify greater enslavement and disillusionment.

Edward Said rightly maintained that “how we formulate or represent the past shapes our understanding and views of the present.”⁸⁷⁷ The past is vital not only for present actualities, but it is also vital for the shaping of the future course. In this respect, we cannot agree more with C. K. Chesterton, who once said, “We can be almost certain of being wrong about the future, if we are wrong about the past.”⁸⁷⁸ This is so because the

⁸⁷⁷Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 4.

⁸⁷⁸Quoted in C. Ben Mitchell, “The Return of Eugenics,” *Ethics and Medicine* (Summer 2005).

past is not dead or obsolete; rather, it continues to influence present actions and will inform and shape future priorities and goals.

Lamentably, however, the fundamental “essence of the idea of Progress is the belief that the new thing is to be preferred to the old.”⁸⁷⁹ Consequently, the modern consumerist and materialist culture places an inordinate amount of emphasis on creativity, innovation and change. The pressure for creativity and innovation is, on one hand, driven by consumerist and materialistic craze for new merchandise; on the other hand, this craze is fueled by the culture of creativity and innovation that continuously generates new products, designs, shapes, models and brands, resulting in excessive wastes and rapid depletion of natural resources. For this reason, we cannot agree more with Arthur Pentty’s definition of progress as “the development of the material accessories of life” that creates economic evils unknown to “primitive” societies.⁸⁸⁰

By its very nature, the notion of progress entails a future-oriented worldview. The future is to be preferred to the past or present, because of the assumption that the future will always be better. To the advocates of the notion of progress, according to Pentty, “[t]he future is featureless,”⁸⁸¹ implying that human being is the master or creator of the future. Moshe Amon argued that “separation from the past” is intrinsic to the notion of progress, “which serves as the fundamental myth of the modern world.”⁸⁸² He maintained that one of the myths of the notion of progress is “liberation from the fetters of the order shaped by old myths” and the “responsible person” is not “the one who tries to preserve

⁸⁷⁹Pentty, *The Gauntlet*, 27.

⁸⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸⁸¹*Ibid.* 34.

⁸⁸²Amon, “The Unraveling of the Myth of Progress,” in *The Morality of Terrorism: Religious and Secular Justifications*, ed. David Rapoport and Yonah Alexander (New York; Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 63.

the social structure but rather the one who tries to destroy it in order to pave the way for the ideal future.”⁸⁸³ Amon believes that this myth of progress which has become “a modern form of secular religion” is wrong headed and human beings have become victims to the trend of discarding everything that is old or past. He writes:

Without a knowledge of the thoughts of those who preceded us, we cannot know ourselves, as those thoughts fashioned us and molded the world we live in. It is the voice of the past which defines the present and, unable to hear this voice, we have no self-definition and no self-esteem. We are driven into a constant state of alienation.

We are victims of the modern trend toward disregarding everything that is not new, but by adopting this approach we lose our own self-esteem, as by eradicating the past we get out of touch with the rationale for our own existence. By ignoring the past and drawing only on the future, the myth of progress has demolished the world of yesterday with its myths and religions; at this point in history it has exhausted itself, along with our past and the prospect for the future.⁸⁸⁴

It may be reiterated that instead of deploring the past, the greatest contribution for the contemporary Nagas in the quest for cultural and political identity and meaning can be to ensure that they provide and inform the future with a past. This will enable them and their posterity to reclaim their fading characteristics, enhance their identity as a people and give them a sense of direction and meaning for the future.

Reweaving Naga society

Weaving was a pivotal part of the traditional Naga society, and all average Naga women knew the art of weaving. Today, however, this invaluable tradition is being gradually forgotten and lost as manufactured clothes and fabrics take the place of traditional clothes. It has been often said that society is like a fabric, and so if the contemporary Nagas have forgotten the art of actual weaving, they also have forgotten

⁸⁸³Ibid., 64.

⁸⁸⁴Ibid., 72-3.

the traditional art of weaving their society. Just as manufactured clothes have taken over traditional weaving, their highly evolved traditional values are being replaced by Western or foreign values. It is a common empirical knowledge that when one removes any threads, the fabric is weakened proportionately, because every thread in a fabric exists to strengthen the entire piece. In traditional weaving, in particular, the threads are woven together to give distinctive texture, design and cultural meanings to the fabric. And when any piece of thread is pulled out, the fabric not only begins to weaken and disintegrate, but also its distinguishing and artistic features that exude cultural meanings begin to fade away.

Analogous to a piece of fabric, the Naga society has been in tatters because of the onslaught of the modern Western notion of progress. Since the inception of Western colonial and missionary conquests, the threads of their cultural fabric have been pulled out one after another, which has come to greatly weaken the society. Vices that were once foreign have taken deep roots among the people. On the other hand, traditional virtues that underpinned the society and kept it going for ages have been disappearing. Thus, the society has greatly weakened and is rapidly disintegrating. The need of the hour for Nagas is to revive and reclaim traditional values and standards rather than pursuing the Euro-American ideas and models they now follow.

Taiaiake Alfred observed that social dysfunction among indigenous peoples of what is now called Canada is “merely the visible surface of a deep pool of internal suffering.”⁸⁸⁵ He further argued that “the underlying cause of that suffering is alienation –

⁸⁸⁵Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness*, xv.

separation from our heritage and from ourselves.”⁸⁸⁶ Similarly, as never before the Naga society is experiencing societal dysfunction, characterized by economic and power disparity, class distinction, venality and unrestrained corruption, insatiable greed, materialism and the penchant for accumulation, extortion, intimidation, rape, factional feuds and homicide, political and tribal violence, gun-culture, and all sorts of vices once inconceivable. Against all these, there is a debilitating sense of despair, malaise, frustration and a lack of direction. Therefore, there is a paramount need to immediately reweave traditional values and meanings into the fabric of the contemporary society. Admittedly, such an undertaking would be a herculean task; nonetheless, it is worth an effort to salvage the society from spiraling down towards its fateful crash.

This dissertation is the work of a Naga, who is not only genuinely interested in his past, but also seriously in search of his fading root and identity. However, it is always possible for some people to characterize these sorts of interest as exotic fantasies or romanticism. Some may caution it as a retreat to the uncivilized past or pagan practices as Richard Norgaard has rightly cautioned:

The belief in progress is so much a part of modernism, so prevalent in Western private and public discourse, that to openly question modernism is to openly question the idea of progress, tantamount to being a pessimist, giving up, dropping out, and becoming a social misfit. The Western sense of time as history moving forward, onward, or upward is so strong that, even in academe, those who raise questions about Western beliefs in progress are accused of romanticizing the past or of advocating going backward.⁸⁸⁷

This kind of attitude is embodied well by the message of Pope Benedict XVI when he warned Brazilian indigenous peoples on May 13, 2007, that “the Utopia of going back to

⁸⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁸⁷Norgaard, *Development Betrayed*, 197.

breathe life into the pre-Columbian religions, separating them from Christ and from the universal Church, would not be a step forward. Indeed, it would be a step back.”⁸⁸⁸

Admittedly, one needs to guard against undue optimism when it comes to reclaiming the past cultural values. Little optimism exists that Nagas, like any indigenous groups, could fully recover their lost cultural values and practices, nor is a full recovery essential. Although retractable, some aspects of the culture are not essential for or applicable today. For example, the distinctive Naga female hair-cut could be recovered with little effort, but the cultural meaning embedded in such practice does not merit its revival. Among some Naga tribes, unmarried women were required to keep their heads shaved until marriage. Any attempt to revive practices such as these would face stiff resistance today, because it is a form of gender discrimination because of the fact that only unmarried women were required to publicly exhibit their status of marriage. If achieving gender equality is paramount, practices such as this need not be recovered. So just as cultures evolve and accommodate changes, such aspects of the culture may be relegated to the past.

There are other core traditional practices that are more vital and need to be reclaimed, and they would salvage the Nagas and work better for them than the ones they have come to adopt in recent decades. Indigenous Naga traditions provide sophisticated, coherent and practicable resources in worldviews, institutions and human-nature relatedness. These long-evolved traditional values, which are time-tested and developed for optimum benefit and advantage for Nagas in their particular location of existence, can help to serve as an alternative to an alien lifestyle and patterns of life which the Nagas

⁸⁸⁸*Rorate Caeli*, May 13, 2007, <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2007/05/aparecida-notes-pope-in-brazil-vi.html> (accessed June 4, 2007).

have but obscure and disorienting knowledge. The traditional art and knowledge of how to negotiate with terrain, trees, vegetations, water, insects and animals for a long lasting sustainable and harmonious existence are paramount for the Nagas.

The ancestral practices of the Nagas, who over countless generations had evolved a pattern of life, well adapted to their social needs and to the landscape in which they live, are in the process of gradual abandonment for want of progress. G.J. Sefa Dei described indigenous knowledge as “knowledge consciousness arising locally and in association with the long-term occupancy of a place.”⁸⁸⁹ Dei further noted that the indigenous knowledge helped shape the “traditional norms, social values, and mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate ...ways of living in and making sense of the world.” This established cultural and geographical specific ways of living with the land that has preserved the Nagas for time immemorial as opposed to an environmentally unsustainable way of modern life is crucial for the Nagas in their rugged and ecologically fragile land. Moreover, adopting Western patterns or structures for social ordering would ensure their own subjugation, subordination and enslavement as they depend on the West for technology and the ‘know-how’ knowledge for their day-to-day existence.

What, then, will the reweaving of a Naga society or a Naga cultural ‘renaissance’ entail? I will mention and briefly discuss two things here: *deconstruction* and *reconstruction*.

⁸⁸⁹ Dei, “African Development: The Relevance and Implications of ‘Indigenusness,’” in *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, ed. G.J. Sefa Dei, B.L. Hall and D. Goldin Rosenberg (Toronto, OISE/UT, University of Toronto Press, 2000), 72.

Deconstruction

According to Haunani-Kay Trask, deconstruction is “a throwing off, or a peeling apart of a forced way of behaving.”⁸⁹⁰ Fanon, as noted by Trask, calls it “the birth of a new, revolutionary human being.” Ngugi Wa Thiongo and others have called it “the decolonizing of the mind.” For the colonized, self-apprehension is hard to come by without liberation from the values of the colonizers. Indeed, Wole Soyinka has rightly claimed that liberation from “the values of others” is crucial for attaining self-apprehension.⁸⁹¹ Colonialism created memory deletion or social amnesia among the Nagas as it did in other colonized cultures. Colonialism then constructed a new identity or colonial image which filled the void created by the deletion. Consequently, the colonially constructed identity became the image of reality through which the Nagas see and understand themselves and the world around them.

Nagas need to engage in a process of deconstructing mythological narratives or stereotypical images in order to arrive at a truer and more accurate understanding of their past. Linda Tuhiwai Smith argued that “*Coming to know the past* has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges.”⁸⁹² Colonially constructed values and portraits have become the cognitive filter through which the colonized Nagas see and understand their world, history, culture and themselves. Alfred has called the values of the colonizer “colonial stains on our

⁸⁹⁰Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 115.

⁸⁹¹Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), viii.

⁸⁹²Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 34.

existence.”⁸⁹³ Colonial values have become a form of mental and psychological colonization, which needs to be unshackled, because such misconceptions and negations continue to inhibit the colonized from assessing and judging themselves and their potentials positively.

Every step or move toward self-apprehension and cultural liberation requires a revolution or transformation of thought that can help liberate the colonized from the values of the colonizers. Thus, until the Nagas are able to revolutionize their thinking and learn to critically engage and critic colonial meaning, identity and portrait, they will not learn to set themselves free from the burden of “intellectual bondage and self-betrayal.”⁸⁹⁴ Colonial myths, stereotypes or portraits, projected by the colonizer, are often introjected by the colonized and become the image through which we see and understand ourselves. Such introjection inevitably leads to self-primitivization and self-alienation. Consequently, the colonial portrayal of the Nagas has come to intrinsically associate with the discourse on Naga culture and, conversely, the notion that Western values are superior has come to dominate the Naga mind. Deconstruction will thus entail liberation from the values of the colonizer and from the colonially enforced, assigned or imposed identity.

Reconstruction

As a colonized people, one way to deconstruct and belie colonial myths and identity is to construct counter-narratives or reconstruct our cultural narratives by ourselves. Contemporary Nagas need to create counter-narratives against the

⁸⁹³ Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005), 101.

⁸⁹⁴ Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, viii.

mythological narratives. One way of doing so is by describing who the Nagas are by the Nagas themselves – *our history for us and by us*. Thus far, the ‘heroic’ invasion of the ‘benighted’ land and culture of the ‘savages’ and ‘nomads’ in Asia, Africa and the Americas who owned no history, religion or land by the white race from Europe, is what we know as the human history.

Reconstruction will entail engaging in several things. First, the Nagas need to make a concerted effort to reaffirm their identity and values. Most Nagas have almost lost the will power to reassert their indigenous identity, culture and history. As such, it is not uncommon for them to engage in self-shame, self-negation and self-sabotage. Not unlike other indigenous peoples with similar histories of traumatic cultural disruption and colonial experiences, they have deflated and wounded self-pride, which is why they make no serious efforts to revive and relive their traditional values. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reconstitute their spirit and restore self-pride in their root. As Alfred puts it, “We cannot preserve our nations unless we take action to restore pride in our traditions, achieve economic self-sufficiency, develop independence of mind, and display courage in defence of our lands and rights.”⁸⁹⁵

Second, the Nagas need to identify the bedrock principles rooted in their traditional culture and reclaim and practice them. They need to revive and make functional their moribund traditional bedrock principles and values that will define their being and guide their actions in modern-day existence. So that instead of defining and judging themselves and their conducts and that of others in terms of Western values, their traditional values will determine their social relationships and conducts. In today’s

⁸⁹⁵ Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, xii.

globalized world, where there is very little respect for meaningful cultural differences, the avoidance of a complete cultural homogenization by the dominant paradigm and the survival of a tiny minority such as the Nagas as a distinct people group or nation hinges on their ability to reclaim and retain their historical and cultural identity and principles. Or else, they will soon face the fate of many indigenous peoples who have been fully inundated by dominant cultures and have become untraceable.

Third, Nagas need to pass on those traditional values, culture and history to posterity. The Nagas are not devoid of history and culture. However, unfortunately, whereas knowing Naga history and culture is only incidental for Naga youngsters, learning and knowing Indian and Western cultures and histories are officially mandated in school, when the reverse should have been the norm. It is difficult to imagine a future generation that knows nothing about their history and culture. Obviously, no people group can expect to build a vibrant and healthy nation out of a generation that knows nothing about its historical past and culture beyond the fallacy that their ancestors were ‘fierce headhunters’ or ‘bloodthirsty savages.’

To reweave traditional values into contemporary society, the Nagas need to change their mind-set, recover, revive and relive their culture and traditional values and impress these values upon future generations. Lately, an increasing number of Nagas are awakening to a sense of need for reclaiming their cultural practices and values. However, along side this welcome development, there seems to be a strong inclination to commodify and commercialize their culture for want of progress. Cultural revival should not be limited to reclaiming its form, nor should a desperate attempt to attract tourist money to improve the economy be the reason for cultural revival. Any cultural form

without its content is at best a travesty. The cultural heritage of a people is not just sights and sounds, such as dances, ornaments, songs and other such tangible aspects of the culture. Culture includes values and principles that shape the worldview and provide guidance and meaning to a people.

How, then, do the Nagas understand their culture? Do they see it as a cash-making commodity that can be sold and bought like any other commodities in a capitalist economy? Or do they perceive and talk of their culture as an indispensable heritage and a vital part of their life and identity? For many Nagas, the talk on reviving culture is almost always intertwined with the former, if not for the sole reason of generating funds. There is a high risk of Nagas ending up in paying tremendous cultural and social costs if they misstep in their approach to cultural 'renaissance'. Therefore, they need to be careful in avoiding the degeneration of their culture because of commercial interests.

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APPENDICES

Map 1: Map of India



Map 2: Naga Inhabited Region (formerly Naga Hills)



Copyright: The Indigenous World 2006

Map 3: Map of Northeast India



Copyright: USDA

Map 4: Map of the State of Nagaland (in India)

