1

Sovereignty in the Hills

In the moments before the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, nationalists in what is now the Indian state of Nagaland declared their own region independent.[1] The Naga claim is key to understanding postcolonial state-making in the decolonizing world because it represented the limits of what could be an independent state in an era of seeming nationalist possibility. Nagaland articulated the boundaries of national self-determination by demonstrating the practical restrictions of an international system in which national self-determination remained an aspiration rather than a right. Postcolonial state-making foreclosed the prospect of international recognition for many nationalist claimants, yet sovereignties that can only be seen outside the lens of their ruling state government persisted, even as they held conflicting claims of statehood.[2]

WHERE IS NAGALAND?

The Naga Hills are located in two different political geographies. The first is that of the Indian Northeast, which, as its modifying adjective makes clear, is an Indian concept, viewed from the perspective of New Delhi.[3]

[1] In 1957, India combined the British district of Nagaland and the Tuensang Frontier Division into an administrative unit governed by the state of Assam and called the "Naga Hills–Tuensang Area," which became the Indian state of Nagaland in 1963.

[2] For layered or partial sovereignties, see Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds., *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[3] Sanjib Baruah, "Towards a Political Sociology of Durable Disorder," introduction in *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford

The term lumps together a host of ethno-linguistically defined peoples, territorially delineated by their relationship to "mainland" India. Some of these peoples, such as Nagas, have been categorized as a collection of tribes rather than as a nation. The term "Naga" itself was coined in British anthropologies of the late nineteenth century, while "nation" was a label certain Nagas applied to themselves.[4] In this geography, the Naga Hills were the ultimate frontier and a place of restricted travel under both British and Indian rule.[5] The region's only national border with the mainland, the Siliguri corridor in North Bengal, is often called the "chicken's neck," accentuating its (Indian) national security vulnerability.[6] This political geography claims the Northeast as Indian and then underscores its directional difference from India's center.

The second political geography, a Naga one, is where Nagaland lies at the junction of China, Burma, and India. The portion of Nagaland that is in Burma is sometimes described as twice the size of Naga territories in India, but the population is the other way around: in 2019, according to Naga accounts, there were approximately three million Nagas in India and approximately half a million in Myanmar.[7] One would not find these

University Press, 2005): "The term Northeast India points to no more than the area's location on India's map" (4). An interesting counterfactual might be, what would a political geography of Northeast India have looked like if oriented from Calcutta pre-partition?

[4] On the derivation of the term, see R. G. Woodthorpe, "Notes on the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the So-Called Naga Hills on Our NE Frontier of India, Part I," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 11 (1882): 56–73. "Naga" draws from the Burmese word *naka*, "those with pierced ears," and the Assamese word *nahnga*, "warriors," so it is an exogenous label. On the tensions between colonial classification and indigenous claims-making, see Arkotong Longkumer, "Moral Geographies: The Problem of Territoriality, Sovereignty and Indigeneity amongst the Nagas," in *Rethinking Social Exclusion in India: Caste, Communities and the State*, ed. Abhijit Dasgupta and Minoru Mio (New Delhi: Routledge, 2017), 148–49.

[5] Nari Rustomji, *Imperiled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Nari Rustomji, *Enchanted Frontiers: Sikkim, Bhutan, and India's Northeastern Borderlands* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1971). Rustomji was a high-level officer and politician with many postings in the Northeast. *Imperiled Frontiers* includes chapters titled "The Mongoloid Fringe" and "Assamese Irredentism," emblematic of New Delhi's perspective on "its" Northeast.

[6] Sanjib Baruah, introduction to *In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

[7] Visier Sanyü, personal communication to author, January 12, 2019. Tezenlo Thong, "'To Raise the Savage to a Higher Level': The Westernization of Nagas and Their Culture," *Modern Asian Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012): 893–918, 896, also approximates the Naga population as three million and likewise points out that this can only be an estimate.

numbers in either India's or Myanmar's official statistics.[8] It is impossible to set an accurate number for the Naga population because the Indian census has perennially underreported this population (and Myanmar does not report it at all) and the Nagas' own figures are vague as they do not have the mechanisms in place for carrying out a comprehensive census. More important than arriving at an accurate figure of the Naga population is understanding that the mechanisms of their ruling states are set up to miscount, and therefore discount, them.

Existing national frames obscure seemingly easy-to-establish facts such as where Nagaland is and how many Nagas there are. This strategic absence challenges notions of counted and categorized postcolonial-state citizenship.[9] Naga territories are spread across five political units. Their villages, even the Naga capital of Kohima, nestled in the Himalayan foothills, seem to inhabit the fold of a map – literally present but rendered invisible by the nationalist, cartographic, bounded conception of postcolonial nation-states of India and Myanmar, and elsewhere across the globe.[10]

Globally, hill regions are often considered ungovernable, "uncivilized" spaces. In 1961, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India compared geographically distinct hill spaces when he proposed a "Scottish pattern of administration" for tribal regions in the Indian Northeast.[11]

[8] The Indian census counts Nagas as "Scheduled Tribes" in Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur, not as Nagas. In areas where the dominant collection of scheduled tribes are Nagas (divided between Ao, Angami, Sema, etc.), this can be a proxy for Nagas, but in other regions with a variety of scheduled tribes, it is not. The Myanmar government does not report the number of Nagas in its state.

[9] Citizenship and its relationship to independence and partition is a huge historiographical and public debate in India; see Swati Chawla, Jessica Namakkal, Kalyani Ramnath, and Lydia Walker (compilators), "Microsyllabus: Citizenship and Provisional Belonging in South Asia," *The Abusable Past* (blog), *Radical History Review*, January 9, 2020. Available at www.radicalhistoryreview.org/abusablepast/microsyllabus-citizenship-and-provisional-belonging-in-south-asia/.

[10] On the issue of cartographic statehood, see Joshua Keating, *Invisible Countries: Journeys to the Edge of Nationhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018). One way to handle the difficulty of determining nationally derived "facts" is to consider Nagas as emblematic residents of "Zomia," the borderlands region of upland Southeast Asia stretching from Thailand to Tibet. The term "Zomia" was coined by Willem van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20 (2002): 647–68; and popularized by James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

[11] Repeated mentions in: TAD/Con/2: "Non-Cooperation Movement by the Council of Action of the All-Party Hill Leaders Conference, Implications vis-à-vis the District/Regional Councils," June–October 1961, Assam State Archives, Guwahati, Assam, India.

In scholarship, James C. Scott famously (and ironically) asked, "Why cannot civilizations climb hills?" while Lauren Benton categorized mountainous regions as "primitive with the potential to become increasingly but never fully modern" in her discussion of uneven imperial geographies.[12] Benton actively searches for sovereignty, while Scott looks for its absence, but they arrive at much the same place – with the hills as a non-state space, a geography of resistance.[13]

Worldwide, regions seeking independence from postcolonial states laid strong claim to hallmarks of "modern civilization" such as nationalism, statehood, and, in the case of Nagas, Christianity. At the same time, these claims of modernity, of civilization, of sovereignty were rendered invisible to outsiders. From the outside world, "Where is Nagaland?" is a seemingly impossible question to answer. Therefore, for Nagas, conceptualizing a "national territory" became "an act of narration and imagination" – an act of self-determination.[14]

WORLD WAR AND NATIONALIST CLAIMS-MAKING

As with many peoples seeking to define their sovereignty, a set of geopolitical processes – war, religion, empire, decolonization – produced Naga nationalist claims-making. During the First World War, approximately 2,000 Nagas served in the French and Mesopotamian theaters as military laborers.[15] On their return home, some of them tried to join the British officers club in Kohima and were refused because they were not considered of the appropriate rank or race. In response, they formed the Naga Club in 1918, a proto-nationalist civil society organization.[16] A decade later in 1929, the Naga Club met with the British Simon

[12] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 13; Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 225.

[13] Thank you to Kalyani Ramnath for helping to articulate this point.

[14] Akotong Longkumer, "Bible, Guns, and Land: Sovereignty and Nationalism amongst the Nagas of India," *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 4 (2018): 1097–116, 1098.

[15] Harry Fecitt, *Sideshows of the Indian Army in World War I* (New Delhi: VJ Books, 2018). John Thomas, *Evangelising the Nation: Religion and the Formation of Naga Political Identity* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016), 26, says approximately 4,000 Nagas and Kukis (another tribal people who straddled the Indian and Burmese border) were sent to France. These different figures show how difficult it is to quantify the number of Nagas engaged in particular endeavors. On the wider panorama of Indian support troops in the First World War, see Radhika Singha, *The Coolie's Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict, 1914–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[16] Keviyiekielie Linyïe, author interview, December 21, 2018.

Commission, a group of seven British Members of Parliament (no Indians) sent out to study constitutional reform for British India.[17]

Indian nationalists from multiple parties reviled the Simon Commission, which denied that India had a legitimate national claim and therefore that it deserved independence. For them, the commission embodied the dominant logic of empire: that India was a collection of incompatible peoples over which Britain alone could keep the peace.[18] Both the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League refused to meet with the commission. Instead, they waved black flags at demonstrations, which the colonial police violently suppressed.[19]

However, Naga nationalists, alongside other disenfranchised communities in British India, rejected the Indian nationalist interpretation of the Simon Commission as a tool of continued British imperialism.[20] When Naga Club members met with the commission, they submitted a memorandum stating "that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachment from other people," and that, on British withdrawal, Nagas "should not be thrust to the mercy of other people … but to leave us alone *to determine ourselves*."[21] In Naga nationalist accounts, this meeting with the Simon Commission served as the point of origin for the public articulation of the Naga nationalist claim.[22] As a result, the Simon Commission became a source of legitimacy for Naga nationalism. While there is debate on how many Naga Club members had served in the First World War, the Naga nationalist narrative drew a causal chain from the Nagas' return from war, to their racial

[17] *Documents Concerning the Origin and Purpose of the Indian Statutory Commission: Reprinted from a Statement Prepared for Presentation to Parliament, in Accordance with the Requirements of the 26th Section of the Government of India Act* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education, 1930). The original copy of the Naga Club memorandum to the Simon Commission is in the British Library, filed as "Memorandum on the Naga Hills from the Secretary, Naga Club, Kohima, Naga Hills," Indian Statuary Commission – Memoranda, Assam (57–1033) [hereafter, "Naga Club memo"].

[18] Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle against Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 72.

[19] Neeti Nair, "Bhagat Singh as 'Satyagrahi': The Limits to Non-violence in Late Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2008): 649–81.

[20] Dalit activists also saw the Simon Commission as a portal outside the Indian nationalist movement to petition the British colonial state; e.g., B. R. Ambedkar, "Evidence before the Simon Commission," in *Selected Writings and Speeches*, vol. 2, ed. Vasant Moon (Mumbai: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 2005), 315–491.

[21] Naga Club memo, emphasis added.

[22] For example, Thepfulhouvi Solo, "Story of Naga Club and Simon Commission Petition," *Morung Express*, June 25, 2017.

exclusion from the British officers' club, to the formation of the Naga Club, to the Memorandum to the Simon Commission.[23] Like many nationalist narratives, this one wields mythic power rather than strict accuracy. The Naga Club's 1929 petition to the Simon Commission remains a founding sovereign document.

The overlapping interactions between indigenous claim, colonial encounter, and neighboring (Indian) majoritarian nationalism that conceptualized Nagas as not "appropriately" Indian shaped the critical geopolitics of Naga nationalist claims-making. This call for sovereignty in the hills was a response to and repudiation of the sovereignty of "mainland" India, which had been created by a partition that decoupled the Northeast from what had been a united Bengal in Eastern India. The "chicken's neck" link to the mainland could always be snapped, making the Northeast both a place of perpetual insecurity from the perspective of New Delhi and of ambiguously belonging to the rest of India. Several years after the Nagas' 1929 Memorandum to the Simon Commission, in 1936 the British declared the Naga Hills to be an "excluded area," which meant that it would be administered by the governor of Assam rather than from New Delhi – attenuating the chain of authority that connected the region to its ruling government.

Excluded area or not, Nagaland became central rather than peripheral to international relations when the armies of the Second World War invaded the region. It is not accidental that the political geography of Nagaland as the junction of China, Burma, and India shares a name with the China-Burma-India theater of the Second World War. In 1944, the Allied forces – the British colonial army made up of South Asian, West African, and East African troops, with US air support flying out of Calcutta and engineers running the railways through Assam – halted the Japanese march westward at the Battles of Kohima (the Naga capital) and Imphal (137 kilometers from Kohima, down a rough road in neighboring Manipur).[24] The violent presence of foreign troops, airplanes, and trains

[23] Thepfulhouvi Solo, "Corrected Story of Naga Club and Simon Commission Petition," *Morung Express*, July 6, 2017.

[24] Steven James Hantzis, *Rails of War: Supplying the Americans and Their Allies in China-Burma-India* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017); Kaushik Roy, "Discipline and Morale of the African, British, and Indian Army Units in Burma and India during World War II: July 1943–August 1945, *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 6 (2010): 1255–82; Bérénice Guyot-Réchard, "When Legions Thunder Past: The Second World War and India's Northeastern Frontier," *War in History* 25, no. 3 (2018): 328–60.

transformed a region that the British Raj had left purposely undeveloped since it was cheaper and easier to govern with a light footprint.[25] Notably, few Nagas officially fought in that war, though many joined partisan units; only one is buried in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Kohima. And not all Nagas chose the Allied side, since the Japanese actively courted Asian anticolonial nationalists within the British Empire.[26]

After the Japanese captured Rangoon in March 1942, they advanced into Burma, cutting off Allied supply lines to China. The defeated British and American command ordered a retreat into India in May 1942. Indians living in Burma, if they could not afford to leave by boat, walked nearly 1,500 kilometers to Northeast India, through Naga territories. Their slow and unprovisioned passage meant that they often needed aid from Naga villagers. Following the Japanese victory in Burma, the British rebuilt its army in the Northeast, while American forces regrouped and turned their attention to China, using long-range penetration units in Burma to reopen supply routes.

Frustrated by the continued Allied control of supply routes into China, the Japanese decided to brave the difficult jungle and mountainous terrain and invade India. Catching the British off guard, Japanese troops laid siege to Kohima and its surrounding villages in early April 1944; the battle dragged on until June. From a Naga perspective, the battle involved the Japanese capturing villages that the British then relieved; forced and voluntary civilian population removals; and the employment of many as laborers, interpreters, and partisan fighters.[27] Eventually, with superior airpower and fierce fighting, the British colonial army drove the Japanese out of Kohima in late June. During a similar time period (March–early July 1944), the Japanese attacked and laid siege to Imphal in neighboring Manipur – approximately a two-day march south from Kohima – and eventually were defeated and retreated from that city.

A poll conducted by the British National Army Museum named the Battles of Kohima and Imphal as Britain's greatest victory, more significant than either Waterloo or the Normandy landings – yet the battles do

[25] Easterine Kire, *Mari* (New Delhi: HarperCollins-India, 2010), a semi-fictionalized biography of Kire's aunt during the Second World War and its aftermath, captures these processes.

[26] On Japanese alliances with Asian anticolonial nationalist leaders, see Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

[27] Charles Chasie and Henry Fecitt, *The Road to Kohima: The Naga Experience in the Second World War* (Trømsø: Barkweaver Publications, 2017).

not loom large in histories of the Second World War because of their location.[28] Mirroring international perceptions of the region in which they fought, the British colonial army, officially the Fourteenth Army, was nicknamed the "Forgotten Army."[29] The trope of a forgotten army, a forgotten war, and a forgotten region haunts the political geography of Nagaland. Of course, the armies, wars, and territory are never forgotten or unknown to those who live there and those who fought there. However, the formation of that trope was not accidental. It was produced both by a departing empire that strategically forgot its past responsibility and violence and by a new ruling government that had its own ambivalent relationship with the Second World War – a war that split India's independence movement: some sat it out in prison, while others allied with the Japanese.

Not only did some Indian nationalists, such as Indian National Army leader Subhas Chandra Bose, ally with Japan, but the Nagas' most prominent nationalist leader, Angami Zapu Phizo, did so as well. Phizo was a member of the Angami tribe from Khonoma village, in the Kohima region. The Angamis of Khonoma had held off the British twice, in 1847 and 1879, so Phizo embodied a nationalist call of historic resistance.[30] Growing up, he held a leadership role within his peer group before he left for school in Kohima.[31] After receiving an English-language education from US missionaries, he became a traveling insurance and Bible salesman, working on commission for US and British firms based in Calcutta.[32] Finding it difficult to make a living in Nagaland, Phizo relocated with most of his immediate family to Rangoon, Burma.[33] There, he made contact with Japanese intelligence, which sought to use

[28] Angus MacSwan, "Victory over Japanese at Kohima Named Britain's Greatest battle," *Reuters*, April 21, 2013. Available at www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-battles/victory-over-japanese-at-kohima-named-britains-greatest-battle-idUKBRE93K03220130421.

[29] The titles of C. A. Bayly and Tim Harper's books, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) and *Forgotten Wars: Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), play on this "forgetting."

[30] Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2003), 95–96.

[31] Umatic Film #2, Visier Sanyü Collection. These films feature a collection of interviews made by Sanyü in 1990 surrounding the events of Phizo's funeral. They were restored and digitized with support from the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam, and transcribed by Asanuo Heneise in English and Tenyidie with support from The Ohio State University's Provost Early Career Scholars Program.

[32] Pieter Steyn, *Zapuphizo: Voice of the Nagas* (London: Keegan Paul, 2002), 45–48.

[33] Steyn, *Zapuphizo*, 49–52.

indigenous anti-imperialist sentiment against Western empires to garner local allies on their march into India.[34] In Burma, Phizo "was very active in politics ... He was with the Japanese army and he was with Netaji, Subhas Chandra Bose."[35] "Netaji" as well as "many Japanese officers" visited the Phizo family regularly in their Rangoon home during the war.[36] Phizo's own movements during the Second World War – whether he fought with the Japanese, or with the Indian National Army led by Subhas Chandra Bose, or at all – are not clear. He was ambivalent about Bose's end game (Indian independence) and worried about how much space an independent India would have for an independent Nagaland: "[Phizo] could not escape entirely the man's charisma and boundless energy, but he refrained from joining the cries of *Jai Hind* whenever and wherever Bose appeared."[37]

The Indian National Army–Japanese alignment affected how the Naga question was understood in India. In 1961, the Department of Tribal Areas for the State of Assam (which administered the Naga Hills) believed "that the Nagas were still worshipping the ideals of Netaji [Bose]." Indeed, "Netaji's appearance at this critical time would have solved the [Naga] problem" by giving the Indian government a representative who would have been a trusted authority in the Naga Hills.[38] This belief in Subhas Chandra Bose as someone who would "solve the [Naga] problem" is more a symptom of Indian misunderstanding of Naga allegiances than an accurate assessment of Bose's past influence on Naga politics. Given Phizo's wariness of Netaji even when they shared the goal of driving the British out, it is unlikely that the latter's presence would have enabled Nagas to trust the Indian government. Yet the Tribal Areas Department's revisiting of the Second World War show how the legacies of the "forgotten" war were never themselves forgotten – or, were forgotten only by those who had a vested interest in doing so.

World war globalized the Naga Hills but did not lift the trope of invisibility from the region. There is a concerted effort in Nagaland today

[34] Steyn, *Zapuphizo*, 57–61. [35] Umatic Film #4, Visier Sanyü Collection.
[36] Umatic Film #4, Visier Sanyü Collection. [37] Steyn, *Zapuphizo*, 59.
[38] Fortnightly *Confidential Report* on the political situation in United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, for the fortnight ending January 31, 1961. TAD/Con/1. State Archives, Guwahati Assam. This comment also alludes to the controversy that surrounds Subhas Chandra Bose's death, and the belief among some in India that he did not really die in August 1945 from injuries occurring in a plane crash. Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, and Leonard Gordon, *Brothers against the Raj: A Biography of Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), debunk that theorizing.

to memorialize the Second World War and to celebrate the efforts of Nagas who supported the British.[39] The Kohima battlefield cemetery functions as a pilgrimage site for British veterans and, therefore, as an international portal for Naga claims-making. Descendants of veterans, often from rural British villages traveling to a non-Western country for the first time, are met by delegations of Nagas who ask, *Why did you abandon us to India?* Caught off guard, some of these British visitors respond that the United States made them leave before they were ready.[40] Even this simplification of the tensions between US and British concerns that accelerated Indian independence show the continued presence of postimperial links.[41] Affective ties remained strong between individual Nagas and the Westerners who were intermediaries between them and the Allied forces. These ties, which are explored in depth in Chapter 2, did not necessarily translate into international support for Naga independence, but they provided the foundations of international advocacy on behalf of the Naga nationalist claim.

MISSION AND NATION

Alongside world war, Christian conversion connected the "excluded area" of the Naga Hills to a wider, global community. The Indian state of Nagaland in recent times is nearly 90 percent Christian and 75 percent Baptist.[42] Percentagewise, it is the most Baptist "state" in the world, followed by the US state of Mississippi.[43] From 1868 onward, a small group of American Baptists sparked outsized rates of conversion and

[39] The Kohima Education Trust and The Kohima Education Society make up a British-Naga civil society organization under whose aegis British veterans from the Battle of Kohima and their descendants support the construction of war memorials, scholarships for Naga students, and the collection of oral histories with Nagas who participated in the war.

[40] Zapuvisie Lhousa and family, interview with author, February 10, 2016.

[41] On Franklin Delano Roosevelt's support for Indian independence, see F. R. Dulles and G. E. Ridinger, "The Anticolonial Policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt," *Political Science Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (1955): 1–18. On the reasons for British decolonization, see Caroline Elkins, "The Re-assertion of the British Empire in South East Asia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39, no. 3 (2009): 361–85.

[42] Indian Census, 2011. Available at www.census2011.co.in. The next Indian census has been on hold due to the COVID-19 environment, but it is supposed to occur in 2024, and it is likely that these percentages will decrease.

[43] Mississippi has been approximately 34 percent Baptist, according to Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 255.

English-language education in the region. Nagaland is the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society's great success story, though it is important to note that most Naga conversion occurred in the years after Indian independence, when American missionaries left the region. Being invaded by armies and bombed from the sky may have made many Nagas more receptive to a religious intervention.

In addition, the rise of Naga nationalist claims-making increased the value of a Christian identity that contrasted with stereotypical Hindu Indian-ness.[44] In the years between the Simon Commission (1929) and Indian independence (1947), American missionaries continued to convert Nagas and teach English, particularly those who lived in the Kohima district and sought jobs as translators for the British colonial authorities.[45] George Supplee, a missionary schoolmaster in Kohima, had a printing press at the school on which the Naga Club printed their English-language newssheet, the *Naga Nation*, starting in the mid-1940s. Earlier, in the 1930s, they had printed a newssheet in Tenyidie, the Angami language, on Supplee's press.[46]

The independent Indian government disliked the activities of American missionaries, which they correctly saw as a source of global connections for Nagas that short-circuited India, but incorrectly viewed as supportive of Naga nationalism. The government selectively refused to renew visas of missionaries departing for home leave, arguing that they undermined Naga loyalty to the Indian Union. Therefore, by 1953, there were no more American missionaries in the Naga Hills, and the American Baptist Convention transferred church leadership to indigenous clergy.[47]

[44] Thomas, *Evangelising the Nation*.

[45] Some Nagas remember the missionaries as joyless taskmasters: George Supplee, the schoolmaster in Kohima, "shouted a lot, [was] bald headed, [and] very arrogant." As a student, Phizo once "threatened to bite him." Niketu Iralu, interview with author, February 4, 2016.

[46] Copies of the *Naga Nation* and *Kewhira Kielie* from the collections of Rev. Keviyiekielie Linyïe, Kohima, Nagaland.

[47] Many Nagas continue to feel a degree of admiration for the American missionaries, a feeling that embodies a contrast with and critique of Hindu India: "The Hindu swamis did not climb the hills. The American missionaries did and the Nagas were impressed." Niketu Iralu, interview with author, February 4, 2016. For archival purposes, this means that the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society kept up correspondence with Naga clergy after 1953 under the category of "mission correspondence" in their collections now in Atlanta, GA. This correspondence provides a potentially rich resource for histories of the Naga Baptist Church, which are mostly written by Naga and Indian scholars who are often not able to easily travel to Atlanta.

The most successful Naga Baptist missionary was Longri Ao, born in Mokokchung in northern Nagaland in 1906. Longri's life and work contrast with the Naga nationalist narrative promulgated by Phizo and his supporters. Back in 1930, Longri pondered how the Lord's "ministry of reconciliation," which extended to all men – including "the British" – could align with the Indian independence movement's call for political separation from imperial rule.[48] This was not necessarily a resolvable question; rather, it was one that demonstrated how Christian beliefs and networks distanced Nagas from the mainstream Indian independence movement. Longri studied and taught at the Baptist Bible School in Jorhat Assam from 1930 to 1950, then spent seventeen years as a Baptist missionary to the Konyak Nagas in Northern Nagaland and the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), where he converted over 10,000 people; he also traveled extensively in the United States.[49] He eventually headed the Nagaland Baptist Church Council and had credibility as a successful missionary who "sought to make the private and public life of the largely Christian Nagaland state a testimony to the power of Christ."[50]

Under Longri's leadership, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council became a powerful institution in the region, though it remained wary about New Delhi's perception of it as potentially disloyal to the Indian government. In spite of their historic ties, American Baptists were hesitant to bring young Nagas to the United States for education.[51] In the early 1950s, they had helped Vichazelie (Challe) Iralu, a nephew of Phizo, go to Chicago for study, under the assumption that he would become a doctor and return home to serve his people. Instead, he remained in the United States, became an epidemiologist, and provided funding for Phizo's endeavors. Afterward, American Baptists only brought Nagas, such as

[48] Richard C. Beers, *Walk the Distant Hills: The Story of Longri Ao* (New York: Friendship Press, 1969), 24.

[49] Frederick S. Downs, entry for Longri Ao in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 25. Downs was born to American Baptist missionary parents in Assam in 1930, and was one of the last Americans to live in the Northeast, as a professor at Eastern Theological College in Jorhat, Assam; he was the vice-president of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India. Longri was a friend and colleague of Downs.

[50] Downs, Longri Ao entry, *Biographical Dictionary*, 25.

[51] Correspondence between George Supplee and Charles Pawsey, 1957–1964, Box 1, Charles Pawsey Papers, Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies Library, Cambridge, UK. Supplee forwarded his correspondence with Pawley regarding Phizo to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Longri, over to the United States for short-term theological training and were adamant that they return home.[52]

American Baptist heritage connected Nagas to a wider global community. Christianity provided a powerful modernizing discourse, legible to the Western world, that linked Nagas to wider global networks. However, fearful of New Delhi's wrath, the Naga Baptist Church did not directly support Naga nationalist claims-making.[53]

Language and education are important tools of conversion and nation-making.[54] Missionary education policies provided many Nagas with the ability to speak, read, and write in English.[55] Naga nationalists produced masses of field notes and atrocity lists, typed up in English on a typewriter that the insurgents had with them in the jungle during the first decade of insurgency (1954–1964).[56] These lists were written to be circulated to Western audiences, secretly handed to some of the few journalists who were allowed in the region, given to Indian and Western advocates whom Nagas used in their pursuit of independence, and published in Naga histories.

While these documents may include elements of British colonial bureaucratic organization, they also correspond to Naga traditions of reciting detailed family genealogies in the form of oral lists.[57] Naga nationalism worked with and adapted the elements at hand – the geography of the Naga Hills as both an excluded area and a strategic junction; the experience of empire, war, Christian conversion, and

[52] Longri Ao correspondence, 1960. Reel 426 J, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society Papers, Atlanta, GA (hereafter, "ABFMS").

[53] From at least 1975, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council received funding from the Indian government for its reconciliation efforts. Longri Ao and Kenneth Kerhuo to Nagaland State Government, February 7, 1975; Longri and Kenneth Kerhuo to Nagaland State Government, April 2, 1975. VK Nuh Papers, Dimapur, Nagaland.

[54] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchman: The Modernization of Rural France, 1970–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); F. K. Ekechi, "Colonialism and Christianity in West Africa: The Igbo Case, 1900–1915," *Journal of African History* 12, no. 1 (1971): 103–15. There is a long tradition of missionaries translating the Bible into vernacular languages, and Supplee tried to do so in Tenyidie. However, his language skills were not sufficient (Niketu Iralu, author interview, December 23, 2018).

[55] George Supplee correspondence, 1940–1953, Reel 348, ABFMS.

[56] Lists found in Zapuvise Lhousa collections, Mesoma, Nagaland; VK Nuh collections, Dimapur, Nagaland; Guthrie Michael Scott Collections, Weston Library, Oxford, UK. They are also printed as appendices in many Naga nationalist pamphlets, particularly A. Z. Phizo, *The Fate of the Naga People: An Appeal to the World* (London: The Africa Bureau, 1960).

[57] Michael Heneise, *Agency and Knowledge in Northeast India: The Life and Landscape of Dreams* (London: Routledge, 2018).

English-language education. These elements formed the critical geopolitics of sovereignty in the hills, posing a critique of the international legal structures of decolonization that recognized some people-territorial matches as sovereign states, but not others.

TRIBE, CONSTITUTION, AND CATEGORIZATION

The sovereign document of postcolonial India, its constitution, includes a list or schedule of castes and tribes who have specialized relationships to the Indian state. On their political incorporation into India, Nagas were broken down into a series of tribes – Angami (Phizo's tribe), Ao, Konyak, Lotha, Rengma, etc. – and were not listed as Nagas. When the Naga Hills became the Indian state of Nagaland in 1963, it did so under Article 371a of the constitution, which gave it special status: non-Naga Indians cannot legally own land in most of Nagaland; when they travel there, they must apply for an Inner Line Permit (a holdover from Nagaland's colonial past), and foreigners must register with the police.[58]

The term "Naga Nation" predated Indian independence and contrasted with the notion of Nagas as a premodern "tribal" people.[59] Imperial rulers defined Nagas (as well as Pashtuns in Afghanistan or American Indians)[60] as a "tribe" rather than a "nation" in order to legitimize their conquest. In North America, as imperial expansion hardened into settler colonialism, American Indian nations also came to

[58] For the colonial and postcolonial evolution of an "Inner Line" and the differences between the Fifth and Sixth Scheduled Tribes, see Duncan McDui-Ra, *Northeast Migrants in Delhi: Race, Refuge and Retail* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 36–38. There are a number of other territorial exceptions under the Indian Constitution, such as the eight Union Territories (which include the former Portuguese colony of Goa, the former French colony of Pondicherry, and Kashmir since 2019). The precarity of these exceptional statuses can always be revoked. Article 371a controls Nagaland at the same time that it protects Naga land–ownership.

[59] The nation-versus-tribe debate regarding Naga political identity is a lively one in both scholarly and popular Naga circles. For a recent synthesis on the construction of the category of "tribe" in Northeast India, see Jelle J. P. Wouters, "Tribe," in *The Routledge Companion to Northeast India*, ed. Jelle J. P. Wouters and Tanka B. Subba (London: Routledge, 2022), 463–68. For an example of the public debate in Nagaland, see "Did Tribes Exist before Colonialism?" editorial, *Morung Express*, August 10, 2022. Available at www.morungexpress.com/did-tribes-exist-before-colonialism.

[60] The British colonial chronicler, Mountstuart Elphinstone, draws comparisons between Pashtuns and American Indians in *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (London: Bentley, 1842). For the "tribalization" of Afghan society, see Benjamin Hopkins, *Making of Modern Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 23–33. I am grateful to Elisabeth Leake for help articulating this point.

be termed "tribes," diminishing their political status.[61] Globally, rendering peoples into tribes subordinated them within the colonial expansionist and postcolonial consolidation projects. In the Indian context, a Naga nation escaped the structures of caste in a Hindu-dominated society and rejected the Indian constitutional category of "tribe," with its connotations of colonial anthropological classification.[62] The concept of "nation" also linked Nagas to the idea of a biblically chosen people, such as the Hebrew nation of Israel.[63]

In Northeast India, the term "tribe" was a marker of difference that could indicate either subordination or separation, depending on the perspective. Some Nagas as well as other Northeastern ethnic groups embraced aspects of tribal categorization and identity for their own goals. For instance, a slogan for Mizo nationalists in nearby Mizoram, another Northeastern region, declared: "Long live Tribal Unity, We want [a] Hill State, We want [an] Eastern Frontier State, Down with Traitors, Separation is the only Salvation."[64]

While the concept of a Naga (Christian) nation occupies the political geography of a Nagaland as a strategic junction, the categorization of

[61] Elizabeth Colson, "Political Organization in Tribal Societies: A Cross-Cultural Comparison," *American Indian Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1986): 5–19.

[62] On caste, see Thomas, *Evangelising the Nation*, 194–95. Accepting the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution, which applies to Nagas, was one of the requirements of receiving an Indian State of Nagaland in 1963, and remains controversial today, though Nagas appreciate that it means that non-Nagas cannot buy property in Naga areas. On the discourses of "tribe" versus "adivasi," see Willem Van Schendel, "The Dangers of Belonging: Tribes, Indigenous Peoples and Homelands in South Asia," in *The Politics of Belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, ed. Daniel J. Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta (London: Routledge, 2011), 19–43. On redefining tribal identity to criminalize the movement of peoples in the wake of partition, see Sarah Gandee, "Criminalizing the Criminal Tribe: Partition, Borders, and the State in India's Punjab, 1947–1955," *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 38, no. 1 (2018): 557–72. Across much of the world (though not necessarily in India) the term "tribe" often has a pejorative connotation; see Archie Mafeji, "The Ideology of Tribalism," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1971): 253–61.

[63] Some Nagas feel an affinity with Israel through evangelical Christian theology and a sense of shared national struggle – they declared independence within a year of each other, and both are small, religiously oriented states/states-in-waiting with antagonistic neighbors of a different religion. In addition, certain Mizos from neighboring Mizoram and Manipur have called themselves a "lost tribe of Israel," and were recognized as such by the Israeli chief rabbi; some have since emigrated to Israel on that basis. Eetta Prince-Gibson, '"Lost' Indian Jews Come Home," *Tablet Magazine*, December 12, 2017. Available at www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/120195/lost-indian-jews-come-home.

[64] Report of the Mizo district for the second half of October 1961, TAD/Com/24, Assam State Archives.

Nagas as "a collection of tribes" who inhabit India's Northeast not only defined them in early-twentieth-century anthropological monographs but also in the Indian constitution. Verrier Elwin, a British anthropologist who took Indian citizenship after independence, became Prime Minister Nehru's advisor for the North East Frontier Agency and advised on the special provisions for the scheduled tribes' section of the Indian constitution.[65] He believed that the tribal areas of the Northeast should be kept separate from the rest of India so that tribal peoples could be slowly modernized and Indianized in the "right" way, and lured away from what he perceived as their racial affinity with China and affective sympathy with the British Empire.

Just as the term "tribe" can cut in two different directions, and just as there are two dueling narratives of the Simon Commission as well as two distinct political geographies for Nagaland, there are also two different sets of scholarship on modern Nagaland, "modern," meaning after the Anglo-American colonial and missionary encounter and its consequent defining, categorizing, ruling, and writing about the region. One body of scholarship is that of empire. The second is that of nationalist claims-making. Interestingly, until relatively recently few "mainland" Indian scholars studied the Naga region. Decades of violence do not produce an accessible research site, and India's own historiographical nation-building project required writing Nagaland out of India rather than into it.[66]

British colonial officials and anthropologists (who were sometimes also colonial officials) and American Baptist missionaries either wrote about Nagaland or were the central subjects of the imperial works of scholarship. They were also the men and women "on the spot" when the Japanese invaded during the Second World War. As mentioned earlier, missionary George Supplee ran an army hospital, the Kohima school, and the printing press used for Naga newssheets. Anthropologist Ursula

[65] Ramachandra Guha, *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[66] For scholarship and its interaction with political contexts, see Jelle Wouters, *In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency: Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 20–22. For India's historiographical nation-building project, see Manu Goswami, "India as Bharat: A Territorial Nativist Vision of Nationhood, 1860–1880," chapter 6 in *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 165–208 and Rajeev Bhargava, "History, Nation and Community: Reflections on Nationalist Historiography of India and Pakistan," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 4 (January 2000): 193–200.

Graham Bower Betts led a Naga reconnaissance unit. Colonial administrator Charles Pawsey liaised with the British colonial army and the Naga population, drafting native translators and laborers. The reporting, correspondence, and monographs of Bower Betts, Pawsey, Supplee, and their colleagues shaped how Westerners understood Nagas in the subsequent decades. Early-twentieth-century anthropology defined Nagas as premodern head-hunters, uncivilized tribal peoples in a forgotten corner of the world – residents of Zomia, the borderlands regions of Upland Southeast Asia, before the term was coined.[67] This imperial scholarship also came to shape elements of Nagas' own sense of history. On the shelves of nearly all libraries in the region, in many homes, and even at certain Nagaland state government promotion events, one finds copies of these anthropological texts, which have maintained continued relevance, even as they become dated.

The second dominant, documented set of scholarship for understanding Nagaland has been written by Nagas themselves, particularly those who engaged in the nationalist struggle and its concomitant peace negotiations. These writings are based on personal records from the Naga nationalist movement (many of which are included in the source base for *States-in-Waiting*) but do not always conform to Western-discipline modes of history writing – they are not necessarily linear in narrative nor do they have extensive citations.[68] Their primary audience has been an

[67] Nagaland is a prime example of Bernard S. Cohn's Anthropologyland. Cohn, "History and Anthropology: The State of Play," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980): 198–221. The fieldwork of J. H. Hutton, J. P. Mill, U. V. G. Betts, and C. von Fürer-Haimendorf was extensive and detailed, making the Nagas one of the best-studied tribal peoples. For an overview of their work, see Andrew C. West, "Nineteenth Century Naga Material Culture," *Newsletter* (Museum Ethnographers Group), no. 18 (June 1985): 21–34. While there was little anthropological fieldwork in Nagaland from the 1950s to the 1990s due to the violence, since 2000, when travel restrictions were relaxed, quite a lot of anthropology has focused on material culture, language, and identity. Vibha Joshi, *A Matter of Belief: Christian Conversion and Healing in Northeast India* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 259–65, includes a thorough bibliographic essay.

[68] Zapuvisie Lhousa, *Strange Country: My Experience in Naga Nationalism* (Kohima: Self-Published, 2015); V. K. Nuh, *My Native Country: The Land of the Nagas* (Guwahati, Assam: United, 2002); V. K. Nuh, *Naga Church and Politics* (Kohima: Self-Published, 1986); V. K. Nuh and Wetshokhrolo Lasuh, *The Naga Chronical* (New Delhi: Regency, 2002); Kaka Iralu, *Uncovering the Political Lies That Have Covered Indo-Naga History from the 1940s to the Present* (Kohima: Self-Published, 2014); Kaka Iralu, *The Naga Saga: A Historical Account of the Sixty-Two Years Indo-Naga War and the Story of Those Who Were Never Allowed to Tell It* (Kohima: Self-Published, 2009); Visier Sanyü with Richard Broome, *A Naga Odyssey: Visier's Long Way Home* (Melbourne: Monash

internal Naga one, even as they were written in an effort to "get the story out." What historical narrative gains the largest public and expert acceptance? Frequently, that which produces the easiest-to-read sources. Nagas themselves know this, which is why these books are written in English and include large appendices of historical documents. The same geopolitical and epistemological orders that make "Where is Nagaland?" and "What is the population of Nagas?" seemingly impossible questions to answer are mirrored in the marginalization of these histories. Since they deal with a political geography that centers on Naga sovereignty and Indian "colonialism," they do not tell stories that a non-Naga audience is easily equipped to comprehend; they are also often self-published and collaboratively written.[69] The results of this marginalization – being strategically forgotten, being rendered invisible – are characteristics shared with its subject, but these books are not notes from Zomia. They articulate an indigenous claim of sovereignty that began in contact with, and in the conquest by, Western empire.

STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

For all the contestation surrounding their status within India, Naga nationalists are emphatic about what they are not – a secessionist movement – because Phizo's political party, the Naga National Council, declared independence on August 14, 1947, *the day before* India gained its independence.[70] The Naga National Council made its declaration to the United Nations (UN), in a telegram that is often reprinted in Naga nationalist document collections. Naga nationalists allege that they received a return telegram from the UN acknowledging that the international institution had received their declaration of independence.[71] In this narrative, the receipt – now lost – provided literal international

University Publishing, 2017); Charles Chasie, *The Naga Imbroglio: A Personal Perspective* (Kohima: Standard Printers & Publishers, 1999); among others.

[69] While this is often not mentioned in the books themselves, some of them are written with friends and family to make the best use of different levels of knowledge of the subject and degrees of formal education within a community. While this sublimated group-authorship does not correspond to certain Western public scholarly norms, it does align with how large academic historical projects may employ a host of researchers who may be mentioned in the acknowledgments but are not on the title page.

[70] For a detailed study of the early Naga nationalist movement, see Jelle Wouters, "Difficult Decolonization: Debates, Divisions, and Deaths within the Naga Uprising, 1944–1963," *Journal of North East India Studies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1–8.

[71] Kaka Iralu and Kolaso Chase, interviews with author, December 25, 2018.

recognition. Over time, loss of that receipt became an emblem for the tragic outcome of their struggle, of the United Nations' deliberate ignorance of their existence, and of Nagas' own failure to keep their claim safe from internal dissent.

In late June 1947, before both declarations of independence, the governor of Assam, Akbar Hydari, signed a nine-point accord with the Naga National Council. The agreement gave administration of the Naga Hills to the National Council, promoted the aspiration of bringing "all Nagas" in all territories "under one unified administrative" unit, and allowed for both sides to revisit the agreement in ten years.[72] Naga nationalists believed that the opportunity to revisit the Hydari Accord after a decade meant that India would respect Naga independence at that later date. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not read the Hydari Accord in that manner and never officially approved the agreement, which occurred before he was prime minister. In Naga nationalist narratives, the Hydari Accord joined the Memorandum to the Simon Commission and the missing UN telegram receipt in their collection of founding documents that provide validation for their claim.

Angami Zapu Phizo (narrowly) won the presidency of the Naga National Council in 1948 because many Nagas were frustrated with the Indian government's rejection of the Hydari accord. Alongside Phizo, the Council's secretary was Theyiechüthie Sakhrie, editor of the *Naga Nation*, who had attended university in Calcutta. Then in his early twenties, Sakhrie played the more moderate (or realistic) intellectual to Phizo's nationalist firebrand; from different clans, they were both Angami Nagas from Khonoma Village.[73]

Under Phizo's leadership, the Naga National Council held a plebiscite in May 1951, in which Nagas unanimously rejected the Indian Union.[74] Phizo traveled throughout the Naga Hills, drumming up support for an independent Nagaland. On a 1952 visit to Kütsapomi village in southern

[72] Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord (also known as the Hydari Accord), Kohima, June 26–28, 1947. Available at https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IN_470628_Naga-Akbar%20Hydari%20Accord.pdf.

[73] In 1953, the Assam government confiscated Sakhrie's extensive writings, which are still missing. Thomas, *Evangelising the Nation*, 103.

[74] The plebiscite, for which Phizo and the Naga nationalists went village to village collecting thumbprints representing a 99 percent vote for Naga independence, remains controversial in Indian accounts. For an overview, see Thomas, *Evangelising the Nation*, 110. For the details of how the Naga National Council (NNC) organized the plebiscite, see A. Sakhrie, *The Vision of T. Sakhrie for a Naga Nation* (Kohima: Self-Published, 2006), 11.

Nagaland, he emphasized Christianity, sovereignty, and education as the interlocking platform that supported Naga nationalism.[75] He also often discussed economic and material conservation as an important aspect in preserving Naga patrimony. For instance, he argued that bars of soap – an expensive, imported item – should be cut into strips and stored vertically, so that they did not needlessly dissolve in water and become mushy and useless.[76] Here, soap became an emblem for a rare, precious necessity that Nagas needed to preserve and guard, like their sovereignty. Phizo repeatedly preached national unity and resource conservation.[77]

In 1952, due to the success of Phizo's campaigning, Nagas boycotted the first Indian general election, refusing to be counted as Indian; in many Nagas' view, their refusal to vote made the application of the election results to the Naga Hills inherently undemocratic. After a joint visit of Nehru and U Nu of Burma to Kohima in 1953 (Nagas were banned from presenting petitions and therefore boycotted the event), Phizo turned to violence, threatening the physical safety of Nagas who worked for the Indian government.[78] As a result, the Indian government suspended rule of law in the Naga Hills and sent in the military, deploying approximately 40,000 troops.[79] In response, Phizo formed a rebel government, declaring the region the "People's Republic of Nagaland" (later renamed the "Federal Government of Nagaland"). He also established the Naga Home Guard to fight the Indian army, while the Naga National Council remained the nationalist political party.

Neither the war in the Naga Hills nor politics within the National Council went Phizo's way. Throughout the 1950s, the Indian government forcibly relocated the villages of his (alleged) supporters, with tactics reminiscent both of the British "villagization" processes used during the

[75] Arkotong Longkumer, "'Along Kingdom's Highway': The Proliferation of Christianity, Education, and Print amongst the Nagas in Northeast India," *Contemporary South Asia* 27, no. 2 (2019): 163.

[76] Versions of this anecdote were independently told by Zapuvise Lhousa, author interview, February 11, 2016; and by Visier Sanyü, author interview, December 25, 2018. Sanyü was repeating a story told to him by his older brother, Pericha Meyasatsu, who joined Phizo's movement.

[77] Umatic Film #2; regarding tobacco, Phizo "always said, do not waste matchsticks by lighting every so often; instead make a fire and light up your cigarettes."

[78] A fascinating revision of this meeting (on display at a 2014 Rwandan reconciliation exhibit) described Nehru's 1953 visit to Nagaland as a successful example of peaceful reconciliation. Thank you to Erin Mosely for sharing an image of this exhibit with me.

[79] Marcus Franke, *War and Nationalism in South Asia: The Indian State and the Nagas* (London: Routledge, 2009), 106.

concurrent Malayan Emergency and Nehru's forced relocation of communities following the Indian annexation of Hyderbad in South India in 1948.[80] For many Nagas, these violations also called to mind the Japanese army's invasion of their villages during the Second World War.[81] And within the Naga National Council itself, Sakhrie, who was willing to seek an accommodation with India, and Phizo fell out. In January 1956, Sakhrie was assassinated, allegedly on Phizo's orders. Subsequently that year, after losing control of his struggle against both the Indian government and Sakhrie's allies within the nationalist movement, Phizo left the Naga Hills, walking approximately 750 kilometers to East Pakistan, where he remained for four years.

From East Pakistan, Phizo sought external alliances and international attention. A 1958 field report written by Captain Perhicha Meyasetsu of the Naga Home Guard focused on the need to gain international visibility: "We requested [the Pakistanis] to help us to send abroad [lists of] Indian atrocities and [descriptions of] our tribulations to the wide world." Perhicha wrote that they had asked the Pakistanis to "send out these papers through their Ambassadors." From Pakistani intelligence, Nagas "received some confidential news ... that the UNO had accepted our appeals, [knew about] Indian atrocities and our announcement [of independence]" and was going to consider it. The institution would "also send some Observers" to Nagaland.[82] The United Nations did not respond to Naga nationalist appeals nor send in observers, but this report communicated how Naga nationalists wanted the UN to act; its reference to "Observers" may have been a wishful comparison to Kashmir, where there has been a UN observer mission since 1949. Even given Pakistan's aid in disseminating the atrocity lists, these lists had remarkable

[80] Robert Grainger Ker Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences in Malaya and Vietnam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966). Besides his key advisory role to the British and US forces in Malaya and Vietnam, Thompson had also served in the China-Burma-India theater during the Second World War, where he was a liaison officer for long-range penetration units in Burma. For Hyderbad, see Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), 98–100.

[81] The novels of Easterine Kire capture the legacies of the Second World War in the Naga Hills and their overtones for the subsequent experiences of violence and occupation: *A Terrible Matriarchy* (New Delhi: Zubaan Press, 2007); *Mari*; and *Bitter Wormwood* (New Delhi: Zubaan Press, 2014).

[82] All of the quotes in this paragraph are from: Captain Perhicha Meyasetsu, Naga Home Guard, to Kedahge, Government of Nagaland, April 18, 1958, Visier Sanyü Collections, Medziphema, Nagaland.

circulation for a nationalist movement that did not control its own mail delivery – though they never generated the recognition of a UN observer mission or committee hearing.

Captain Perhicha's report continued, noting that the Nagas had "learned that one Britisher named Mr. Graham Green[e] a journalist was arrested at Kuda (Dimapur) when he was coming to explore our country in 1956."[83] It is unlikely that Greene, who crisscrossed the globe, actually traveled to India, let alone to the Northeast, in 1956, though he was planning an overland journey to China via the Soviet Union in that year.[84] However, he had a global following as a critic of imperial wars against nationalist movements, particularly in Vietnam and Cuba. His novel *The Quiet American* (1955) eviscerated US covert intervention in the then-French war in Indochina, and he supported Fidel Castro during the Cuban revolution (1953–1959). The invocation of Greene linked Naga nationalism to a wider set of anticolonial nationalist liberation movements, particularly in Southeast Asia. This fit how Nagas themselves saw their struggle: as one of many torches in the "ring of fire burning all along the tropics."[85]

With Phizo in Pakistan, Nehru reached out to Phizo's Naga opponents. According to Naga nationalist accounts, this was not the first time Nehru had attempted to co-opt Naga leadership. During the dueling declarations of independence in August 1947, Nehru allegedly gave Phizo the signed blank check, asking him to name his price.[86] In Naga nationalist retelling of this encounter, Phizo refused to be bought off. However, other Nagas chose otherwise – not necessarily (or not only) for monetary reasons, but also because they wanted to make the best deal they could with the means they had. In time, the Indian government attempted to cut Phizo out of the political equation completely by negotiating an agreement with his political opponents.

How some degree of Naga autonomy would interact with the Indian constitution and linguistic-nationalist movements throughout India – particularly in contiguous Assam – was New Delhi's primary concern. These questions had dangerous repercussions for both Naga moderates and the

[83] Captain Meyasetsu to Kedage, April 18, 1958.
[84] Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene*, vol. 3 (New York: Viking, 2004), 73–74.
[85] Abdoulaye Ly, *Le masses africaines et l'actuelle condition humaine* [The African Masses and the Current Human Condition] (1956), 12, quoted in Todd Shepard, *Voices of Decolonization: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015), vii.
[86] Kolaso Chase and Kaka Iralu, interviews with author, December 25, 2018.

Indian government. In July 1960, the Naga People's Convention, a group of moderates under the leadership of Dr. Imkongliba Ao, negotiated a sixteen-point agreement with Nehru. This group, opponents of Phizo's, made a trade: instead of independence, Nagas would have a Naga state within the Indian Union.[87] Critics of Nehru argued that the creation of an Indian Naga state emboldened and exacerbated separatist demands throughout India, particularly elsewhere in the Northeast.[88] A year later, in August 1961, militant Naga nationalists assassinated Imkongliba Ao as he returned home from his medical clinic in Mokokchung, northern Nagaland.

While the agreement did establish a Naga state in India, Nehru refused to budge on the constitutional categorization of "tribe" as well as on Naga "integration" – the incorporation of all Naga territories (in Assam, NEFA, Manipur, and Burma) into one political unit, which had been discussed in the Hydari Accord.[89] From Nehru's perspective, these demands were too destabilizing to Indian domestic and regional security dynamics to even begin to address. However, leaving them out of the July 1960 sixteen-point agreement between the Naga People's Convention and the Indian government undermined the possibility of a lasting, peaceful settlement.

Interestingly, like his Naga nationalist opponents, Nehru saw the Naga claim through the lens of global decolonization. He wrote to Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the chief minister of Assam, suggesting that the Naga Hills needed the "largest possible autonomy" because any other attitude "will be contrary to what is happening in Africa."[90] "New States, big and small – and some very small – are appearing on the scene every few weeks as independent States. We support them and encourage them. We cannot

[87] "The 16-Point Agreement between the Government of India and the Naga People's Convention, 26 July 1960," UN Peace Agreements Database. Available at http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IN_600726_The%-20sixteen%20point%20Agreement_0.pdf.

[88] Subir Bhaumik, "Ethnicity, Ideology and Religion: Separatist Movements in India's Northeast," in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, ed. Satu P. Limaye, Mohan Malik, and Robert G. Wirsing (Honolulu, HI: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004), 225.

[89] The definition of Nagas as a collection of constitutionally listed tribes remains a source of anger in some corners within Nagaland. Interview with Akum Longchar, February 11, 2016.

[90] Jawaharlal Nehru to Bimala Prasad Chaliha, June 25, 1960, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers SG (post 1947). File 704, Part 3, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (hereafter "NNML").

therefore, oppose full autonomy" for the Naga Hills, he wrote. However, in spite of the need to show the world that India supported self-determination, he said that Nagaland would be part of India – but it would be a "special type of State" within the Indian Union.[91] "Naturally," he said, "[Naga] autonomy will be limited because of law and other conditions."[92] For security reasons, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958, which placed the territory under martial law, continued to apply (as it does as of this writing); and New Delhi administered Nagaland through the Ministry of External Affairs rather than the Home Ministry until 1972 – even as India categorized the Naga question as a "domestic," rather than an international, concern.

For the Indian government, the debates surrounding the creation of a Naga state in India were Indian political affairs. The issues of Sikh and Tamil nationalisms, linguistic movements throughout the country, particularly in neighboring Assam, as well as labor unrest in central India framed Nehru's negotiations with the Naga People's Convention.[93] In Nehru's declassified correspondence, during the summer of 1960, when he was articulating the prospects and limits of an Indian Naga state, the issue of Goa in Western India was not prominent. In Goa, India supported the nationalists against Portuguese empire and invaded a year later, making Goa an Indian Union territory (rather than a state). For Nehru, Goa was an international issue that needed to be made Indian, while Nagaland was an Indian issue that needed to escape international attention.

Obviously, the Naga question was a decolonization issue for Naga nationalists, who sought independence and international recognition. Less obviously, the context of global decolonization also framed the Naga question for the Indian prime minister, who had the most at stake in labeling the Naga claim a "domestic concern." Nehru was the person who had to deal with the fallout of creating a Naga "special state" within a country riddled with many other claims of difference or separateness, as

[91] Nehru to his Chief Ministers, August 1, 1960, File 705, Part 2, Nehru Papers SG, NNML.

[92] Nehru to Chaliha, June 25, 1960.

[93] Nehru to Sardar Guram Singh (Sikh nationalist) on the Indian government's refusal to recognize religion as a defining characteristic of an Indian state, July 8, 1960; Nehru to Chaliha on linguistic and anti-Bengali riots in Assam, July 12, 1960; Nehru to M. C. Chagla (ambassador to Washington, DC) on the Indian general strike, July 12, 1960; all in File 705, Part 1, Nehru Papers SG. Secession was not unconstitutional in India until 1963, when the 16th Amendment banned political parties from standing for elections if they had a secessionist platform – an amendment targeted at Tamil nationalists.

he called India's "fissiparous tendencies."[94] Against this background of Indian instability, Nehru decided to create an Indian Naga state in order to undermine the Naga claim to national independence and to pacify the territory. He did so while attempting to demonstrate his ostensible support for national liberation on the decolonizing African continent – being careful to separate the Naga claim from that of anticolonial nationalism.

CONCLUSION

Within postcolonial India, Nagas posed a fundamental challenge to state authority. They were the "mother of all insurgencies" and the first nationalist movement within the country to declare independence.[95] Over time, the "special-ness" of the Indian Naga state and the "exceptionalness" of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act were extended to other regions, particularly Kashmir and elsewhere in the Northeast, making Indian Nagaland a template for how the Indian government could deal with its unruly pieces. Outside of India, Nagas are one of many "tribal" or Fourth World peoples whose existence and political mobilization threaten not only empires but also both settler colonial and postcolonial states.[96] They likewise challenge Cold War ideological and developmentalist orders of so-called First, Second, and Third Worlds. Asking "Where is Nagaland?" in the process of global decolonization is not only asking a question about Nagas themselves. It is asking a question that makes visible the many nested claims within, and obscured by, each and every demand for national liberation.

During global decolonization, the international community – the United Nations, the United States, the Soviet Union, dissolving European empires, and new postcolonial states – came to recognize and therefore legitimize one slice of nationalist claims-making as legitimately "national" and capable of becoming postcolonial nation-states. This process led to difficult queries: "Whose nationalism is legitimate?"

[94] India's fissiparous tendencies were a repeated Nehruvian refrain and a theme expanded in Chapter 6, "Marching into the Great Wall of State."

[95] "Mother of all insurgencies": This phrase/trope is frequently used (without attribution) to describe Naga nationalism in Indian accounts; e.g., Samir Kumar Das, "Regions Within but Democracy Without: A Study of India's North-East," in *Rethinking State Politics in India: Regions within Regions*, ed. Ashutosh Kumar (London: Routledge, 2011), 250.

[96] George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1974).

"What is the "correct" political unit (i.e., nation) deserving of independence?" The sovereign recognition provided by a postcolonial, state-based international order was built upon national liberation for some and the subsequent exclusion of others, such as Nagas.

Naga nationalist claims-making had a specific history derived from Nagas' geographic location, imperial confrontation, missionary encounter, and wartime experiences, as well as their anthropological and Indian constitutional categorization. At the same time, the Naga claim is emblematic of the general challenge states-in-waiting posed to the international community as decolonization transformed international order, revising and then entrenching hierarchies of power. Peoples such as Nagas were forgotten and ignored because international attention directed toward them would have upset the balance of decolonization. Recognition of the Naga claim, its critical geopolitics, and that of other similar claims made by "marginal" or "minority" peoples would have redrawn the postcolonial map in ways that the international legal order and emergent postcolonial nation-states desperately and successfully sought to avoid.

Angami Zapu Phizo himself understood the weakness of a sovereign claim when virtually no one outside of a region realizes it exists; he left Nagaland in order to place his case before an international, Western audience. The following chapter features the networks of advocacy that connected Naga nationalist claims-making to international politics, and Phizo's efforts to mobilize them. Yet these networks – which included some of the same missionaries and anthropologists who had spent their careers in the Naga Hills under empire – were imperial remnants rather than catalysts for subsequent decolonizations.

Phizo left Nagaland so that Naga nationalist claims-making could utilize international advocacy to confront the structural limits of an international system in which national self-determination did not become, in practice, a universal right. This tactic was emblematic of nationalist claims-making throughout the postcolonial world – with the African continent the epicenter of these upheavals in the early 1960s. The United Nations' 1945 Charter, its 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People all focused on the rights of states and the rights of individuals within states. None of these structuring documents addressed "the rights of peoples who did not happen to be in the mainstream of, or [reject the] control of, a state" – such as

Nagas.[97] In the words of David Maybury-Lewis, an indigenous-rights activist who supported Naga claims-making, as well as an anthropologist of Latin America, born to a family of imperial civil servants in British India and therefore intimately familiar with this conundrum through professional advocacy, scholarly expertise, and family heritage: "It is the lack of correspondence between states and peoples … or between states and nations … that is the difficulty." International institutions "have so systematically [yet] unsuccessfully attempted to suppress these units of identity" since they destabilize their member states.[98]

[97] David Maybury-Lewis, *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World* (New York: Viking, 1992), 273. *Millennium* is the accompanying book to a PBS/BBC 1992 television series of the same name (hosted by Maybury-Lewis) focused on indigenous groups and their struggles to find accommodation in the "modern world."

[98] Maybury-Lewis, *Millennium*, 273.