

Colonial Rule and Agrarian Transformation in Naga Hills: A Socio-Economic view of Angami Society

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Abstract

The evolution and socio economic dynamics of the agrarian Angami tribe of Nagaland are best comprehended through land relations that dictate social structures and identity, despite their inherent heterogeneity in land holding patterns. Like any other tribal societies, clan and community ownership of land has been the distinctive hallmark of land relations among the Angami. However, the traditional Angami society was transformed with the British annexation of the Naga Hills in the nineteenth century. It transformed the traditional land relations by their cash economy, new political structures, agricultural land taxation and new labour relations of production. Thus, the paper deals with the colonisation of Naga Hills and the consequent changes in land relations. It examines how native land tenure system was undergoing changes with the introduction of new administrative systems and land revenue policies introduced by the British; besides urbanisation, development of trade and commerce and the advent of Christianity, and the process of agrarian transformation of the Angami society during the colonial period have been analyzed.

Introduction

The traditional land relations of the Angami underwent significant changes during the colonial rule in the Naga Hills. Before the British intervention, the Nagas were living within their specific village territory and were culturally integrated into the ecological and material world they inhabited (Thomas, 2016). Although there were few interactions outside the village, their society was predominantly traditional. However, British rule disrupted the traditional structure and new customs were

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introduced. Like colonial Africa, European concepts³ were also deployed in the hills in order to implement their imperial model of rule (Ranger, 2013). Like any other region in the Indian sub-continent, the tribal communities, as well as the valley states of the British Northeast Frontier, underwent substantial transformation under the colonial rule. In Brahmaputra valley, the *Paik* system of the Ahom state was transformed into a system of tax and proprietary rights of the British known as the Ryotwari system (Guha, 1990). Likewise, in the hills, the British imposed their supremacy as undisputed masters over the tribes, and meticulously imposed new land revenue policies. Introduction of various taxes, commercialisation of crops, creation of unprecedented demand for labour, and the spread of Christianity, imposed colonial organizations of governance on the extant traditional political institutions. In this paper, an attempt is made to understand the changes in the Angami land relations during the colonial rule. This paper also examines the British policy of annexation, colonial land revenue system, and its implications on Angami traditional land relations. The paper discusses in detail, the processes of how traditional political institutions, were restructured into the colonial model of rule. It also describes the implications of Christianity on traditional land relations.

British Annexation of Naga Hills

The East India Company came into direct contact with the medieval kingdoms of Manipur, Jaintia, Cachar, and Assam, as well as the tribal communities of the adjoining hills, after the acquisition of Diwani of Bengal in 1765. However, they had been left undisturbed by the British until Burmese invasion (1817-24) of Manipur, Assam and the Cachar Plains. The British defeated the Burmese and forced them to surrender their claim over Assam under the Treaty of Yandabo⁴ in 1826. Within a decade and a half of this treaty, the British annexed the kingdoms of Assam, Cachar and Jaintia and all the petty independent tribal states of the Khasi Hills. Almost all other hill territories of the present Northeast (except Manipur and Tripura) were under the political control of the British by 1873 (Guha, 2006). The annexation of the entire region by the British government was, therefore, a gradual process that continued throughout the 19th and into the 20th century (Downs, 1983).

The first Naga encounter with the British took place in January 1832 when Captain Jenkins (later Commissioner of Assam) and Pemberton were ordered to trace a land route from Manipur to the British Headquarters in Assam. The interaction with the Manipur and Assam states brought British into contact with the Angami tribe who fiercely resisted the British intrusion into their country. Captain John Butler noted:

³ Since there was a limited connection between the British and African political, social and legal system, British administrators invented and codified African traditions, with white models of command and offered many models for African modern behavior. For instance, they created a model of village where there was direct relationship between local food production and local food supplies (Ranger 2013).

⁴ The Treaty of Yandabo was signed in the year 1826 between the Burmese and the British at Yandabo village in central Burma. The treaty forced the Burmese to accept the British terms and cease all their interference from the territory of British India.

“In January 1832 Captains Jenkins and Pemberton led 700 Manipuri troops with 800 coolies from the Manipur Valley, via Popolongmai, Samoogoodting, and the Dhunsiri to Mohung Dijooa on the Jumoona. They had literally to fight their way through the whole Kucha and Angami country. So irritated were the hill men by this invasion that British troops were sent to Mohung Dijooa to protect Assam from the threatened inroad of the united clans (Butler, 1854)”.

Apart from this contact, the British also came into contact with the Nagas through the Cachar Hill territory⁵ which runs between the Angami Hills and Khasi Hills. North Cachar was annexed by the British in 1832. Though the British found that North Cachar was constantly suffering from Naga exaction and raids, but they were neither ready nor keen to annex the Nagas; so they asked Tularam, the Chief of North Cachar to check the Naga raids; however Tularam protested that he neither had control over the Nagas nor any means of checking their raids. The British government then requested the King of Manipur at Semkhor to occupy the Naga Hills; which was again unsuccessful as they only exacerbated the situation by conducting raids. Thus, it was left to the British to occupy the Angami Hills (Mackenzie, 2014). The intervention of the British to check Naga raids became a turning point for the Angami. Their social-economic, political, cultural, and religious life was to be drastically altered in the years to come. In fact, a fierce resistance against the British was carried out, but in time, even the indomitable Angami, would eventually fall under the imperial power.

The British made ten punitive expeditions into the Naga Hills from 1839 until the end of the period of non-interference in 1851. In 1839, Mr Grange, Sub-Assistant at Nowgong⁶, was chosen to conduct the first Angami expedition. He was directed to investigate the causes of the Angami raids, and to punish the Chiefs of the large village of Konemah⁷ and Mozemah⁸ who had been active during the raids. Mr Grange discovered that there was active trade in slaves between Angami and Bengali Sylhet merchants, and one main objective of such raids was to procure the supplies of slaves⁹. In 1840, Mr Grange was again put in charge for survey expedition of building a road from Assam to Manipur, through the Angami Hills but had to turn back due to Angami resistance. Between 1841 and 1842, a survey expedition was carried out under the command of Lieutenant Bigge, which concluded with a temporary framework of peace with the Naga Hills, particularly with the Angami Hills. Thus, the Dhunsiri River became the boundary line between the British districts and the

⁵ Presently known as Dema Hasao district of Assam.

⁶ Presently called as Nagaon, a district in Assam.

⁷ Presently called Khonoma.

⁸ Presently called Mezoma.

⁹ As per the report given by Moffat Mills in 1854 and B.C Allen in 1859, North Cachar was inhabited by six tribes namely Hill Cacharis, Aroong Kucha Nagas, Hozai Cacharis, Mikirs, Old Kookies, and New Kookies. Among the six tribes, most slaves could have been the Aroong Kucha Nagas, since they suffered the most from the Angami raids. While Kookies were under a chief and Angami people avoided dealing with them. It also appears that in 1880 British raised 100 strong Kookie militia to check the Angami raids (Mackenzie, 2014).

Angami tracts. Slave traffic carried on by the Nagas with the Bengalis of Sylhet was to be suppressed with the establishment of this boundary. Besides, the boundary between Angami Hills and Manipur were also to be settled, a road was to be opened to Samoogoodting¹⁰ from Nowgong, and finally a nominal tribute was to be taken from the Nagas.

In 1844 Eld led an expedition to collect tributes; the Angami tribe refused to pay the first year's tribute to the British, and continued their raid on the British outpost. The expedition concluded that it was essential for the British to occupy the Hills and control the hostility of the Angami. In 1845, Captain John Butler made a commercial survey of the Angami Hills and received tributes in terms of ivory, clothes, and spears. "He was directed by Francis Jenkins, the agent to the Governor General of North East Frontier Agency to discover lime, salt, coal, iron ores, indigenous tea, coffee, and any timber trees which might appear to possess useful qualities, and all hill products which were likely to become articles of commerce and to submit the result of his researches and samples of all such articles. Hence, Butler's discovery of indigenous tea plants brought joy to the government (Sema, 1992)".

During 1846 and 1847 Butler made his second expedition to Angami Hills, this expedition resulted in connecting the roads from Mohung Dijooa¹¹ to Samoogoodting. Samoogoodting was then put under the political control of a constable Bhogchand Derogha with a few Shan troops. However, Bhogchand was killed during his engagement in the clan feuds that occurred between Konemah and Mozemah in 1849. This prompted the British to occupy Mozemah and Konemah, and thus in 1850, under the command of Lieutenant Vincent; they fought the first battle with the Angami tribe and ended in capturing a strong Naga fort at Konemah; besides engaging in a bloody fight with Kekremah¹² village. However, in 1851, the British withdrew their troops from the Angami areas, and the non-interference policy under the direction of Governor General Lord Dalhousie was implemented till 1865 (Mackenzie, 2014). However, even during this time, nineteen Angami raids into British territory were recorded, in which 232 British subjects were killed or wounded. Verrier Elwin noted that the settlement of a trade blockage, could not secure the peace in the frontier (Elwin, 1969). Although, the policy of non-interference was introduced in the Naga Hills, the British were forced to acknowledge the failure of the policy¹³. Thus, in 1866, the non-interference policy was abandoned, and the forward policy was adopted by the British towards the Nagas; which led to the establishment of the British post at Samoogoodting, and marked the beginning of the colonization of the Naga Hills (Venuh, 2005).

¹⁰ Presently called Chumukedima.

¹¹ Presently called Manja Tin Ali in Karbi Anglong District in Assam.

¹² Presently called Kikruma.

¹³ Administration Report of the Naga Hills 1868.

When the news of forward policy of the British reached the Nagas in the hills, they became more defensive by making their own fire weapons, as well as acquiring them from Manipur by 1870s. During this time, there was also resistance to British rule, from other parts of Naga Hills. In 1876, Captain Butler was wounded and killed by the Lothas in Pangti village. Three years after the establishment of British outpost at Samoogoodting, the British shifted their Naga Hills District Headquarter to Kohima in 1879. This brought the British and Angami into great hostility and ignited the famous battle of Khonoma 1879-1880.

In 1879, Captain Damant was shot by the Khonoma warriors on his survey tour to Khonoma village. He was accompanied by sixty-five police, twenty-five were found to be killed or missing, fourteen more were wounded, and of the twenty military personnel, ten were killed and five wounded. Three domestic servants who accompanied the party were also killed. The Angami warriors had swarmed out and succeeded in dispersing the troops, who broke up and attempted to return to Kohimah (Kohima) in twos and threes. The Jotsomah men joined in the attack, and the Chetonoma Khel of Kohimah came out to cut off their retreat (Mackenzie, 2014). Subsequently, an alliance of thirteen Angami villages was formed to conduct a siege on the British garrison in Kohima, in an attempt to wipe out the British from their hills (Venue, 2005). Reinforcements of the British troops came from Wokha, Samoogoodting, Manipur, Shillong, and Dibrugarh. Thus, Alexander Mackenzie noted:

“Colonel Johnstone had, as soon as the news of Mr Damant’s death reached him, asked the Maharaja of Manipur to put 2,000 men at his disposal, and these men, under the command of the Minister and the Maharaja’s two sons, started the next day. Colonial Johnstone had also with him his own escort of 30 men of the 34th Native Infantry, and a small body of Cachar Frontier Police. The whole force accomplished the distance of nearly 100 miles, over a roadless and most difficult country, in five days”.

“The news of Mr Damant’s murder reached Shillong on the 18th of October. The 44th Silchar Light Infantry was at this time at Goalundo, having been ordered to Cabul; but these orders had already been countermanded, and they were directed to return. In the meantime, a party of the 43rd Assam Light Infantry under Major Evans, was dispatched from Dibrugarh on the 23rd, and marched from Golaghat to Samoogooding, where they were joined by Lieutenant Maxwell, the Assistant Commissioner who had pushed on with few Frontier Police, arrived at Kohimah on the 30th (Mackenzie, 2014)”.

Vishier Sanyü and Richard Broome in ‘*A Naga Odyssey*’ (2017) gave a brief account of the battle of Khonoma, which is quoted below:

“The British force surrounded the village and began their assault in the late morning. Their rocket attack to burn the village failed, and the infantry was

forced to make a frontal assault. However, the steep terracing of the hillside, the three-meter high stone walls, and the narrow paths funnelled the invading force into a narrow front, and they were cut down by a withering fire by the Angami. As daylight was fading, the British made a final push but lost a quarter of the forward assault force in so doing. At 10:00 pm that night, the Naga warriors whooped and yelled, flames engulfed the village, and then silence descended. Next morning the village was deserted: the villagers had left for the higher ground. The Naga reportedly lost over seventy, while the British force lost twenty, including three officers, with another twenty-four wounded. The villagers were forced to abandon their rice harvest; the British estimated several thousand large containers were left, promising much hardship for the Angami in the coming winter. The Naga built a new base higher in the mountains, which the British called Chaka fort. The British never attacked this fort, fearing large British casualties, and soon made peace with the Angami living there' (Sanyü and Broome, 2017)".

In 1880 the British annexation of the Naga Hills was completed with the defeat of the Angami. As a result, the Naga Hills District was formally established in 1881. The permanent establishment of the district became a huge political achievement for the British in the region. Brigadier General J.L. Nation, who led the British force, wrote in his report published in the *London Gazette*, 27 April 1880, that the assault and capture of Khonoma was 'one of the most brilliant feats of arms' in recent times by British officers (Sanyü and Brooke, 2017). In the fighting that followed the invaders discovered that although armed with spears, daos and a very few old muskets, they were a foe by no means to be despised. The Nagas encountered by early British explorers were tough warriors, divided into clans and sub-clans (Keane, 2010). Naga resistance as Niketu Iralu writes; the spontaneous, uncoordinated fight thus waged by the Nagas for what was most important to them, namely their land and their self-respect, ended in their first-ever subjugation by a mighty power from outside (Iralu, 2015).

Thus, the British annexation of the Naga Hills brought all the Nagas into the British Administered area. Apart from Angami Hills, the Lhotas and Rengmas came under the direct control of the British by 1882, and were made part of the British frontier tribes regulated under the Inner Line Regulation of 1873¹⁴. However, there were trans-frontier villages and tribes were designated within the frontier, like four Lhota villages and tribes like the Ao, Sema and Konyak. Between the years 1884 and 1885, Mr R. B Mcbabe, I.C.S., the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, conducted the first expedition into the trans-frontier area and by 1890, trans-frontier areas such as Ao territory was occupied and a sub-division of the hill district was established in Mokokchung. In 1904, the boundaries of the Naga Hills District were extended

¹⁴ The Inner Line Regulation 1873 separated the Naga Hills from the British Assam by restricting the tea planters from acquiring land beyond the Inner Line. This also made the tea planters pay compensation to the Nagas for the land occupied beyond the Inner Line (Yonuo, 1974).

to include the Sema country (Eaton, 1984). By 1909 to 1910, all other trans-frontier Naga tribes were brought under the administered area (Reid, 2013). However, in the later years of the British administration, the Naga Hills was kept outside the purview of the Constitutional Act 1935 and accordingly declared to be an Excluded Area¹⁵ under the Government of India till 1947.

Revenue Assessment

In 1881 when Naga Hills District was formally established, the British introduced a uniform policy of revenue assessment in the Naga Hills although there were several weak Angami villages that were paying agricultural grains to the British in the form of tribute (A.J. Moffat Mills, 1854 cited in Elwin, 1969). However, the British were aware of their agricultural practices, and their traditional land tenure system, which they had gathered from various survey reports and expedition reports. As David Ludden pointed out that settling of land revenue was a primary concern of the East India Company, and consequently the revenue records are far more detailed than other alternative files (Ludden, 2003). S.K. Barpujari noted that the punitive expeditions undertaken during 1832-1851 were more exploratory than punitive; and many new things about the Naga country, its different tribes, manners, and customs, their political, social and economic conditions came to the knowledge of the administration (Barpujari, 1978).

Thus, the British incorporation of the hills land tenure system, into the standard policy of revenue assessment resulting in house tax as well as a tax on their rice grains. Both house tax and paddy rice were directly a tax associated with land and agricultural production¹⁶. Though the revenue policy was applied everywhere in the Naga Hills, there were variations of revenue assessment among the Nagas, which differentiated between terrace cultivators and jhum cultivators. The Angami were known by their terrace cultivation, while the other tribes like Lhota, Rengma, Ao, Sema, Konyak, etc. were characterised by jhum cultivation. Terrace cultivation as a practice by the Angami was considered by the British to be more productive, which ultimately affected the rate of tax imposed on them. Between 1880 to 1881, the Angami were paying house-tax fixed at two rupees and one maund¹⁷ of rice, while the Lhota and Rengma during the same time paid a house tax of one rupee. In 1893, house tax on the Angami was increased to rupees three, which resulted in a net gain of Rs 6000; concurrently, it increased from rupees one to rupees two per house among the Lhota and Rengma. Thus out of total revenue of Rs. 8,285 resulted in a net gain to the government of Wokha subdivision from Rs. 7249. The British occupied the Ao territory only in 1890, and sub-division of the hill district was established in

¹⁵ Some of the Excluded Area was earlier known as the 'Backward Tracts'. The areas under the Excluded Area were directly controlled by the Governor of Assam. The areas were Balipara Frontier Tract, Sadiya Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract, The Naga Hills District, and Manipur state (Reid, 1944).

¹⁶ Administration Report on Naga Hills District 1882.

¹⁷ A unit of weight used by the British India. The equivalent of one maund is 40 kilogram (Elwin, 1969).

Mokokchung with revenue of rupees two as house tax and 1500 maund of rice was to be collected annually¹⁸. From 1901 the whole areas of Sema and other trans-frontier tribes came under the British administration with a house tax of two rupees and one maund of rice (Reid, 2013). Thus, the revenue generated from the house-tax by the British in the Naga Hills District was assessed in lieu of land revenue (Allen. 1905).

Apart from revenue from land and rice grain, forced labour was another form of revenue that the British imposed on the Naga Hills. Barpujari noted that forced labour was a form of revenue that the British also used as a symbol of authority, and disciplinary measure (Barpujari, 1978). Force labourers were unpaid labour, which was used by the British either for making cart roads or construction of the bridle paths in the hills. They were also used in transporting the British stores from one place to another. Forced labour was thus collected as a form of revenue from the British subjects. Whenever a village worked against the interest of the British, the supply of forced labour by the villages was acquired, according to the requirements of the government. When the battle of Khonoma ended, Angami villages were asked to pay revenue from land, rice grain and annual supply of labour to the government (Mackenzie, 2014). Thus, forced labourers were also an important aspect of colonial enterprises.

Monetisation of Economy

The introduction of cash by the British in Naga Hills during the nineteenth century significantly transformed the traditional village socio-economic system. Although, the village remained independent of all control¹⁹, the British considered it as the white men's burden to industrialise the Nagas²⁰. Thus, traditional labour was transformed into wage labour, and a self-subsistent agricultural product of the village economy, was linked to the market. It may be noted here that wage labour occurs only within a capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1990). However, the wage labour and commoditization introduced in Naga Hills were governed by the colonial enterprise. Thus, the tribal mode of production namely the communal mode of production and individual ownership relations coexisted, with the colonial mode of appropriation.

Trade

Before the British colonisation, there was already a barter system of primitive trade relations. Merchandise comprising woven goods, yarn, live-stock, food-grains, and agricultural implements were interchanged within their community²¹. It has also been noted that trade relations existed between the Nagas and the valley state. The relations between the Ahom and hill tribes varied over time, at times the hills would

¹⁸ Administration Report on Naga Hills District 1882.

¹⁹ Administration Report of the Naga Hills 1878.

²⁰ Administration Report of the Naga Hills 1868.

²¹ Nagaland District Gazetteers Kohima 1970.

raid the plains; at the same time there were tribes which wanted the protection of the Ahom Army to intervene in an inter-tribal conflict. The Ahom government would also raise revenue from salt brought down by some hill Naga communities, to be retailed with the plainsmen; in fact, the Nagas also depended on the markets in the plains, for certain foodstuffs and goods. Thus the hill dwellers relations with plains were not only overshadowed by acts of warfare or their 'savage' and 'warlike' state of being; but they raided the plains from sheer necessity, when the adjoining areas, were the only source of supply, of essential commodities where they depended. The bounty from a successful raid on the plains consisted of grains, goods, weapons, agricultural tools, and persons, who were enslaved in agriculture or used as payment or tribute to the neighbouring tribes. The acute need for essential goods kept the hills in a mode of constant readiness to raid the productive plains, while on the other hand the Ahom state also depended on supplies of salt from the hills. The Ahom state, in due course changed its tactics in dealing with hill dwellers, by introducing a policy of seduction known as *posa*-system²² which came to be recognized an alternative to Ahom suzerainty (Wouters, 2012). Thus, the pre-colonial trade relations between the Hills and plains were based on the exchange of goods, for instance, ivory, wax, a conch shell was exchanged in return for salt, brassware, iron, etc. (Elwin, 1969). However, with the British intervention in the hills, cash was introduced through trade and coolie labour. They expropriated the old system of trade relations by monetising the pre-colonial trade relations. Thus, *haat*²³ earlier known as Naga *khat* or *posa*-system of the Ahom state became a significant part in colonising the hills. Earlier exchange through goods like ivory, wax, cloths, salt, brassware, shells, cornelian beads, and agricultural implements became purchasable only by cash. Moffat-Mills reported that Angamis were purchasing cornelian beads and muskets from places like Calcutta (Moffat-Mills cited in Elwin, 1969). In 1854, John Butler mentioned that one thousand Angami Nagas visited the station of Nowgong to trade with the merchants in salt and cornelian beads (Butler, 1854). During the year 1878 one thousand nine hundred ninety-five Angamis took passes²⁴ to trade in the plains, of which one thousand seven hundred six took down Rs. 7943 to buy salt. While two hundred seven of them bought Manipuri clothes, and the remainder took forty-five ponies (Elwin, 1969). Thus, by the late nineteenth century, the region witnessed British establishing shops at strategic points, and market *haats* held in the interior, formed the local centres for the collection of exports and distribution of imports (Barpujari 1990). Trade and markets were therefore not only politically significant for the British to control the hill raiding on the plains, but eventually let the people of the Naga Hills into a modern economy. Another landmark in modern Naga history

²² A system in which the hills were access to levy an annual collection of goods and also access the labor service of the Assamese pykes, in return they had to refrain from making inroads into Ahom territory (Wouters, 2012).

²³ Haat is a weekly market. It was a popular means of trade relationship which was practiced between the Nagas and Ahoms before the British Rule (Walling, 2016).

²⁴ Inner Line Regulation of 1873 made mandatory for both the people of the hills and people of the plains to trade or cultivate only with a pass from the British government.

is the invasion of Japanese that brought new patterns of trade and industry. Troops from all over India, from Great Britain, and from the Commonwealth countries came to rescue Kohima from the grip of the Japanese. Hence, not only multitude of new faces but also new patterns of trade relations came into being²⁵.

Wage Labour

To meet the demand for manual labour in different jobs, the British started to employ the locals as wage labourers known as *coolies*. Thus, it was through *coolies* that cash became widespread in the Naga Hills. Besides agricultural occupation, working as *coolies* also became an important subsidiary occupation for the tribal communities, to tackle the economic hardship of taxation, imposed on them by the British. Thus wage earning by *coolies* became inevitable to meet the monetary demands of the cash economy. During the cold winter, majority of the Nagas would turn out to work as coolies in Kohima. They worked in the road construction and earned four to six annas²⁶ a day, but when they were employed as a means of transport by carrying goods, they earned eight annas. The wages of coolies were fixed throughout the Naga Hills and ranged from two to eight annas as daily wage (Allen, 1905).

The *coolies* were compelled by the British to work in various activities such as road construction and transportation of goods in the hills throughout the year²⁷. Thus, the coolies were not confined to singular form of labour, but used in the form of what Ian. J. Kerr called the 'circular labour' that circulated from worksite to worksite (Kerr, 2006). Thus, coolies could be toiling up the steep hills with loads of rice and luggage, or employed in public works like construction of roads²⁸, pounding and sifting the unhulled rice stored in the British stockade. Besides, the coolies were also employed in the clearance of the roads in the hills district. In fact, each village was held responsible for the section of the road that passed through their village territory. The villagers were also required to clear the jungle twice a year, to dress the road surface once a year; and maintain the roads by clearing drains, trees, stones and earth that may have fallen on them. For this, they were paid at an average of about rupees thirty per mile (Allen, 1905). Lipokmar Dzuwichu refers to this road as the political road, which became an important colonial project of British rule in the Naga Hills (Dzuwichu, 2013).

Commoditisation

The introduction of cash into the Naga Hills resulted into commoditization of land and economy. Land thus became a commodity that could be sold; one acre of terraced land was selling at rupees six hundred in areas, which were connected by

²⁵ Nagaland District Gazetteers, Kohima 1970

²⁶ A silver currency previously use in British India.

²⁷ The Future Administration of the Angami Naga Hills 1866.

²⁸ Roads were in the form of cart road and bridle path.

the construction of the cart road. While in other parts, agricultural land was sold at rupees two hundred. An acre of terraced rice land was also leased for a year at three to nine rupees, depending on the quality of the terraced land. Jhum land was also leased for two seasons at a rupee and a half (Allen, 1905). During the year 1896, terraced land at Samoogoodting was highly priced and was often sold at a price equivalent to twenty-two British pound (Elwin, 1969). The British also articulated the traditional value of items used in exchange for monetary value. Moffat-Mills estimated that a cow was valued at ten rupees, salt at seven rupees per maund, the conch shell at one rupee, a male slave was worth thirteen rupees, a female slave fetched thirty four rupees, and a goat at two rupees. In 1875 a basket of pounded rice could be bought at four annas and fowl at two annas. In 1879 one maund of pounded rice was priced between two to eight rupees in Kohima (Elwin, 1969). While between 1898 to 1903, the price of the rice shifted from one rupee to fourteen rupees of three to eight per maund, the price of salt and dal dropped from eleven to ten rupees per maund; and between 1903 and 1904 it dropped to five and four rupees per maund (Allen, 1905). Food items like eggs, fowls, rice, millets, job's tears, and vegetables sold in the market; and cloth dyed in border was also sold at three to five rupees (Elwin, 1969). Wild birds like pheasants were also brought into Kohima by the Angamis for sale in the market (Hutton, 1921). During the year 1905 one kilogram of wax was selling at the cost of one rupee in Kohima town. Firewood was expensive, salt was also an expensive item in the market, one kilogram of salt was selling at eight annas. Thus, the pre-colonial economy of the Nagas was commoditised into a cash economy which became a pathway to modernity.

Urbanisation

During the initial years of Naga Hills District, Kohima was the only administrative centre with Deputy Commissioners' office, British officers and barrack of regiments; it gradually transformed into a town connecting Manipur and other parts of the Naga Hills, which led to the gradual development of external commerce²⁹. Along with British political administration, Christian missionaries also took initiatives in urbanising Naga Hills through education. Ordinary education was to be imparted and according to the laws of the existing political economy³⁰. As a result, education in Kohima developed through the initiatives of the Christian missionaries such as C. D King, Rivenburg, and Supplee who started schools in Kohima. In 1881, C. D King with the help of an Assamese teacher through the medium of Assamese language established the first school in Kohima. Later English became the main language of learning, and the Bible was considered a major textbook. After C. D King's departure from Kohima in 1887, Rivenburgs took the initiatives in 1889 to revive the school started by C. D King. After his retirement in 1922, Mr and Mrs Suppllee took up the charge of education in Kohima. Education was considered by the British government as part of their colonial

²⁹ Administration Report on Naga Hills District 1882.

³⁰ Administration Report of the Naga Hills 1873-1874

administration, and schools were run in collaboration between the Christian missionaries, and the British government. The enrolment of students and the standard level of the class were regulated by the government; it was made compulsory for *Gaonburas*³¹ to send the children of their village for education. Since engagement with natives for the day-to-day administration of the British in Naga Hills was required, thus those who got an education were employed as clerks the government office (Longkumer, 2011).

However, along with administration and education, there was also in-migration from other British provinces. Based on 1901 census ninety-four percent were Naga population and four percent of the population were from Assam, and few Nepalese serving in the regiments. There were other few groups who migrated to Kohima which included coolies and cart men from Bengal, artisans from Punjab, traders from Marwar, and a small population belonging to Manipur and Khasis. Nagas from nearby villages have also migrated to settle around Kohima. There were few shops run by Marwari merchants dealing in salt, kerosene oil, matches, agricultural implements, grain, cloth, umbrellas, thread, brass wire, etc. The Naga customers mainly bought salt, thread, agricultural equipment, kerosene, matches and brass wire from Marwari shops. There were also a variety of food items and goods produced in the Naga villages that were brought for sale in Kohima bazaar.

Legitimising of the Institution of Elders

The tribal-village institution of elders was appropriated into *Dobashi*³² and *Gaonbura* institution. They were given the task of civil affairs in the concerned village and were made to report to the political agent once a month. *Gaonburas* were given the task of collecting house tax and received a commission of not exceeding 20 per cent³³. According to Piketo Sema, the *Dobashi* institution was one of the chief means through which the British government established successful relations with the diverse Naga tribes. The *Dobashi* were employed as the handmaidens of the British administration. As a medium of communication, they were entrusted with the responsibility of furnishing districts officers with native news; thus acting as informants, as well as the personnel of the intelligence department. They were in fact respected by the native people and acted as native judges, as they were experts in customary laws (Sema, 1985). The *Gaonbura* was the village elder, who represented the British authority, from each clan group. They were responsible for the collection of house tax from the villagers, and for supplying porters and rations at a nominal cost, whenever British officers toured their region. The offices of the *Gaonbura* and *Dobashi* was therefore introduced by the British to bring some uniformity to the village political structure, and facilitate the governance of the villages belonging

³¹ Gaonbura is an administrative term introduced by the British which is used to denote village elders, village headman or chiefs.

³² The word 'Dobashi', was derived from Hindu words 'Dobhasias' which etymologically means two languages. Literally, it means a man of two languages (Sema, 1985).

³³ The Future Administration of the Angami Naga Hills 1866.

to different Naga groups (Joshi, 2012). The institution of *Dobashi* and *Gaonbura* was, therefore, a direct appropriation of the Angami traditional informal council of elders consisting namely of *Phichümia*³⁴, *Peyumia*³⁵, and *Pehümia*³⁶. Therefore, the native judge, village headmen, the village chiefs, and the *Dobashi* were constituted from the extant *Peyumia* and *Pehümia*. The *Dobashi* system of administration, consequently, became a tool for the British to integrate the tribal structure into colonial administrative convenience. The *Gaonbura* or the village headmen or chiefs were given responsibility to collect and submit the revenue to the district office; while the *Dobashi* were given the role of administering justice. The *Gaonbura* and *Dobashi* thus became fully functional agents of the British, and consequently came to hold a considerable stake in the colonial project of rule (Dzuvichu, 2013). Hence, the administered districts were governed, and the regulated spaces were institutionalised, for taxing and legitimising the traditions surrounding land rights, by institutionalising the village level leaderships such as village chiefs and village headmen (Das, 2014). In this way, the tribal political institution was appropriated and became an important project of colonial modernity.

Christianity and Land

Christianity in the Naga Hills was brought by the American missionary E. W. Clark who arrived in Ao Naga Hills in 1872. While in 1878 the British decided to send a missionary to Kohima Angami country but were delayed by Khonoma rebellion and the siege of the Kohima garrison (Joshi, 2012). C. D. King reached Kohima only in 1881 when Angami hills were formally occupied by the British. In 1883, Kohima Baptist Church was founded and the first Baptism was given to an Angami person name Lhousietsü in 1885. Thus, Christianity began to spread across Angami villages in the latter part of the nineteenth century, followed by mass conversion in the twentieth century. However, the conversion of the Naga to Christianity took place at the expense of village cohesiveness (Eaton, 1984). The intrusion of Christianity into the Angami traditional village, created a social upheaval among the villagers. The common perception was that conversion to Christianity would necessitate discarding their traditional ways of religious life, restrict their food habits and ways of living. It would also directly come into conflict with many aspects of their socio-economic relations of production. Christianity also had a huge impact on the traditional social structure of the Angami. Since, those who got converted into Christianity formed their own agricultural labour group, by discarding many social and economic obligations imposed by the traditional society. In the traditional society agricultural labour not only functioned in a work cycle of mutual obligation among the members, but each individual was required to provide enough food and rice beer to his fellow men, working in his or her agricultural field, which was a burden for

³⁴ Those who have attained the age of 60 years and above.

³⁵ Those who have qualities of oratory skills, in-depth knowledge of history, rituals, ethical values, talent in singing, wisdom, diplomacy, honesty and wealth.

³⁶ Those Phichümia in the older category, having the qualities of a Peyumia (Nakhro, 2009, Yalie ,2016).

the poor cultivator. Thus, for some poor cultivators conversion to Christianity was also an escape from this traditional hierarchy. Thus, there were Christian agricultural labour groups known as *Kehumia Peli*. Agricultural activities were performed in the new light without the attachment of traditional rituals and social practices³⁷.

Christianity also substantially increased the production of Angami rice crops. In the traditional society, most of the rice produced from terrace and jhum cultivation was consumed not only as rice for food, but was also used in making unlimited rice-beer known as *Zu*³⁸. J.H. Hutton (1921) noted that the Angamis drank *Zu* all day long; in fact, it was not just a drink, but a staple article of consumption, the staff of life, and might be reckoned more appropriately as food rather than drink (Hutton, 1921). When rice ran out before the harvest, the poor cultivator either loaned rice or fed on the job's tears and other millets, which were also consumed by making *Zu*. When Christianity came to Angami areas, *Zu* was considered as a characteristic of the traditional Angami religion. According to the American missionaries, rice-beer was seen as a barrier to 'true' conversion (Longkumer, 2016). As such, the conversion into Christianity ultimately resulted in discarding *Zu*. Thus, Christianity directly increased their rice stock. Since rice and traditional *Zharha* labour are intimately related, the increased stock of rice also resulted in the disappearance of traditional *Zharha* labour relations³⁹. Thus, Christianity like the market economy, also significantly affected their traditional agrarian class structure, by transforming many traditional values and cultural beliefs.

Christianity also directly affected their traditional land tenure system. In 1935, when Sir Charles Pawsey was the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District, he was called to solve the land dispute that was regularly emerged in Chiechama village between the Christians and the Non-Christians. As a result, a boundary line was drawn on the basis of religion, with newly converted Christians moving out to new sites for settlement while the non-Christian continued to occupy the traditional village land⁴⁰. Thus, when Christianity made its entry into the Angami villages, land rights, land ownership and became a significant identity marker of the non-Christian Angami. In fact, Christianity from the perspectives of the non-Christian Naga was seen as an alien force. However, mass Christian conversion took place by the middle of the twentieth century, and as Christianity began to spread among the Angami and the Church came to occupy a certain amount of land in the village.

³⁷ Chiechama Baptist Centenary Seweda, 1910-2010.

³⁸ *Zu* is a fermented rice beer, which is of three types namely *Zutho*, *Zutse* and *Dzüzu* (Hutton, 1921).

³⁹ In traditionally Angami society, labourers were paid with a fixed quantity of unhulled rice. *Zharha* is earned by an individual as a one day wage; *Zha* in Angami literally meaning wage and *Rha* meaning basket, thus the basket filled with unhulled rice which the individual earns is called as *Zharha*. The existence of *Zharha* labour group and non-*Zharha* labour group clearly indicated that the pre-colonial economy of the Angami was stratified between the rich and poor. The rich are called *Mhakenyimia* as the term implied a person owning property of any sort, particularly land. The poor were termed as *Mhakejümia* or *Zhakraketsümia*. The term *Mhakejümia* does not strictly imply a person not owning property of any sort but owning a limited or small amount of land in comparison to the rich.

⁴⁰ Chiechama Baptist Centenary Seweda 1910-2010.

Conclusion

The colonial rule brought about structural changes in Naga in society, by altering the traditional patterns of social relations of production, and paved the way to new social formation and new modes of production. In the context of land relations, there were significant changes in traditional land relations of Angami society. Their traditional land tenure system was meticulously rearranged, and revenue was imposed on their land and agricultural crops.

The traditional subsistent economy got monetised and commercialised through several means. There was expropriation of pre-colonial trade relations between the hill dwellers and the people of the plains. Like the Ahom state, the British invented the new tradition of a trade by providing goods, in which the hill tribes commonly traded in the plains. As such, market *haat* became a place in which the supremacy of the British was established. Wage labour in the form of the coolie, was introduced into the traditional economy as a new means of occupation.

The process of urbanisation and commercialisation also began to take place in Kohima. Education became an important tool for the British administration since native involvements in day -to-day administration became vital. As Kohima was urbanized, there was also in-migration of people for settlements, administration, and trading. Thus, there were not only Nagas migrating to town from native villages but there was in-migration from different parts of British India such as people belonging to Assam, Punjab, Manipur, Bengal, Rajasthan, Nepal and Khasi Hills. Markets and bazaars also became important characteristics of Kohima urbanisation, as such traditional economic goods and products were monetised.

The British rule also transformed the village political institution to garner the benefits of the village economy, by politically controlling their social institutions. As a result, the *Dobashi* and *Gaonbura* became important mediators and agents through which British rule was established. Likewise, Christianity also facilitated the process of colonisation, and in fact, brought certain radical changes in their land relations. The land was demarcated between Christian and non-Christian Angami, and new village settlements emerged with Christian inhabitants. It also brought transformation in their socio-economic relations of production. However, during the latter part of the twentieth century, almost all the Angami population was converted into Christianity. As a result, Churches came to occupy certain amount of village community land in the village.

This agrarian transition during the colonial period, paved way to the process of privatisation, commoditization, urbanisation, and agricultural commercialisation in the post-independence period as well as in the recent times.

Note

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