



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>  
Journal DOI: [10.21474/IJAR01](https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01)

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL  
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**REPRESENTATION OF NAGA IN THE COLONIAL DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES: EXPLORING ITS IMPRINT IDENTITY CONSCIOUSNESS.**

**Heroka Yeptho.**

Ph.D. student, Center for the Study of Social System, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 110067, India.

**Manuscript Info**

**Manuscript History:**

Received: 10 May 2016  
Final Accepted: 13 June 2016  
Published Online: July 2016

**Key words:**

Colonial knowledge, Naga, tribes, power, myths, ethnicity, and identity.

**\*Corresponding Author**

**Heroka Yeptho.**

**Abstract**

The colonial encounter was not an identical in different parts of the world. Despite which in many contexts, one of the significant aspects was that, it inaugurated new dimension of self in the life of the colonized subjects. The postcolonial scholarships, therefore, have raised significant questions particularly with regard to the representation of 'natives' in colonial discourses and practices. The encountering with the Nagas was rather inadvertent but left its deep imprint legacy, which still haunts many of its contemporary identity discourses and practices. It was largely a byproduct of past misrepresentation of Nagas in the colonial military and travel accounts. The most classical colonial representation of Nagas, whose logic still reproduces, is as exotic "head-hunters of Assam." Ultimately, their way of life are still perceived and discursively construct within this logic of colonial lens to be the best representation of Naga nature. In this paper, we shall critically examine those discursive formations of Nagas? In what way past colonial discourses and practices shape contemporary Naga selfhood? Does it have any relevance in the contemporary lifeworld of the Nagas themselves?

*Copy Right, IJAR, 2013.. All rights reserved.*

**Introduction:-**

The advent of the British colonial power in the region, massive transformations have taken place in the socio-cultural, religious and political spheres of the people in the North East India. One crucial area of those transformations has been the modern identity consciousness among the people in the region. Indeed, much of the modern identity consciousness in the North East India has its mooring in the encounter with the European colonialism, its discourses, and practices, in the region. Even today, the social and cultural history of North East India is marked by a tense and contested terrain of identity claims and counterclaims with the overtone of some colonially constructed categories. The contemporary growth of various identity discourses in the North East India presents a possibility of multiple pockets of emerging identity with many distinct claims.

In the colonial encounter, the colonial administrators, who turned into anthropologist, had assumed and represented the region as a terrain of stateless societies were reorganized into communities and the communities were social, politically, culturally, and even racially bounded unity. In the case of Naga Hills, Sanghamitra Mishra (1998, p.3273) argues that it was partially done to strengthen the complex relation between colonizer and colonized. In the case of the Nagas, an important factor in the formulation, extension and strengthening identity in the colonial encounter was standardisation and texturisation in the colonial discourses and practices. This was mostly done by the colonial administrators, who later turned anthropologists, and partly by the Christian missionaries who function as an informal extension of colonial power in the area. The present study looks at the dogged nature of these discourses and practices that have shaped and informed the identity discourses and politics in North East India with special reference to Naga.

**Colonialism and Identity: A Discursive Practices:-**

Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere traversed had inaugurated new dimension in the life of the colonized subjects. That is, in other words, the success of colonial force over the colonized was not just as a matter of the superior weapons, political and diplomatic shrewdness, and economic energy - as important these factors were (Nandy,1983). Its powerful legacy is its pervasive structure of colonial modernity. The breadth of these subjects cover by colonial modernity in the colonies stemmed from the desire of the Europeans to systematically normalize its modern powers at all levels and degree it could, over the people and land under its colonial jurisdiction. Colonial modernity than is now left the legacy in the form of institutional practices to enumerated identities in most of the once-colonized nations and continues to operate. That is even after the formal decolonization the imprints of colonial modernity continues to hunt the post-colonial discourses. The distinctive aspects of which is the European categories that now not only confined to Europe but seems to have transmitted to other parts of the world. Hence, the project of modernity that originated in western intellectual tradition wishes to declare as well as desires universal application.

This aspect of western modernity is that, as it underwent long trajectory, it did not stop in Europe but rather its symptom percolate outside Europe in the wake of colonialism through its discursive practices. In south Asia specifically, the British colonial interference with natives thought systems, culture, ethnicity, language, has disempowered the natives by limiting their ability to define their world. The native life world has been gradually replaced by the foreign one. This slowly and steady process of transforming native 'self' has effectively been conducted through a systematic application of a number of the so call 'investigative modalities'. The echoes of which is heard in the modern technologies of 'colonial knowledge' which produced colonial identity. Tony Ballantyne (2004, p. 10) thus remarks, 'the entanglement of intellectual production and formation of identity remains a crucial starting point for much works in post-colonial studies and culturally inflicted research within imperial history'.

The idea that informs the colonial knowledge production is informed by the enlightenment epistemology. It was in this logic of Eurocentric of subject-centered reason, the linearity of time or the idea of progress, meaning-legislating rationality. Edward Said (2003) shows that these discursive practices inform the intimate connection between knowledge and identity formation. He shows that the occident mode of producing 'colonial knowledge' then went on to remodel and refashion the European 'others' by juxtaposing 'other' and 'self' into perpetual entities. The European concept and categories in theorizing the oriental has to infect played a major role in producing Europe as the radiating center around which others were arranged. In other words, 'colonial knowledge' has preoccupied the theory and practice about European colonialism in Asia. Knowledge has become a site of the battle for power struggle across the modern academic discipline for intellectual transformation from colonial hegemony. Colonialism was made possible, strengthened, and sustained by the production of colonial knowledge.

In South Asia, within the field of history, anthropologist-historian such as Arjun Appadurai, Nicholas Dirks, Gyan Prakash and other scholars working under the intellectual leadership of Bernard Cohn have drawn attention to the way colonially instituted practices and knowledge systems affects the formation of new subjectivities... and cast a lasting shadow over emerging politic of identity (Chakrabarty, 1995, p. 3373). Volumes of literature now unearthed the possible ways in which the present production of identities has its moorings in colonial discursive practices such as the writings of colonial anthropology and colonial historiography.

For Sugata Bose and other the rejection of colonial historiography is as old as the colonial rule itself (Bose, 2003, p. 33). In south Asia, it was manifested amongst the anti-colonial nationalists who challenged the dominant colonial historiography long before the actual defeat of colonial system. Yet, colonial modernity also led nationalist intellectuals to follow the historiographical knowledge conventions established by European colonial scholarship that often neglected its pre-colonial reality of the 'past' as proper history. Hence, in South Asia among the post-colonial Indian historians who call themselves as Subaltern Studies collective, Gramscian in inspiration and led by Ranajit Guha, developed a critique of nationalism that relied on the conventions established by colonial discourses of historiography and ethnography.

The intimate connection between colonial historiography and identity production had been a core of the writing of history during the colonial and postcolonial period. In South Asia and Southeast Asia in general, the postcolonial intellectuals led by Bernard S. Cohn (1987) have opened up a debait about 'Historical Modalities' that has been an important instrument in constructing a meaningful universe of events and narratives for the colonized in the

colonies. In most of the colonized situation, the colonials, as well as the dominant nationalist discourse, construct the identity of the colonized past by selectively organizing events in relation to their ideology. In the process, many minorities were either marginalized or stereotyped and thereby prevented from identifying themselves. In this sense, identity produces through historical knowledge enterprises is not an object of discovery but rather an invention by the dominant.

According to Cohn (1987, p. 5). 'historiography, for the British, has an ontological power in providing the assumption about how the real social and natural world is constituted (and) history in its broadest sense was a zone of debate over the ends and the means of the colonial rulership' The colonial representation, as well as the dominant nationalist discourses on the minority communitarian strife, share common position since each offers explanations cast interims of criminality, backwardness, primitive passion and ready unreason of the people. Just as I have discussed that the intimate connection between historical knowledge and identity production has been a core of history writing so also the writing of anthropology. Infect by the late nineteenth century in most of the colonized nation, anthropology become literally the history of the colonized. Though here I will not dwell much but it is the latter issue that I now turn for a moment as Cohn (1987,p. 19) remarks both "history and anthropology shares a great deal at the epistemological level..historians and anthropologist have a common subject matter, 'otherness'; one field constructs and studies 'otherness' in space, the other in time'. Thus in most of the context of Naga today, 'the idea or defining of history as closely associated with anthropology or a part of anthropology in the widest sense' (Vashum, 2000, p. 27)

#### **Production of Colonial Knowledge, power, and Naga identity:-**

During the colonial period, the anthropologist ethnography was in many instances directly or indirectly involve in the colonial project (Asad, 1973, Lewis, 1973, Sanjek, 1993). In the colonial period, the anthropologist is responsible for inventing many of the concepts, categories, and classification resulted through the subsequent exercise of gathering information about different fuzzy ethnic and sub-ethnic group, customs, sub-cultures, traditions and so on for the archival and 'rescue recording' purpose. The ideas which colonial administrators/anthropologists used are perpetuated in the form of governmental and official policy, which are now replicated by the postcolonial state. The relationship between colonial anthropologist with colonialism and its discourses in Southeast Asia and South Asia can be drawn from Victor T. King and William D. Wilder who writes:

"Much of the anthropological research and writing on other cultures was undertaken not by academic anthropologist but by colonial officials and missionaries, who lived and worked in the dependent territories, who were fluent in the mainstream vernaculars, and who recorded social and cultural life in their spare time. Some had acquaintance with anthropological literature either through personal interest or more often formal colonial training programs provided in universities, academic and colleges, while other did not" (King and Wilder, 2003: 26).

The colonial administrators played a crucial if ambivalent, role as a mediator between the colonial subjects and the colonial government. The colonial officials and the missionaries help to construct 'official ethnography' for colonial government and develop practices that sought to disguise the power coded colonial influence by claiming what they recorded was genuine for posterity. Nevertheless, the colonial official anthropologist epistemological premise remains closely intact with the European social theories and the European system of classification. The projects of classification, grouping, naming, and enumerating method deploy in the European colonies, however, needs clear distinction from their home in Europe.

The European logic of employing classificatory technique into quantification and enumeration in their home seems to have different intention from there nineteenth-century South Asian colonies. Arjun Appadurai views that there are three sound legitimate reasons to claim such differences (Appadurai, 1996:117-118). In European (British as well as France) context, the first, he says was overwhelmingly territorial and occupational rather than ethnic or racial. Secondly, it was sociological, that is, it was tied to the politics of representation. Finally, it concerns the welfare of the socially marginalized poor, the sexually profligate, lunatic, and the criminal. These utilities of numbering were part of their historical experience of literacy for the colonial elite who came to believe that classification and quantification were socially useful.

The major concern of the European metropolitan interlocutors was concentrated on the social or resource-related policy initiatives. This utility becomes a part of a complex including informational, justificatory and pedagogical techniques. In the process, this phenomenon gradually gets bureaucratized as a key to the colonial imagination that

has created the sense of controllable mechanism such as essentials, discipline, surveillance, objectification of fuzzy communities in the colony. The colonial project then shaped the colonizing state which was then led to the dislocation of the colonized subject as well as those European audiences.

Anthropological works of the colonial officials and missionaries become an integral part of what came to be known as “Colonial Knowledge”, which in turn become the taken for granted epithet of history, territory, identity and society of the postcolonial present. Colonial anthropological discourses in this way have contributed in elaborating and constituting identity in various forms of gender, class, tribes and so on. Hence, it is on this background understanding, the present work intended to trace the legacy of colonial modernity through understanding the colonial construction of identity by taking the case of the community in the Eastern Frontier of South Asia popularly known as North East India with a special focus on the community called the Nagas. It is thus the production of colonial knowledge in relation to the Nagas were not only confined to the colonial official reports but was a product of the colonial anthropological work of that period (Mishra, 1998, p.3274). It thus colonial discourses of that period has largely shaped the contemporary identity by which its legacy continues to find its prominence.

The activity of colonial administrators produced many contemporary identities such as tribes within ethnic Naga group<sup>1</sup>. They were formed out of either grouping or separating for their convenience<sup>2</sup>. All these groups belong to one broad linguistic group call Tibeto-Burman. In it is further applied to fragments of the politically defined population. Hence, Hutton (1965) observes ‘To one living and working in the Naga Hills in daily contact with various tribes from all part of the district... the differences in language, custom, dress, appearance, and psychology, seemed so marked that the inherent unity of the Naga tribe tends to be obscured by their differences’. Hence, decade’s back J. H. Hutton<sup>3</sup> in his *The Mixed Culture of the Naga Tribes* opens an interesting observation on various Nagas. Hutton describes various markers of the distinctiveness of each Nagas as well as possible inherent unity among them. In other words in a contemporary language, it is generally coded as “Unity in diversity”<sup>4</sup>? The understanding of Nagas on such apparently differences as well as commonality is familiar in anthropological discourses. Hence, Hutton’s also made his observation on other European colonial anthropological discourses and points as to how Nagas were actually marked off from one group to another. Hence, J.H.Hutton remarked this aspect in the following words:

The earliest Europeans to come into contact with Nagas in Assam divided them roughly into Pakka Nagas in the north, where the contact was first made with them and Kachcha Nagas in the south where they were met on the Cachar borders. The Pakka or genuine Naga in the North went naked, whereas the Kachcha tribes wearing a sort of short black’ hobble’ kilt were regarded on that account as ‘half-baked’ hence Kachcha or ‘row’, through their affinity to the Nagas bordering on the Assam Valley in the north was clearly recognized (Hutton 1965, p.16)

It is however not typical to colonial writings but can be also found among Nagas scholars. Primarily because it has established itself which in epistemological level address deeply ingrained as the taken-for-granted habits of thinking and representation (Schutte, Gerhard, 1999, 135).

Naga scholars are also informed by colonial writings who classify themselves into physical and racial typology. In Asoso Yonuo’s generalized classification Nagas were grouped into two broad categories of those he identifies as Caucasian or ‘Aryan-like traits’ and those who are not. According to his observation Angamis, Chakhesang, Tangkhul, Mao and Marams belong to ‘Aryan-like traits’ as most of them are six feet high or more, broad shoulder and regularly build. The ‘other’ here in his description is Sema, Aos, Lothas etc who are short and some sturdy (Yonuo 1974:7). In the geographical affinity identifies the Nagas into four groupings. According to his classification, Nagas are enumerated as the southern Nagas, the western Nagas, the central Nagas, and the eastern Nagas (Horam, 1975, P. 36). In a recent time within Nagaland, there are group formations within the Nagas such as

---

<sup>1</sup> Observing Naga society from detached positivist approach, will give its most obvious sense that, each group are quiet distinct from one another (which means they are constituted by agglomeration of numerous smaller tribes). In contemporary there are many tribes that have emerged after colonialism.

<sup>2</sup> For instance Christian missionaries would standardize one language for disparate tribes into one tribe.

<sup>3</sup> A colonial officer turn anthropologist who himself was one among whom in most case an enthusiastic and sympathizer of the Naga communities.

<sup>4</sup> Naga Scholars R.Vashum describe Naga society as anthropological archetypes of unity in diversity (p-22), similarly Nar Imsong also describe the same (p-22),

Tengime Nagas, Eastern Nagaland Tribe, Central Nagaland Tribes<sup>5</sup>, with their own group organizations, founded with its own distinctive modern ideologies. Within these groupings are made up of smaller groupings.

In contemporary Naga intellectual like Charles Chasie remark that “Nagas are a confusing rainbow of system”. He distinguished various tribes into two broad groups on the basis of material culture which he identifies as those with Kilted and Non-Kilted Nagas. He forged his two typological grouping of Kilted and Non-Kilted with the traditional system of Naga village polity. Although it is an arbitrary banal definition according to him the Kilted have a democratic system whereas the Non-kilted have an autocratic system (Chasie 1999: 22). Different Naga group has its own unique political village organization. It ranges from aristocratic to egalitarian or autocratic to democratic as popularly categorized. Among the aristocratic or autocratic the popular institution is the chieftainship. The two different form of chieftainship are, the Konyak Angs whose political power mainly derived from religious or sacred sources while the Sumi Akuku who is a secular chief derived its power mainly from political and economic power. On the other hand the egalitarian or democratic. The Angamis practice extreme democracies while the Ao (non-kilted) practice semi-republic where gerontocracy (Tatar) is elected for the period of one generation.

The Nagas are classified into groupings as found in colonial writings also finds its expression in the beliefs and practices of the contemporary high politic of Nagas themselves. Hence from the administrative point of view, the Nagas are popularly categorized as predominantly ‘tribes’<sup>6</sup>. It is therefore in contemporary observed by some scholar that the category tribe ascribed to the Naga groups is a colonial construct. Michael Oppitz, Thomas Kaiser, Alban Von Stockhausen, Marion Wettstein (2008) argues that the notion of ‘tribe’ was a colonial creation. According to these scholars on Naga identity remarked that;

“The British officers, who in many cases were responsible for the nomenclature of the North Eastern tribes, showed a boisterous lack of concern when naming the societies they encountered on their way to the east in the aftermath of the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1820 ... This may have been somehow justified in the case of advise of the Indian sub-continent”. (Oppitz, Michael, Thomas Kaiser, Alban Von Stockhausen, Marion Wettstein 2008, p. 14, 16)

In order to find these puzzling diversity often asked the question is who are Nagas? Almost all the authors on Nagas are still confused with the meaning and origin of the word call Naga. Different authors from their own politic of location recurrently attempt to decode the meaning behind the word Naga (as if it has all reviling truth). Many such attempts were made particularly by an anthropologist who felt the need to write about Naga. Decades ago a non-Indian anthropologist who got Indian citizen (Elwin, 1964, p. 234), researched on many tribes in India with an approach of what he call ‘tribal touch’ or ‘tribal bias’ (1964, p. 245) came to discover Nagas and have written about them. In his observation “the derivation of the word is still obscure” (1961, p. 4) and which still remains as it is i.e. who are Nagas? Within this exegetical ambiguity, a prominent anthropologist on Nagas has come up with his observes that ‘it was popularly used by the British colonial as prefixes to mark distinguish between highlanders and plains people (West, 1994, P-64)’<sup>7</sup> for administration. Hence, the word continues to be an enterprise of Naga intellectual’s incomprehension.

<sup>5</sup> These groups emerged in the form of thesis and anti-thesis. The new emergence political category call Eastern Nagaland or Frontier Nagaland base its historical clam that it was part of NEFA. The geographical category NEFA was created primarily out of colonial administrative arrangement which was left out as unadministered area. NEFA at present has turned as a political tool for political clime. Interview Mr. Z.T Yemchunger30/04/2014 and T.Y.Sangtam 02/05/2014

<sup>6</sup> It was used in the colonial and postcolonial administrative category as a reference point of administration and now identity. In the colonial documents the people are known as ‘Hill tribes’, and in a postcolonial time the government of India categories as ‘schedule tribes’. In Nagaland government invented category “BACKWARD” tribe, ‘ADVANCE’. Hence From fuzzy to enumerative boundaries within Naga groups in everyday life. It has become a heuristic device when it becomes an inclusive by way of excluding there ‘other’ in the everyday interaction. I will observe how this self and other between Nagas are maintaining among the Nagas.

<sup>7</sup> In a similarly line of thinking an indigenous scholar Alimchiba (1970) problematized that, “even as late as 1954 people of Tuensang (now popularly as Eastern Nagaland) rarely identify themselves as Naga but rather as Konyaks, Changs, Phoms etc (P-24)”. Hence some scholars observes that the name ‘Naga’ was popularized and enforced by the British colonial authorities during their introduction of their Rule in the Naga area (Nag, Sajal, 2013,22)

Although the meaning of the word is although obscure the Naga as a people was first recognized and attempt to modify only during colonial rule in Naga areas. However, such definition was largely dependent on the politic of location on the one who defined it. Continuing from the same root of inquiry there is no one agreed upon view on the etymological origin to the word 'Naga' but different interpretation. The hitherto Nagas from colonial time to contemporary government records and documents they are popularly enumerated as 'tribes'<sup>8</sup>. It is then reproduced by the Naga scholars themselves. Most prominently by and large anthropologically informed historians on Nagas are divided on either the word was given by the non-Nagas of adjacent plainmen of Brahmaputra valley, Assam, Bengal, and Brumes, or the British, while some view it as an indigenous origin<sup>9</sup>.

Writings on the Naga since then make the question seemingly familiar but also persist as a bone of contention for scholars in producing scholarly enterprises. views it as was primary 'due to the backward stage of their 'civilizational' advancement (Nag, 2013, p-18)'. The real or imagined groupings based on their colonial anthropological chaos and historical perceptions of possibilities have produced different groupings and so also their opinions. Hence, Chasie argues that the Nagas, most probably, were not one people until recent past. Thus, he based his argument on the following facts.

- ❖ There are many different tribes who are either recognized as Naga or who call themselves Naga. However to this day there is no authoritative version of the number of Naga tribe.
- ❖ There has been no such thing as Naga society, maybe even not a tribal society. We had village societies, even republics, each warring with the other, although sometimes also conducting their affairs on a very high order.
- ❖ The term Naga is still shrouded in mystery and open to various interpretations.
- ❖ The origins of Naga tribes are still unknown. (Chasie 2004, P.130).

#### **The Naga myth and legends in articulation of modern nationalist creed:-**

In writing back colonial construction distinctive enumerated categories, a Naga intellectual Abram Lotha (2008, p.47) observes, "it is not surprising to see from a casual observation, it might give the observer with a sense that they (Naga tribes) do not belong to one society". He argues that the current development of tribalism within Naga society due to the various process of rationalization through the modern institution and modern elite's politic only reinforce such distinctiveness. In this context it is rightly observed by a Naga scholar Temsula Ao (2014) who's 'many years of introspection about the fate of being a Naga' continues to be anguish in many like her and from her own words 'being a Naga today challenges to seek answer to a host of question' (Ao, 2014, p-6). She opens one possibility by showing its reader to try to change the perspectives of the 'outsiders' by giving 'insiders' view.

In trying to arrive at the common ethnic origin of Nagas as a Nation they often inference from its oral history of myths, folklore, and legendary stories<sup>10</sup> to find a relation between different groupings. Through this myth and legends, it tells the tales of Naga history and literature were once written down on animal skins but unfortunately devoured by hunger dog long an ago. It is therefore said that Nagas gradually forgot their script and became 'people without writing' (Lavestraus, 2009, p.11) until colonial and Christian missionary's insistence to adopt a culture of writing. Another Naga scholar Dolly Kikon (2008, p.98) remarked that 'although these stories are apocryphal but the tradition of storytelling continues and contributes towards claims for a Naga nationalist past'. In this regard, The Nagas 'identitarians' in order to make sense often interprets their own life in terms of its ethnic images, noation, models, folktales, myths, legends, folk songs, dances, festivals, beliefs, ideas, values and even at times 'personal

<sup>8</sup> It is not a new phenomenon but believed to have existed since colonial time.

<sup>9</sup> Today the intellectuals points early reference of the Naga to Greek philosopher Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographia*, who call the land (today Naga settlement) as *Nangalothae* meaning realms of Naked. Some scanty referance of Naga are also found in the chronicles of *Ahom Buranji*. The term Naga or Nagas thus use by many scholars, First the indo-Aryan language as 'Nanga' or 'Naaga' 'Nag' meaning 'naked', 'Hillman' 'Serpent' from Sanskrit and 'Noga' meaning 'Naked' from Assam's, *Nagta* from Bengali word. The other Tibeto-Burman language 'Naka' from Brumes word meaning people 'people with pierced ears', 'Nahngra' in Kachari language meaning 'warrior' or 'fighters', in Ao naga language 'Nok' meaning people with 'dao', in Konyak Naga word 'Na' means 'ear' and 'Kha' means 'ear'.

<sup>10</sup>In this section we shall see various markers on which these categories emerged and hitherto used to define or identify as Nagas identity. Hence in contemporary still continues to ask question such as: who are Nagas? What does it meant? Or what does it meant to be a Naga? Are some few question pose and grapple by many non-Nagas as well as Nagas scholars

schemes' to reconstruct a cohesive ideological whole for Naga tribes<sup>11</sup>. Hence, Naga scholar Dolly Kikon (2008) observes how the Naga nationalist interpret cultural memories in constructing the ethnic origin of Naga nationalism. Among which myth of origin is one important aspect of the Nagas cultural memories. The tradition of such sense-making was exemplified in the origin and relation study between some Naga tribes but the idea was already conceived and articulated first in the colonial ethnographies.

One such identification is their common place of origin such as Khezakakenoma, Longtrok, Changsang, Mongko, Kamaphu where they believe is their place of origin. According to J.H.Hutton almost all the major ethnic groups in Nagaland such as Angami, Sema, Lotha, Rengma, Chakhesang and the Aos points their ethnic migration from the south of Nagaland. It is believed by these Nagas that they came to this present inhabited homeland through southeast and North of Manipur then to Khezakenoma. Hokeshe Sema (1986) argue that although they came from same root Ao are not mention in Khezakenoma, and suggest must have gone ahead of all the above Naga groups and settled in Chungliyimti village i.e. Longtrok for a considerable time. Similarly, Yimchunger Naga points to Kamaphu, the Chung Naga to Changsang and the Sangtam to Mongko. Whereas the Konyak and Kheimungan live on the border side of both in India and Myanmar. On the other hand "All the southern Naga tribes claim their origin from Makhel in Manipur's Senapati district" (Kami, 2002, p. 16).

Similarly on the other hand based on Naga art, material artifacts and physical appearance affinity, its practices, traditional institutions, stone Celts etc, various scholars from sociological and anthropological studies believe that their ancestors were ethnically origin from China, the Dyaks of Borneo, the Igorot of Philippines and stock of people from Polynesia, Myanmar, Kakchin, (Smith, W.C 1925, 2002:154-178, Alimchiba 1970:12-19, Sema, 1986, p. 4-8) and so on. Hence according to Hokishe Sema (1986) based on this information, "it is now certain that the Naga now living in Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur have migrated to this place through Burma" (Sema, 1986, p. 5).

The majority of the Nagas or at least those on the border side of Indian have almost professed the Christian religion. Apart from the major Christian religion, there are also small populations among Nagas who also believes in their tribal religion which is known to anthropologist as 'animism'. One such characterized as 'animism' is a popular tribal religious cult known as 'Haraka'. Its practitioners are mainly constituted by a section of the Zelingrong Naga tribesmen in Manipur and Assam. The generations of Naga authors and intellectual who have constructed differences within the Nagas from their own politic of location but simultaneously it is also observable that there are also reconstructed unities of the Nagas. Lanunungsang argues that at present although there is an estimation of more than 40 linguistically different groups but "comes together and formed themselves into a kind of federation of tribal Nation (2002:41,p. 214)" who are claiming their distinctiveness from their neighboring communities. On another hand Mar Imsong Imsong (2009) argues that the common thread that binds the Nagas together is their traditional ethos of Land. He however also caution that Naga unity can also be fractured by ethnocentrism, factionalism among the Naga politicians and national leaders, denominationalism, individualism, consumerism due to globalization etc (2009, p. 32). Hence, the formulation of any perspective on the definite Naga identity as remarked by Naga scholar Tumsula Ao (2014) "was long in the making".

The process of tribe formation themselves into one people, following the advance of the British, may be said to be continuing. Therefore in contemporary Nagas are found in the highland state of Nagaland, Manipur (the four hill district), Arunachal Pradish (northeast district of Tirap, Changlang), Assam (North Cachar Hill, Mikir Hill, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, and Sibsager District) in Indian and some parts of Myanmar (west of Chiendwin river and sagiang state). This in everyday conversation we also hear a reference of Nagas into Nagaland Nagas, Manipur Naga, Arunachal Nagas, Assam Nagas and Burma Nagas etc. It is believed that the Nagas today occupy an area of vast land that convergences in between India, China, and Myanmar. Geographically it is located within the approximately between the Longitudes 92.5E and 97.5 E; and Latitudes 23.5N and 28.5N (CSCF/Mkg, 2006). No précised estimation but various Naga scholar have roughly estimated that the Nagas occupies a land of around 1,

---

<sup>11</sup> In other words normally Nagas associated their identity both in terms of their constructed social relation as well as their individual sets of characteristic to distinguish themselves from their other. Therefore, Naga identity is generally understood and expressed by the Nagas as well as non-Nagas in terms of both subjective and objective sits. The ethnographic study here will take into account the phenomenological inter-subjective point of view of those being studied. This will require the object of studying build notion of Naga identity from both subjective and objective categories use by the despondence while making sense of their notion of identity.

00,000 Sq kilometer (Vashum, 2000, p. 9), 47,000 sq miles approximately (K. Nuh, V, 2006, P. 24), 20,000 to 30,000 or more square miles (Chasie, 1999, p. 21, Yonuo, 1974:1), 120,000 sq km (CSCF/MKg, 2006). It is within this estimation Nagaland state covers an area of 16,527 square kilometers with a population of about 1.98 million. There is no scientific survey or official statistical data on Naga population so far due to the political situation. The unofficial population of the Nagas is a rough estimation by scholars which is 3 to 4 million.

Various scholars from India, abroad and even Nagas themselves identify themselves as ethnically mongoloid origin<sup>12</sup> and distinguish themselves from their other<sup>13</sup>. Hence, Linguistically Nagas are categorically placed within Tibeto-Burman group (Elwin, 1961, p. 4, Sanyu, 2008, p. 7, ). The ethnic Naga language and spoken dialects vary widely from one another which are not intelligible to one another. Most of its language is classified as Tibeto-Burman based on language tonal. The various linguistic groups until now that are included under the nomenclature of tribal Naga nation as identified by various scholars and Naga organization continues to differ. The government of Nagaland at the time of the formation of the state in 1963 there was 13 Naga group under the administrative category called 'tribes'. In contemporary, there are 14 out of 16 major 'tribes' of Nagaland. An anthropologist Verrier Elwin (1961) there were 14 Naga groups, A Naga Scholar Yonuo (1974) listed 33; Horam (1975) listed 31; for Sanyu, V (2008) there are 34, Nuh, V.K (2006) listed 66, According to Naga Hoho there are 66 groups (interview, 31/03/2014), popularly accepted that there are 68 groups. In line with the argument as made by Sudipta Kaviraj (1992), such observation can be seen as colonial categorization from the anachronistic point of view to marks separation of people from fuzzy to enumerative boundaries. It is thus although Nagas who are seemingly different linguistically, culturally from one another constitute itself into the ethnic nation.

### **Concluding remarks:-**

The modern Naga identity consciousness got strengthen with the intrusion of British colonial power and it still continues to trudge on to the contemporary postcolonial India. Colonial expansion brought the British to come in close relation with the Nagas who were then in the periphery of their colonial sphere in South Asia. The colonial expansion in the Naga Hills facilitated colonial administrator, soldier-ethnographers, and Christian missionaries to produce ethnographic literature on the Nagas and these 'colonial knowledge' was used to regulate and colonial control. Thus with the development of colonial knowledge as a technology of modernization, the redefinition of Naga identity, not in perspective of the Nagas, but encoded in accordance with the western modernity concept, categories, and classification. In most general term it is now realize that most of this 'colonial knowledge' about the Nagas have been constructed and elaborated in the fashion of orientalism. It is the influence of the evolutionary anthropological theory of Victorian discourses; the colonial administrator-scholars and the colonial agents so to say orientalisised the Nagas in the colonial era.

There are no doubts that, one may identify certain differences between the postcolonial discourses with the former British Empire with regard to the use of concept and categories in understanding and defining the Naga identity. Many of the colonial ontological and epistemological style of defining the Nagas were faithfully reproduced by the postcolonial mainstream discourses. For instance, Nagas are "hostile", "insurgents" and are sought to be 'civilized', 'tamed' and above all 'nationalized' by officially patronizing them as "scheduled tribes" of India. This is observable especially through the media and government published writings of civil service officers. These writings continue to use the colonial discourses in its relationship with the communities of the Nagas.

The effects of such attitude and stereotyping, and the politics framed accordingly have a far reaching consequence on the Naga communities. Many of the contemporary socio-political identity politics in the North East India are born out of the deeply embedded colonial and the postcolonial state attitudes and policies of classification and demarcation of communities. For instance, the incapability of the postcolonial Indian State to innovatively respond

---

<sup>12</sup> Almost all the scholars on the Nagas have identify Nagas as 'Indo-Mongolian folk' (Alemchiba,1970:1; Aosenba,2001:1.), 'Mongoloid race' (imchen,1993,13; Iralu,2000,10; Shikhu, Inato Yekheto,2007:1; Venuh,2005,7; Nuh,2006,14), 'Tibeto-Mongolian' (Imsong,2011,24), 'Mongoloid stock' (Vashum,2000,13) etc.

<sup>13</sup> In other words Nagas are those with broad head, complexion light, dark light and golden brown but black too with yellowish tinge, hair black, straight, coarse, vigorous, wavy and Negrito frizzy in some case, with scanty hair on face, stature short or below average in the slandered way, nose fine to broad, face characteristically flat eyelids often oblique (Asoso Yonuo, 1974, 7). According to this observation there 'others' are those of Aryan, Dravidian, Negrito and Dasyu origin.



to the Naga nationalism is due to the postcolonial state continual reproduction of the colonial style of relationship with the Naga. The intimate connection between colonial knowledge and the Naga identity construction makes it possible to trace the connection between various existing colonial discourses and the postcolonial socio-political identity claims in the North East, particularly here in the case of the Naga being discussed.

### Reference:-

1. Ao, Tamsula, (2014), "On being a Naga: Essays", Heritage Publication House, Nagaland, Dimapur.
2. Appadurai, Arjun (1996), "Number in the colonial Imagination", in Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
3. Asad, Talal (1973), "Anthropology and the colonial Encounter", Humanity Books, Amherst, New York
4. Ballantyne, Tony (2004), "Knowledge and European Empire-Building in Asia", *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.6, No.2,
5. Bosse, Sugata (2003), "Postcolonial Histories of south Asia: some reflection", *Journal of Comparative History*, Vol.38, No.1
6. Chakrabarty, Dipesh (December 30,1995), "Modernity and ethnicity in India; a history of the present", *Economic and Political weekly*, vol.30 , no.52, pp.3373-3379.
7. Cohn, Bernard S. (1987), "An anthropologist among the historian and other essays", Oxford University Press, New Delhi
8. Chasie, Charles (2004), "Administrative and social factors: The changing in Naga society", in Neivetso Venuh (ed), "Naga society: Continuity and Change", Sipra Publication, Delhi.
9. Chasie, Charles, (1999), "Naga Imbroglia", standard printer and publishers, Kohima
10. Elwin, Verrier (1961), "Nagaland", Shillong.
11. Elwin, Verrier (1969), "The Nagas in Nineteenth-century", Oxford University Press, London
12. Horam, M, (1975), "Naga Polity", B.R. Publication Corporation, Delhi.
13. Hutton, J.H (1965), "The Mixed culture of the Naga Tribe", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol.95, No.1, pp. 16-43
14. Kaviraj, Sudipta (1992) "The Imaginary institution of India", in Sudipta Kaviraj(ed) *Subaltern studies*, vol. 7, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
15. Kikon, Dolly (2008), "Cultural construction of Nationalism: Myth, legends and memories", in Oppitz, Michael, Thomas Kaiser, Alban Von Stockhausen, Marion Wettatein (2008) (ed) *Naga Identities: Changing Local Cultures in the Northeast of India*, Snoeck Publishers Gent
16. King, Victor T. and William D. Wilder (2003), "The modern Anthropology and South –East Asia", Routledge, Curzon, London
17. Lewis, Diane (1973, "Anthropology and colonialism", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 14, No.5, pp.581-602.
18. Lotha, Abraham,(2008), "Naga Identity: Enduring Heritage", in Oppitz, Michael, Thomas Kaiser, Alban Von Stockhausen, Marion Wettatein (2008) (ed) "Naga Identities: Changing Local Cultures in the Northeast of India", Snoeck Publishers Gent
19. Misra, Sanghamitra (1998), "The nature of colonial intervention in the Naga hills, 1840-1880", *Economic and political weekly*, Vol.33, No.51
20. Nag, Sajal (2002), "Contesting marginality; ethnicity, insurgency, and subnationalism in Northeast India", Manohar publishers, Delhi
21. Nag, Sajal (2013), "Expanding imagination: theory and praxis of Naga nation making in post-colonial India", in Tanweer Razal (2013) (ed), "minority Nationalism in South Asia", Routledge, London and New York.
22. Nandy, Ashis (1983), "The Intimate Enemy: Loss and recovery of self under colonialism", Oxford University Press, New Delhi
23. Nuh, V.K (2006), "165 years history of Naga Baptist Chronicles", MEK Computers, Kohima
24. Oppitz, Michael, Thomas Kaiser, Alban Von Stockhausen, Marion Wettatein (2008) (ed) "Naga Identities: Changing Local Cultures in the Northeast of India", Snoeck Publishers Gent
25. Said, Edward (2003), "Orientalism: the western conception of the Orient," Penguin Books, London.
26. Sanjek, Roger (1993), "Anthropology's Hidden colonialism: Assistant and their ethnographers", *Anthropology Today*, Vol.9, No.2, PP. 13-18
27. Schutte, Gerhard, (1999), "Anthropology and Eurocentrism. Anthropology: Guilty as Charged?", *Review in Anthropology*, Vol.28, pp-123-136
28. Sema, Hokisha (1986), "Emergence of Nagaland; socio-economic and political transformation and the future", vikas publications house, New Delhi

29. Sanyu, Visier, (2008), "A history of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamic of oral tradition in village formation", Commonwealth Publication, New Delhi.
30. Strauss, Levi (2009), "Myth and meaning", Rutledge, London and New York
31. Yonuo, Asoso, (1974), "The Rising Nagas: A historical and political study", Vivek Publishing House, New Delhi
32. Vashum, R. (2000), "Nagas Right to Self-Determination", Mittal Publication, New Delhi.
33. West, Andrew, (1994), "Writing the Naga: A British officers Ethnographic Tradition", History and Anthropology, Vol.8, Nos.1-4