Geographies of Naga (Inter)nationalism 1946-2022

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Abstract

This thesis is a political and historical geography of Naga (inter)nationalist intellectual thought from 1946 to 2022. For the Nagas, the administrative end of colonialism did not herald political emancipation. Instead, the transfer of power from British to Indian rule in 1947 marked the beginning of a continuing struggle for Naga self-determination. The history of that struggle is a story of numerous complementary and contradictory attempts to create and sustain the perception of the Nagas as international actors in order to claim self-determination. The principal challenge facing these efforts has been to shape Naga identities and spatial imaginaries according to hegemonic norms as to what it means to be considered 'international', while simultaneously adapting these norms to the reality of Naga life. This thesis explores how Naga groups have attempted to chart a course between these two poles, and in so doing construct alternative, internationally legible, geopolitical projects for the protection of the Naga community. This study engages with theoretical issues which sit at the intersection between post-, de-, and anticolonial geographies scholarship and the geographies of internationalism. These include: the relationship between nationalism, internationalism, and colonialism, the role of the state in subaltern geopolitical imaginaries, and the relationship between political legitimacy and temporal and spatial scale. In doing so, this thesis offers conceptual leverage and empirical depth to geographers' understanding of the internationalist practices of subaltern geopolitical actors.

Responding to calls to provincialise the histories and geographies of both the 'international' and the 'remotely global', this study seeks to understand how Naga nationalists have conceived of 'the international' and their place within it. Through archival, digital, and interview methodologies, this thesis charts a shift in the registers used by Naga (inter)nationalists to articulate their political claim, from a postcolonial politics of modernity, statehood, and

recognition, towards a decolonial politics of Indigeneity. After analysing the conditions for the emergence of the Naga nationalist movement in the colonial period, I describe the geopolitical thought and praxis of one of its principal architects: the late anticolonial nationalist Angami Zapu Phizo. I explore in particular his efforts to articulate an alternative theory of the Naga state, before turning to examine how, since the 1990s, Naga groups have recast the Naga political struggle as part of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement. I illustrate how engagement with global Indigeneity has underpinned activists' efforts to reshape nationalist imaginaries and produce Naga space at multiple scales – including by imagining futures outside the constraints of the Westphalian state. Finally, I draw on scholarship which understands performance as embodied memory to show how contemporary Naga nationalists use performance to re-enact, re-fashion, and re-fuse the colonial archive, to naturalise particular territorial projects, and to articulate (inter)nationality. I conclude by reflecting on the longer-term genealogies of Naga (inter)nationalism. I argue that practices of internationalism are integral to the construction of Naga national identities and spatial imaginaries and thus make the case for situating and diversifying the histories and geographies of internationalism to account for such alternative foci of internationalist activity.

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Table of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
ABFMS	American Baptist Foreign Mission Society
AFSPA	Armed Forces Special Powers Act
AIPP	Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact
BL	British Library (London)
BOD	Bodleian Libraries (Oxford)
BNA	British National Archives (London)
ADVN	Archive for Social Movements (Antwerp)
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CSAS	Centre of South Asian Studies (Cambridge)
DOCIP	Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research, and Information (Geneva/Online)
EMRIP	United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGN	Federal Government of Nagaland
FNR	Forum for Naga Reconciliation
GOI	Government of India
GON	Government of Nagaland
GNF	Global Naga Forum
INC	Indian National Congress
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
NARC	Naga Archives and Research Centre
NEFA	North Eastern Frontier Agency
NHD	Naga Hills District
NHDTC	Naga Hills District Tribal Council
NID	Naga Independence Day
NNC	Naga National Council
NPC	Naga People's Convention
NPG	Naga Political Group

NPMHR	Naga People's Movement for Human Rights
NSA	Nagaland State Archives (Kohima)
NSCN-IM	National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah
NSCN-K	National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang
NSF	Naga Students' Federation
NWS	Naga Women's Society
NSW	Naga Solidarity Walk
NYM	Naga Youth Movement
RIIN	Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland
SSC	Subaltern Studies Collective
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TOK	The Times of Kohima
TNN	The Naga Nation
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNPFII	United Nations Permeant Forum on Indigenous Issues
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation
WC-NNPG	Working Group Naga National Political Groups
WGIP	United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations

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Chapter 1 | Introducing Naga (inter)nationalism

On 26 July 1960, Angami Zapu Phizo ('A. Z.' Phizo) rose to address a crowded room of journalists and officials, both Indian and British, in a 'dingy office' on the Vauxhall Bridge Road, London for an 'International Press Conference'.[1] Dressed in a pale blue three-piece suit[2] and 'wearing a long thin beard',[3] the 53-year-old President of the Naga National Council (the 'NNC') cut a slight figure next to the press conferences' chair: the anti-apartheid campaigner and Anglican priest, Rev. Michael Scott.[4] Introducing the Naga leader to a restless crowd of more than fifty people, Scott began by drawing parallels between Phizo and Hastings Banda, Kenneth Kaunda, and Kwame Nkrumah.[5] One day soon, Scott told the audience, Phizo would emulate the achievements of these African anticolonial nationalist leaders and realise independence for his people.[6] Next, Phizo took his turn at the dais:

> I have come to this country on behalf of the Nagas to tell the people of Britain, and through them, the people of the whole world, of a terrible tragedy that has overtaken my country. I have come here because we found ourselves helpless in the hands of superior forces.[7]

[1]A. Z. Phizo: Obituary, *The Independent,* 3 May 1990.

[2]Mysterious Mr. Phizo talks of murder, *The Express,* 27 July 1960.

[3]Charges Against Indian Army: Nagaland 'Atrocities', *The Guardian,* 27 July 1960.

[4]Naga Leader Complains of Atrocities, *The Times,* 27 July 1960.

[5]Pieter Steyn, *Zapuphizo: Voice of the Nagas* (London: Routledge, 2002). p.114.

[6]ibid; albeit only Kwame Nkrumah represented an independent state at this point.

[7]Statement by A.Z. Phizo, 26 July 1960, British National Archives, Kew (BNA)/Records of the Prime Minister's Office (PREM)/11/3017.

Speaking haltingly in a 'low voice',[8] Phizo described his arrival in Britain six weeks earlier to find 'a solution so that the bloodshed, starvations, and sufferings in Nagaland may soon end'. Banging the table in front of him,[9] the NNC leader claimed that Naga tensions with India had begun twelve years prior, following the 'death of Mahatma Gandhi'.[10] Since then, the Nagas had been subject to 'terrible atrocities, shameful acts, far beyond the modern nations will [sic] like to believe', including the 'massacr[ing]' of 'men, women and children'.[11] Expressed in short staccato sentences, Phizo made a 'particular appeal to the people of India':

> We should not quarrel. We should not try to kill each other… Remember, we were both subject people once… Is it an honourable policy for free India now trying to divide a small nation like the Nagas? Once Nagaland was self-sufficient but now starvation abounds… Forced starvation must be stopped. Killing must be stopped. Raping women and forced prostitution must be stopped. Forced labour must be stopped. Concentration Camps must be brought to an end. Torture of the people must be stopped. [12]

The NNC president then made three demands: for an immediate cease-fire across the Naga Hills, for the establishment of 'Public Commission of the Nagas and India' to investigate atrocities against the Nagas, and for the 'world press' to be allowed to see the situation in Nagaland for themselves'.[13] He concluded by reiterating his appeal to the people of Britain,

[8]Charges Against Indian.

[9]Mysterious Mr. Phizo.

[10]Charges Against Indian.

[11]Phizo statement, 26 July 1960, BNA/PREM/11/3017.

[12]ibid.

[13]ibid.

India, and the whole world to help resolve the 'differences between India and Nagas'.[14] The Nagas, Phizo claimed, were 'willing to abide by any reasonable and just solution'.[15]

When his speech had finished, Phizo held aloft his 34-page manifesto '*THE FATE OF THE NAGA PEOPLE: An Appeal to the World'*.[16] The pamphlet was quickly distributed to the audience. It asserted that Nagaland was an independent sovereign state, entirely separate from India.[17] The press conference quickly 'became stormy'[18] as Phizo refused to answer multiple questions about himself – who was financing him? how he had reached London? where would he go next?[19] There was one question, however, that Phizo was eager to answer. When asked whether he was seeking 'autonomy or independence for his country', Phizo was adamant: the Nagas had been independent long before the independence of India. They merely sought a return to the status quo.[20]

Phizo's 'appeal to the world' fell on deaf ears. Despite prominent coverage in Indian and British newspapers and provoking a series of questions to Nehru on the subject from Indian MPs in the Lok Sabha,[21] interest in Phizo's press conference was quickly

[14]ibid.

[15]Charges Against Indian.

[16]Naga Leader Complains.

[17]Angami Zapu Phizo, *The Fate of the Naga People: An Appeal to the World* (1960), British Library, London (BL)/Collections W. G. Archer (Archer)/Mss Eur/F236/230.

[18]Mysterious Mr. Phizo.

[19]ibid.

[20]Naga Leader Complains.

[21]Mr Nehu Answers Questions on Mr Phizo in Lok Sabha, Press Release (No. 108), Information Service of India, 5 August 1960 and P.M's Statement in Lok Sabha on Mr A. Z. Phizo, Press Release (No. 107), Information Service of India, 4 August 1960, BNA/Dominions Office and Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Files (DO)/196/60.

eclipsed by events. Not least among them the Indian government's announcement – made the very same day – that they were to establish a federal state of Nagaland within the Indian Union.[22] In a telegram to Scott four days earlier, Nehru had branded Phizo's proposals as 'quite unacceptable' and refused to recognise the NNC leader as the legitimate representative of the Naga people.[23] By the time of Phizo's second 'International Press Conference' in January 1962 (also held in London), the NNC leader was able to command an audience of just ten people.[24] The unsatisfactory nature of these early experiences with the 'international political scene' – Phizo would tell his biographer decades later – 'prompted within him a belief that an entirely different approach was taken to politics and diplomacy in the corridors of power in London from those he had left behind' in the Naga Hills.[25] If he 'wished to further his cause', Phizo realised, he would have to 'gear his thoughts' to speak to the concerns of those in 'Europe', 'across the Atlantic' or perhaps even China.[26]

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Phizo's first 'International Press Conference' hints at the conundrum of scale which the so-called 'Naga issue' provokes and with which this thesis is concerned. Naga nationalists and their supporters have persistently asserted that the Indo-Naga conflict is an *international* rather than a domestic Indian concern – a claim captured in the title of Michael Scott's own 1966 manifesto for

[22]Naga Leader Complains.

[23]Onward Telegram (No. 1434) from Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) to Delhi, 28 July 1960, BNA/DO/196/60.

[24]Letter to Mrs Walton (South Asia Section) from Miss Butler (CRO), 21 January 1962, BNA/DO/196/60.

[25]Steyn, *Zapuphizo,* p.116.

[26]ibid.

realising peace in Nagaland: '*The Nagas: India's Problem, Or the World's?*[27] This claim was initially articulated via Phizo's assertion that any negotiations between the Nagas and India were those between two nation-states. Today, the Naga nationalist movement is divided into numerous political factions commonly known by those on the ground as the Naga Political Groups (or the 'NPGs').[28] I discuss some of the different NPGs in further detail in the next section. However, these factions *all* claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the Naga people and – as Jelle Wouters describes – all are engaged in an ongoing 'struggle' amongst themselves over 'historical legitimacy, ideological differences, leadership, and territorial and tribal domination within the broader Indo-Naga conflict'.[29] Even when renouncing their demand for statehood, however, the various NPGs also continue to maintain that any resolution to the 'Naga Imbroglio' must recognise the distinctive nature of the Nagas' putatively international character.[30] Phizo and the NPGs' vision for the Nagas' geopolitical future thus hinges on the Nagas' international identity. The history and geography of Naga efforts to achieve self-determination is, at its core, an ongoing story of varied attempts to create and sustain the perception of the Nagas as international actors. The central challenge for the Nagas across nearly a century has been to shape Naga identities and spatial imaginaries according to hegemonic norms as to what it means to be considered 'international',

[27]Michael Scott, *The Nagas: India's Problem, Or The World's* (London: Author, 1966), Bodleian Libraries, Oxford (BOD)/Archive of David Astor (Astor)/MSS.15363/262. I describe Phizo's relationship with Scott in Chapter 5.

[28]The phrase 'Naga Political Groups ('NPGs') was widely used both by my interlocutors and Naga newspapers.

[29]Jelle Wouters, *In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency: Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India* (Oxford: OUP). p. 3.

[30]'Naga Imbroglio' is used by Chasie to describe the continued failure of the Indo-Naga negotiations to reach an agreement. Charles Chasie, *The Naga Imbroglio: A Personal Perspective* (Kohima: Kohima Standard Printers and Publishers, 1999).

while simultaneously adapting these norms according to their circumstances on the ground. This thesis explores the differing ways Naga groups have attempted to chart a course between these two extremes.

Drawing upon calls to provincialize the histories and geographies of both the 'international'[31] and the 'remotely global',[32] this study seeks to understand how Naga nationalists have conceived of 'the international' and their place within it throughout the last nearly eight decades. To explore how practices of internationalism have shaped the development of Naga national identities and spatial imaginaries, I adopt the written formulation '(inter)national' – one which speaks to the processual slippage between articulations and imaginaries of Naga nationalism and their international dimensions. As I show in the chapters that follow, attending to the histories and geographies of Naga (inter)nationalism raises a number of conceptual issues which speak directly to scholarship within political and historical geography, including the spatialities and temporalities of political legitimacy, de-, post-, and anti-colonialism, and internationalism.

1. Between instability and stasis: the Naga self-determination struggle

Today, the Nagas comprise 3-4 million people occupying a highland region of approximately 120,000 square kilometres either side of the Indo-Myanmar border, in the Indian states of Nagaland,[33] Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, and in Sagaing Region and Kachin State in

[31]Ali Raza, 'Provincializing the International: Communist Print Worlds in Colonial India', *History Workshop Journal* 89 (2020) 140-153.

[32]Antoinette Burton, 'Not Even Remotely Global? Method and Scale in World History', *History Workshop Journal* 64 (2007) 323-338.

[33]'Nagaland' is used compendiously by Naga communities to refer to: (1) the Indian State of Nagaland established in 1963; (2) Naga nationalists' anticipated independent state of Nagaland (made up of all Naga inhabited areas across India and Myanmar); and (3) the broader Naga homeland (consisting of much the

Myanmar (see figure 1).[34] Community oral histories describe the Nagas' belief that their ancestors migrated to their current location from Mongolia and China in the North and from present-day Myanmar in the East.[35] British annexation of the Naga Hills began in 1832, motivated by a desire to prevent Naga raids on tea plantations in the neighbouring Brahmaputra Valley. For most of the period of British rule, the Nagas experienced a comparatively 'light touch' form of colonialism vis-à-vis the rest of the subcontinent: the Naga Hills were excluded from the political and legal system operating across the rest of British India, while a shifting boundary known as the 'Inner Line' restricted movement between the hills and the plains below.[36] This period also saw the gradual ossification of Naga tribal identities, assisted by British efforts to define the 'peoples' they were colonising, and the emergence in turn of a pan-Naga consciousness.[37]

For the Nagas – like many minority groups in South Asia – the administrative end of colonialism did not herald political emancipation.[38] Instead, the transfer of power from British to

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same area). When I use the term 'Nagaland' in this thesis, my intended meaning is typically clear from the context. Where it is not, I have clarified the sense in which I use the term.

[34]On the difficulties of estimating the number of Naga people, see Sanjib Baruah, 'Confronting Constructionism: Ending India's Naga War', *Journal of Peace Research* 40 (2003) 321-338.

[35]Vibha Joshi, 'The Micropolitics of Borders: The Issue of Greater Nagaland (or Nagalim)', in *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia,* ed, by. David Gellner (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), pp.163–193.

[36]Imdad Hussain, 'Inner Line', in *The Routledge Companion to Northeast India,* ed. by Jelle Wouters and Tanka Subba (London: Routledge), pp.268-272.

[37]Jelle Wouters, 'Tribe', in *Routledge Companion to Northeast India*, ed. by Wouters and Subba, pp. 463-468.

[38]On the incomplete nature of decolonisation across South Asia, see Jessica Namakkal, *Unsettling Utopia: The Making and Unmaking of French India* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2020). On decolonisation in other, 'tribal' areas of India, see Amit Prakash, 'Decolonisation and Tribal Policy in Jharkhand: Continuities with Colonial Discourse', *Social Scientist* 27 (1999) 113-139.

Indian rule marked the beginning of a nearly eight-decade long struggle for Naga self-determination and against military subjugation at the hands of the postcolonial Indian state (see Appendix A for a timeline of the Naga self-determination movement). In 1947, the NNC, led by Phizo, declared Naga independence via a memorandum to the United Nations ('UN'),[39] and sought to establish a sovereign Naga state, led by the Federal Government of Nagaland ('FGN').[40] In 1951, the Nagas again affirmed their desire for independence through a plebiscite in which 99.9% of Nagas reportedly voted in favour.[41] The vote was derided as illegitimate and dismissed by Indian officials in Delhi. Following Indian military occupation of the Naga Hills, Phizo attempted to take the Nagas' claim to the UN, travelling via East Pakistan and Switzerland, before arriving in London on 12 June 1960.[42] Six weeks later, Phizo gave his 'International Press Conference'. Despite (or perhaps because of) the support of a network of western advocates and Christian internationalists – including Michael Scott – the Naga claim went unheard in the UK.[43] Phizo's dream of speaking before the UN General Assembly ('UNGA') also went unrealised. Save for advocacy trips to Germany and the United States (and a brief sojourn to Pakistan), the NNC leader remained in London for the rest of his life.[44]

[39]NNC Declaration of Naga Independence, Cable to the United Nations, 14 August 1947, in *The Naga Chronicle*, ed. by V. K. Nuh and Wetshokhrolo Lasuh (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2016), p.121.

[40]As I discuss in Chapter 5, the FGN was established in 1956, nine years after the NNC's independence declaration.

[41]Dolly Kikon, 'Engaging Naga nationalism', *Economic and Political Weekly* ('EPW') 40 (2005) 2833–2837. I discuss the reliability of the figure of 99.99% in Chapter 5.

[42]Joint Research Department Memorandum, The Naga Problem, 20 February 1968, BNA/PREM/11/3017.

[43]On Phizo's attempts to take the Naga case to the UN see Lydia Walker, 'Decolonization in the 1960s: On Legitimate and Illegitimate Nationalist Claims-Making', *Past and Present* 242 (2019) 227–264.

[44]Mhiesizokho Zinyü, Phizo *and the Naga Problem* (Kohima: Author, 2014).

In 1963, the Government of India inaugurated a 'State of Nagaland' within India, consisting of the former Naga Hills District of Assam and the Tuensang Area of the North East Frontier Agency ('NEFA'),[45] but not the Naga areas to the south (in the present-day Indian state of Manipur) and to the east (in what was then known as Burma). This political compromise failed to satisfy the NNC's demand for full sovereignty and the territorial integration of all Naga inhabited areas within and across India and Myanmar. The 1960s and 70s saw sustained fighting between Naga and Indian military forces.[46] Since 1958, the *Armed Forces Special Powers Act* ('AFSPA') has afforded Indian security forces effective legal impunity for the widespread human rights violations committed across the region in the name of counterinsurgency.[47] Facing overwhelming Indian military pressure, in November 1975, a group of NNC cadres signed the 'Shillong Accord' with the Indian government. As well as agreeing to give up their arms, the Accord stated that the Naga underground would 'accept voluntarily and freely the constitution of India'.[48] Far from resolving the tensions, however, the accord led to a split within the NNC between 'accordists' and 'non-accordists'.[49] The latter established a breakaway group: the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (the 'NSCN') in 1980. The split marked the start of further violence across the Naga Hills, and the beginning of the end of the NNC's hegemony in Naga political and social life.[50] In 1988, the NSCN

[45]NEFA was a political-administrative region of British India. The remaining parts of NEFA became the Indian Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh in 1974, before being upgraded to a State in 1987.

[46]For a full account of the Indo-Naga war see Kaka Iralu, *Nagaland and India: The Blood and the Tears* (Kohima: Author, 2017).

[47]Dolly Kikon, 'The predicament of justice: fifty years of Armed Forces Special Powers Act in India', *Contemporary South Asia* 17 (2009) 271-282.

[48]Shillong Accord Signed On 10.11.1975, in *Naga Chronicle*, ed. by Nuh and Lasuh, p. 239.

[49]Joshi, Micropolitics, p. 170.

[50]ibid.

further divided into two factions: the NSCN-Isak Muivah (the 'NSCN-IM') – principally led by Tangkhul Nagas from Manipur – and the NSCN-Khaplang (the 'NSCN-K') – predominantly composed of Nagas in Myanmar.

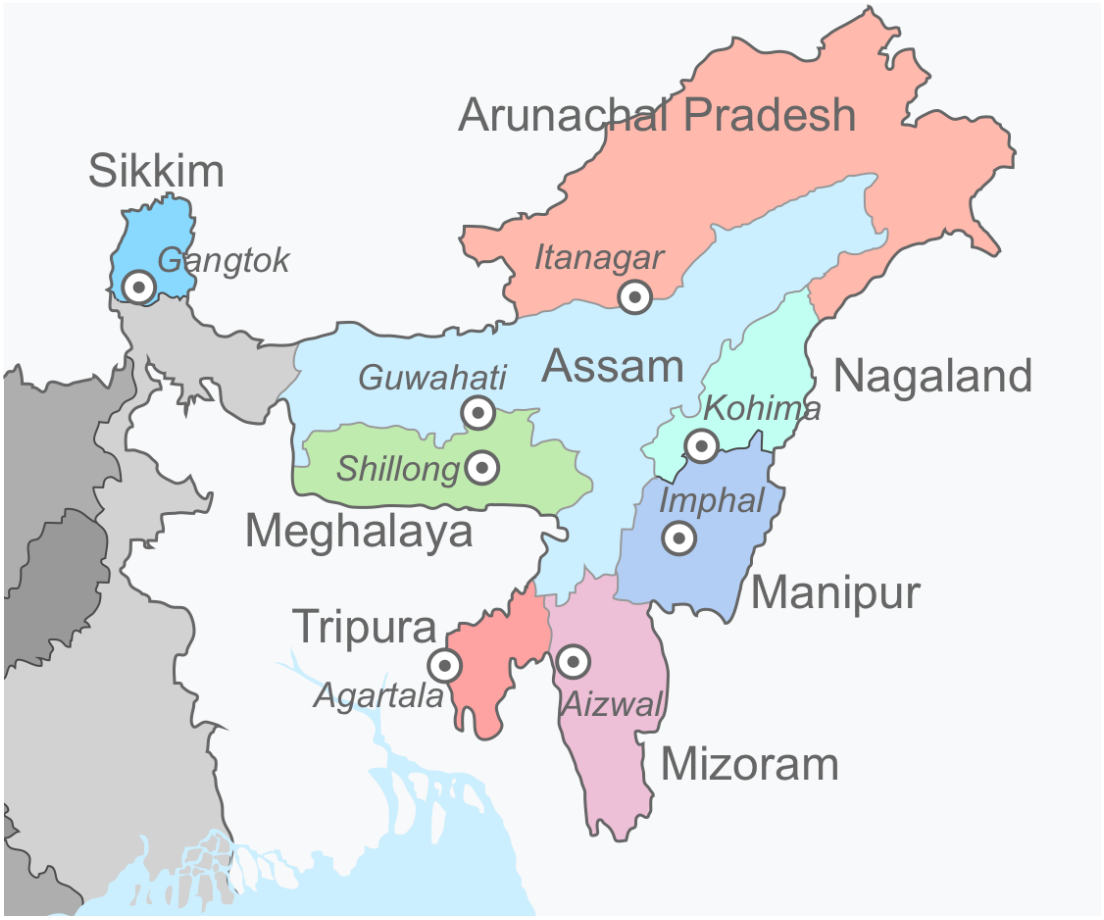

Figure 1: Map showing the current internal and international borders of Northeast India. Naga groups are spread across four Indian states and parts of Myanmar. In Nagaland, they comprise by far the majority of the population. Considerable numbers also live in Northern Manipur, whilst more limited numbers live in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The remainder of the Naga population live in the regions of Myanmar bordering the State of Nagaland. Since the 1940s, Naga nationalists have variously called for the integration of all Naga inhabited areas within a single unit. Source: Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Northeast_india.png last accessed 11 September 2023. This file is licensed under the CC BY-SA 4.0 licence © Renzut. Title: 'North East India'. Date Produced: 19 November 2017. No changes have been made to the image.

The next turning point in the Naga nationalist movement occurred in 1997 when the Government of India signed a ceasefire agreement with the NSCN-IM. This was extended to the NSCN-K in 2004. The post-ceasefire period has seen further divisions within the nationalist movement and a mushrooming in the number of NPGs.[51] To different degrees, these groups all seek to mimic governmental functions to appear state-like, including by levying taxes from Naga households and recruiting cadres to join militant groups. In spite of numerous civil society attempts at unification, however, the relations between these rival groups remain fractious.[52] While all the NPGs claim to represent the Nagas in their struggle for self-determination, support for the different NPGs tends to follow pre-existing tribal divisions, and Naga society remains deeply divided.[53] Recent decades have seen widespread interfactional violence, amidst public protest that Naga cadres are using the nationalist movement for personal gain, and, weakening the broader Naga struggle for collective self-determination in the process.[54]

[51]These include the four smaller factions of the NSCN and four factions of the NNC. As Wouters argues, the number of Naga factions is so numerous that even Nagas find it 'difficult to sum up and differentiate all the Naga factions'. This thesis does not discuss the subtle distinctions between the NPGs, save to say that the NSCN-IM remains the predominant actor in negotiations with India and the NPG which is most engaged with international articulations of Naga nationalism. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the emergence of Naga nationalism via the activities of the NNC. Whilst Chapters 6 and 7 briefly consider the NSCN-IM's engagement with the UN, discussion of the contemporary Naga movement within this thesis is principally concerned with the efforts of Naga civil society groups to internationalise the Naga struggle – both at the UN and on the ground – as a means of overcoming the ongoing stalemate in the Indo-Naga negotiations and the division amongst the NPGs. On the different NPGs and their role in contemporary Naga politics, see Wouters, *Shadows,* pp. 81-123.

[52]I describe recent attempts to realise Naga societal reconciliation in Chapter 7.

[53]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.100.

[54]ibid, p.3.

Since the ceasefire, most NPGs have abandoned their call for statehood,[55] save perhaps the NNC. Instead, the NSCN-IM – the clearly predominant actor with Naga politics and the one which enjoys the most public support – continues to call for an 'honourable, acceptable' and 'inclusive' solution to the 'Indo-Naga issue'.[56] Twelve years after the ceasefire was signed, in August 2015, NSCN-IM leaders signed an historic 'Framework Agreement' with the Government of India. That agreement sought to lay the ground for the implementation of a sui generis 'shared-sovereignty' arrangement which would establish an 'enduring inclusive relationship of peaceful coexistence between the two parties'.[57] In 2017, the Government of India expanded the Indo-Naga peace process to begin parallel talks with six other NPGs.[58] Nearly a decade on however, and the Indo-Naga negotiations have ground to a stalemate. There has been no progress implementing the Framework Agreement, and the Nagas are no closer to realising self-determination.

[55]ibid, p.34.

[56]NSCN-IM says Framework Agreement, competencies are being worked out with outside the box solution', *Ukhrul Times* (online), 11 September 2020. I do not include hyperlinks for online newspaper articles and digital archival sources in footnotes because of the very large number of these sources to which I cite (discussed in Chapter 3). I indicate where newspaper articles and archival sources are available online in the footnotes. Hyperlinks for these sources are in the bibliography. Hyperlinks for sources other than digital archives and online newspapers are reproduced in both the footnotes and the bibliography.

[57]Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, 'Four Reasons Why the NSCN(I-M) Released the Confidential Nagaland Framework Agreement', *The Wire* (online), 17th August 2020.

[58]These groups negotiate with the Government of India under the umbrella of the 'Working Committee of the Naga National Political Groups' (the 'WC-NNPGs'). The emergence of two parallel strands of the Indo-Naga negotiations has led to calls from some Naga politicians for an Indo-Naga solution which is applicable only to the Nagas of Nagaland, amid publicly professed concerns as to the perceived influence of Tangkhul Nagas (led by the NSCN-IM) within the Indo-Naga negotiations. For their part, the NSCN-IM argue that the expansions of the Indo-Naga negotiations is an attempt by India to divide the Naga movement. See 6 Naga Political Groups Form Working Group, *The Morung Express* (online), 14 December 2016.

The history of Naga nationalism is thus one characterised by *both* instability and stasis. On the one hand, the numerous failed Indo-Naga accords and decades of interfactional violence speak to a movement characterised by lingering uncertainty. On the other hand, the continued inability to resolve the Naga problem speaks to a society in political limbo. Against this backdrop, Naga political and civil actors – including, but not limited to, A. Z. Phizo – have continually turned to 'the international' to resolve this deadlock. Analysing these practices, I suggest, requires going beyond existing scholarship which has examined the Nagas' engagement with international fora, including the UN, and that which has investigated the development of Naga nationalism on the ground. Instead, I seek to examine a broader range of '(inter)nationalist' projects and to investigate how the geographical imaginaries and spatial vocabularies accompanying the Nagas' political claim have been forged across and between spatial scales.

2. Thesis aim and objectives

In this thesis I aim to write a political and historical geography of Naga intellectual thought, one which explores how Naga (inter)nationalists have conceived of alternative, internationally legible geopolitical projects for the protection of the Naga community from 1946 to 2022. I seek to understand how Naga nationalist geopolitical demands have been (re)articulated *both* in the wake of shifting domestic and international conditions, *and* in response to shifting modalities of state and colonial power. Through attending to the histories and geographies of Naga (inter)nationalism over a nearly eight-decade period, I endeavour to trace the plural historical and geographical imaginaries which both inspire and foreclose efforts to materialise alternative Naga geopolitical futures. In doing so, I embrace a plural understanding of the international as simultaneously: a sphere of geographical multiplicity; a claims making arena; and a domain of putatively

'international' actors, sites, and institutions. While interrelated, the concerns of my three research objectives broadly correspond to one of these three understandings of 'the international':

(1) To examine the spatial vocabularies and geographical imaginaries underpinning Naga nationalists' political claims and how these have been (re)interpreted over time.
(2) To investigate which sources of political legitimacy Naga nationalists have drawn upon when articulating their political claims internationally and on the ground.
(3) To explore how Naga (inter)nationalism has been created and enacted through specific sites, practices, and people.[59]

Turning to the first objective and to understandings of 'the international' as a domain of geographical heterogeneity and multiplicity,[60] this study explores the imaginative geographies underpinning Naga nationalists' (inter)national political claims. I seek to investigate the geographical imaginaries underpinning both the Nagas' historic claim to statehood and more recent Naga articulations of Indigeneity.[61] Specifically, I ask the following questions: How have

[59]This phrasing is inspired by Hodder, Legg, and Heffernan's call to investigate the range of 'sites, practices, and people' through which internationalism has been created and enacted. Jake Hodder, Stephen Legg, and Michael Heffernan, 'Introduction: Historical Geographies of Internationalism, 1900-1950, *Political Geography* 46 (2015) 1-6. p. 3.

[60]On the international's plural character, see Didier Bigo and R. B. J. Walker, 'Political Sociology and the Problem of the International' *Millennium* 35 (2007) 725–39; Milja Kurki and Justin Rosenberg, 'Multiplicity: A New Common Ground for International Theory?', *Globalizations* 17 (2020) 397–403; Jake Hodder, 'Conferencing the international at the World Pacifist Meeting 1949', *Political Geography* 49 (2015) 40-50.

[61]I follow Graham and Penny and capitalise the terms 'Indigenous', 'Indigenous Peoples', and 'Indigeneity'. Graham and Penny argue that 'such capitalization accords these terms dignity and recognition as collective proper nouns or derived forms'. I capitalise 'Peoples' only when used after 'Indigenous'. I do not capitalise other nouns when used after Indigenous, such as 'people' and 'representatives'. Laura

Naga actors understood and articulated ideas of the state, nation, territory, sovereignty, and self-determination? How, why, and to what effect have Naga nationalists sought to recast the Naga political struggle as part of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement? How, in scripting and materialising alternative imaginative geographies of a Naga homeland, do Naga actors articulate alternative conceptions of regional and global space? How have these geographical imaginaries been shaped by and articulated with reference to the Nagas' experiences of both British and Indian coloniality? Finally, acknowledging geographers' contention that spatial imaginaries are necessarily also temporal imaginaries, I ask: How are Naga nationalist geographical imaginaries informed by understandings of the Nagas' past, present, and future?

As to the second objective and to understandings of 'the international' as a claims making arena,[62] this thesis is also interested in how Naga spatial imaginaries, political claims, and national identity are articulated in dialogue with international norms around sovereignty, Indigeneity, and self-determination. As I discuss in Chapter 2, the notion of political legitimacy provides a generative tool for understanding how Naga actors make their aspirations legible to varied audiences at different historical junctures. As an analytical concept, the ambiguity of legitimacy is also its greatest strength, and legitimacy provides a useful lens to interrogate broader questions

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Graham and H. Glenn Penny, 'Performing Indigeneity: Emergent identity, self-determination, and sovereignty', in *Performing Indigeneity: Global Histories and Contemporary Experiences*, ed. by Laura Graham and H. Glenn Penny (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), pp. 1–31. Also see Micah Morton and Ian Baird, 'From Hill tribes to Indigenous Peoples: The localisation of a global movement in Thailand', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 50 (2019) 7-31. p. 8.

[62]Itty Abraham, '"Germany Has Become Mohammedan": Insurgency, Long-Distance Travel, and the Singapore Mutiny, 1915', *Globalizations* 12 (2015) 913-927.

about the nature of the Nagas' multi-scalar geopolitical subjectivity.[63] These include: How have Naga actors sustained a nationalist geopolitical subjectivity for nearly eight decades in the absence of both de jure and de facto sovereignty and the strategic resources of the state? How have Naga nationalists articulated their spatial and political imaginaries and identities in dialogue with reference to putatively international institutions, norms, and reference points? How, in articulating their national claim, have Naga actors sought to demonstrate their eligibility to collective international political rights? And how, in doing so, have Naga groups pushed at, unsettled, and reconfigured those same institutions, norms, and reference points?

While the first objective investigates the substantive content of the Nagas' political claim and the second considers how that claim has been shaped according to domestic and international norms, the final objective speaks to geographical scholarship concerned with the spatialities of internationalism to ask how the Nagas' (inter)national identity and political claim has been articulated. This thesis thus also interrogates how Naga practices of internationalism have been enacted by specific actors rooted in and routed through specific locales. Here, I understand 'the international' as both an adjective – that is, a label which Naga actors have strategically adopted at different historical junctures – and a noun – as a domain of putatively 'international' actors, sites, and institutions. In this vein, I ask: How do Naga actors use claims to particular scalar identities (namely, 'the international') as a political strategy? How have Naga actors engaged with the UN and other putatively 'international' organisations? Who has articulated the Naga international 'and from where'?[64] What conception of the international have Naga nationalists

[63]Alice Wilson and Fiona McConnell, 'Constructing legitimacy without legality in long term exile: Comparing Western Sahara and Tibet', *Geoforum* 66 (2015) 203-214.

[64]Hodder, Legg, and Heffernan, Historical internationalism, p.6.

advanced in making their claim? How do Naga groups use transnational solidarities, global advocacy networks, and membership of the global Indigenous movement to overcome hegemonic framings which see the Naga Hills as a 'remote' and at times 'backward' region of Northern South Asia?[65] How has the Nagas' international identity been felt, performed, and embodied across a range of different sites and scales? How have Naga theories of 'the international' been informed by their development in particular places? What has been the relationship between Naga (inter)nationalism and imperialism?

To address these questions, this thesis adopts a spatial and multi-scalar lens. Turning to the first of these, as captured in the first research objective, a spatial lens involves interrogating the geographical imaginaries underpinning Naga (inter)national claims. While Naga demands for statehood and for territorial autonomy are often acknowledged, there has been little attention to how space and socio-spatial relations have been imagined, theorised, and materialised by Naga actors. This thesis seeks to address this lacuna. I adopt a relational conception of space – one which understands space as 'constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales' to investigate how Naga geopolitical thought and practice has been informed by interactions across various sites and scales,[66] while also acknowledging the 'constraints and structuring influences on [Naga] spatial relations'.[67]

The multi-scalar lens adopted in this thesis has two facets. First, I investigate the views of *both* elite political actors – including Naga anti-colonial thinkers – *and* popular culture discourses

[65]On the Naga Hills as a marginal space see Debojyoti Das, 'Understanding Margins: State Power, Space and Territoriality in the Naga Hills', *Journal of Borderland Studies* 29 (2014) 63-80. p.69.

[66]Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). p.265.

[67]Stephen Legg, *Prostitution and the Ends of Empire: Scale, Governmentalities, and Interwar India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press). p. 22.

of nationhood. As I describe in Chapter 3, these are examined with reference to a mixed-methods approach, one which attends both to the historic Naga archive of anticolonial nationalist thought and interviews with Naga thinkers, but also to circulations of print and digital media and embodied performances of Naga nationhood. Such an approach is vital in writing an historical geography of Naga political thought in order to elucidate how that thought inscribes materially meaningful geographies. Second, as I have already alluded to, the story of the internationalisation of the Naga struggle is not limited to international fora. Through a multi-scalar perspective, I examine 'on the ground' Naga (inter)nationalist practices – including marches, rallies, and cultural celebrations led by Naga civil society – and Naga engagement with the UN and other putatively international organisations.

The discussion across the chapters that follows is principally focused on the geopolitical aspirations of Nagas living in India, with only incidental discussion of the aspirations of Nagas in Myanmar. The reasons for this are twofold. The first concerns the availability of research materials. The early locus of the nationalist movement was in India and accessible archival materials principally concern Nagas from India. Even prior to the 2021 coup-d'état, research in Myanmar was extremely challenging, while the ongoing internet blackout makes remote research almost impossible. Second, since the NSCN split of 1988, there has been a broad geographical divergence between the activities of the two most prominent NPGs: the NSCN-IM (led by Nagas from India) and the NSCN-K (led by Nagas from Myanmar), though both factions claim to represent all Nagas.[68] Today, the NSCN-IM's negotiations with India principally concern the consolidation of all Naga areas *within* India – particularly across the Nagaland-Manipur border – and the implementation of a separate Naga flag and constitution. The NSCN-K is not a signatory

[68]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.9.

to the Indo-Naga Framework Agreement. Nevertheless, I am aware that this approach risks reproducing the methodological nationalism which the Naga movement fights against. Where possible, I have thus sought the views of interviewees from India concerning the situation of Nagas in Myanmar.

3. Thesis outline

This thesis consists of eight chapters: an introduction, a literature review, an overview of the methodology, a chapter providing historical context with reference to both secondary literature and primary sources, three empirical chapters, and a conclusion. It does not provide an exhaustive chronology of the Naga political struggle.[69] Instead, this thesis focuses on three historical dis/junctures within the Naga (inter)nationalist movement, when ideas of Naga (inter)nationalism have been (re)articulated according to shifting local and international conditions. These dis/junctures have been selected in an attempt to periodise the nature of the Naga claim into three overlapping phases. The first concerns the decades immediately following the transfer of power in which Naga actors demanded statehood. The second is a period from the 1980s when Naga actors began to engage with the Global Indigenous Peoples' Movement. The third covers contemporary Naga nationalist politics, in which the ongoing stasis in the Indo-Naga negotiations following the signing of both the 1997 ceasefire and the Framework Agreement has prompted many Naga civil society groups to engage in alternative, bottom-up forms of advocacy. Nevertheless, this is not a

[69]For this, see Marcus Franke, *War and Nationalism in South Asia: The Indian State and the Nagas* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Nirmal Nibedon, *Nagaland the Night of the Guerrillas* (Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2013); M. Horam, *The Naga Insurgency: The Last Thirty Years* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1988).

linear narrative. Instead, I document the dis/continuities in the Nagas' geopolitical subjectivity across all three periods.

Having set out the aim and objectives of this thesis, in the next chapter I situate this study within and between literature on colonial geographies and the geographies of internationalism. In Chapter 3, I turn to describe how this research was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the methodological shift this necessitated away from an ethnographic study. I set out the 'scavenger' methodology employed in this thesis, involving the integration of multi-sited archival, interview, and digital methods. First, I discuss the archives I consulted in the UK, Nagaland, and Belgium, how I read the archive – both against and along the grain – and how I overcame a fragmentary source base. Second, foregrounding efforts by contemporary Naga activists to articulate self-determination in international fora and on the ground, I describe interviews with members of three Naga civil society organisations, in addition to how I supplemented this with analysis of Naga social media pages, websites, and local newspapers. Finally, I consider issues of ethics and researcher positionality.

Chapter 4 provides historical context through both a review of secondary literature and by introducing primary sources that will be elaborated on in the chapters to follow. I explore how British colonial practices of spatiality and territoriality shaped the making of both the Indian nation-state and its margins, including the Naga homeland. First, I describe how a Naga nationalist consciousness was formed on the grounds of an 'imperial social formation' in the colonial period.[70] That is, an uneven zone of encounter between the Nagas and the British colonial world characterised – on the one hand – by contact between Naga elites, Baptist missionaries, and

[70]Mrinalini Sinha, 'Mapping the Imperial Social Formation: A Modest Proposal for Feminist History', *Signs* 25 (2000) 1077-1082.

Christianity, and, on the other hand, by the Nagas' engagement with heterogenous global networks, through which they were able to position themselves within the international sphere. Second, I discuss a series of alternative efforts to reshape the Nagas' territorial settlement by the British, India, and the Nagas in the closing decades of colonial rule. I show how, while the Nagas' claim to statehood was not inevitable, from the Nagas' vantage point, neither was their inclusion within India.

Having described the conditions for the emergence of Naga nationalism in the late colonial period, in Chapter 5, I consider the geopolitical thought and praxis of one of its principal architects: the late anticolonial nationalist leader and NNC President A. Z. Phizo. Through drawing together fragments of Phizo's thinking as they appear in the archive, this chapter illustrates how Phizo's was both a material and epistemic project of decolonisation. On the one hand, Phizo's campaign for an independent Naga nation-state in the period 1946 to 1990 sought an end to British colonialism, whilst enacting a refusal of the militarised violence of the Indian colonial state. On the other hand, Phizo articulated an alternative theory of the state, in which he rejected the adoption of foreign institutions, thought, and political philosophies, seeking instead to build a hybrid Naga modernity based on Indigenous modes of Naga political and social life, infused with a distinctly Naga Christian theology.

While Chapter 5 recounts Phizo's failure to take the Naga case to the UN, in Chapter 6 I consider how, since the 1990s, Naga civil society groups have recast the Naga political struggle as part of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement. I bring relational framings of Indigeneity into dialogue with relational geographies scholarship to illustrate how Naga engagement with global Indigeneity has been a fulcrum underpinning activists' efforts to reshape nationalist imaginaries and produce Naga space at multiple scales. I illustrate how Naga groups rhetorically and materially

position themselves as members of a putatively international community and, in doing so, have scripted the so-called Naga issue as one of international concern. I consider how Naga activists have reworked dominant conceptions of Indigeneity, repudiating any association between the Nagas' Indigenous identity and minority status to articulate futures outside the Westphalian state. Finally, the chapter describes a series of spatial and relational tensions underpinning Naga expressions of Indigeneity, concerning: articulations of Indigeneity and claims to territory; the limits of networks of Naga Indigenous solidarities; and challenges of communicating an Indigenous identity across scale. I conclude by reflecting on how these tensions point to the ambivalence of Indigeneity as a mode of Naga geopolitical subjectivity, and discuss the challenges of forging decolonial futures while the state continues to loom large in (inter)nationalist imaginaries.

Chapter 7 broadens the thesis' analytical and scalar gaze beyond the discursive and the theoretical, to account for the embodied and situated ways in which Naga groups materialise their geopolitical imaginaries. Specifically, it considers three recent Naga nationalist events: 'Naga Day', which was organised by the Forum for Naga Reconciliation in January 2018; the 'Naga Solidarity Walk', which was led by the Global Naga Forum in July 2022; and the '75th Naga Independence Day' celebrations, coordinated by the NNC in August 2022. The chapter brings political geography scholarship on performance into dialogue with work in performance studies on the relationship between the archive and the repertoire to examine how these groups used these performative events to articulate their political claims and further Naga (inter)nationalism. I argue that the political potency of all three events was derived from their ability to articulate both spatial and temporal scalar identities. On the one hand, these performances produced (inter)nationality through the transmission of collective identity, the generation of alternative modes of political

belonging, and the articulation of cross-border solidarities. In so doing, they demonstrated Naga eligibility to collective political rights and international recognition. On the other hand, each performance was a means to 're-invest the present with historical meaning'.[71] Through re-enacting re-fashioning, and re-fusing the colonial archive, these performances were a form of worldmaking, and were used to communicate knowledge about the Nagas' past as the basis of an imagined future.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by drawing together the threads of dis/continuity of Naga thought around nationhood and self-determination. I begin by reflecting on how this thesis contributes to scholarship on Naga political and social life. I then identify three spatial tensions which, I argue, undergird the project of Naga (inter)nationalism. First, I argue that the geographical imaginaries underpinning Naga nationalist political claims sit in tension between a post- and a decolonial project. Second, I suggest that efforts to construct alternative geopolitical projects for the projection of the Naga community exist at the interplay between both domestic and international ideas of political legitimacy and between the demands of regional and global audiences. Third, I discuss how the project of Naga identity formation collapses the boundaries between the national and the international. I conclude by reflecting on the importance of recovering alternative Naga geopolitical futures and by calling upon scholars to take seriously alternative spatial foci of internationalist activity.

[71]David Dean, Yana Meerzon, and Kathryn Price, 'Introduction', in *History, Memory, Performance,* ed. by David Dean, Yana Meerzon, and Kathryn Price (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), pp.1-18 (p.7).

Chapter 2 | Theorising Naga (inter)nationalism: Colonial and scalar geographies

1. Introduction

In this chapter I situate this thesis' contributions within the sub-disciplines of political and historical geography, but also identify productive synergies with the fields of imperial and global history and South Asian studies. As outlined in Chapter 1, the central concern of this thesis is to examine how Naga anticolonial nationalists have articulated alternative geopolitical projects in response *both* to shifting modalities of British and Indian colonial power, *and* to shifting international norms around (inter alia) sovereignty and Indigeneity. The nature of this inquiry raises broader questions about how to conceptualise the role of minorities and Indigenous groups within both putatively postcolonial states and the international sphere. In attending to these questions in this chapter, my approach to this puzzle is threefold.

First, I explore how and why post-, de-, and anticolonial geographies scholarship is key to understanding Naga geopolitical thought and practice. I argue that, while postcolonial geographies scholarship provides a basis for understanding the terms on which Naga territorial struggles against the Indian state are made, decolonial geographies help us to comprehend Naga claims as to India's ongoing coloniality. Anticolonial geographies, however, draw attention to the specific practices through which Naga (inter)nationalists forge alternative geopolitical futures. Second, I discuss the politics of labels to argue for using subaltern geopolitics as a framework to understand the Nagas' (inter)national geopolitical subjectivity. Finally, I set out the necessity of bringing into conversation subaltern geopolitics literature and the geographies of internationalism to understand the Naga case, not least because Naga thought has been forged through a multi-scale dialogue with putatively international ideas, spaces, networks, and hierarchies. Accordingly, I consider how

geographical scholarship on the discursive and practical deployment of scale sheds light on the Naga case. I then examine the scale which animates this thesis – 'the international' – and discuss how geographical, historical, and international relations scholarship informs my approach.

2. Colonial geographies of Naga (inter)nationalism

To understand the spatialities and temporalities underlying Naga geopolitical imaginaries since 1947, I take as my starting point geographical scholarship that is attuned to the complex spatialities of colonialism. Specifically, I bring into dialogue scholarship from post-, de- and anticolonial geographies.

Turning to the first of these – postcolonial geography takes as its object of study the 'spatiality of colonial discourse, the spatial politics of representation, and the material effects of colonialism'.[72] Postcolonial geographers are, in other words, interested in the relationship between colonialism and space.[73] Of utility to the Naga case is postcolonial geographies scholarship which provides a spatially nuanced understanding of colonial power relations. Geographers have analysed colonialism as simultaneously relational and processual and have illustrated how the material and discursive production of space underpinned the maintenance of imperial rule.[74] Colonial spaces 'were ordered, sanitised [and] made amenable to regulation' such that these spaces did 'not simply reflect colonial aspirations' but were 'social technologies… to incorporate, categorise, discipline, control and reform the inhabitants of the city, town or plantation'.[75]

[72]Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan, 'Introducing Postcolonial Geographies'. In *Postcolonial Geographies,* ed. by Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (New York: Continuum, 2002). pp.1-6 (p.2).

[73]Tariq Jazeel, *Postcolonialism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2019).

[74]Stephen Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). Also see Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[75]Jo Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism* (London: Sage, 2009). p. 56.

Geographers have thus focused attention on cartography, architecture, urban planning, and even gardens as tools of colonial governmentality.[76] In attending to the specificities of colonial rule, scholars have highlighted its spatially variegated nature (within and across empires)[77] and its internal contradictions – including how the coloniser-colonised relationship produced ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity.[78] This scholarship provides important theoretical leverage for interrogating the specific workings of British colonial power over Naga territories throughout the late colonial period and the relationship between British coloniality and the emergence of a Naga nationalist subjectivity.

However, postcolonial scholarship also offers up valuable conceptual space in which the contemporary legacies of historic coloniality over Naga territories can come into view. As Ashcroft and colleagues argue, each '"post-colonial" occasion needs to be precisely located and analysed for its specific interplay'.[79] That uneven imperial sovereignty regimes – including those which characterised British rule across Northeast India vis-à-vis the rest of the subcontinent –

[76]For instance, see Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism;* Matthew Sparke, 'A map that roared and an original atlas: Canada, cartography, and the narration of nation', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88 (2015) 463-495; Chiara Certomà, 'Expanding the "dark side of planning": Governmentality and biopolitics in urban garden planning', *Planning Theory* 14 (2015) 23-43.

[77]Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Also see Stephen Legg, 'An international anomaly? Sovereignty, the League of Nations and India's princely geographies', *Journal of Historical Geography* 43 (2009) 96-110.

[78]Homi Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse', *October* 28 (1984) 125-133.

[79]Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts (Second Edition)* (Oxford: Routledge, 2000). p. 171.

continue to shape contemporary postcolonial geographies is widely recognised.[80] As Ann Stoler notes, the 'political effects and practices that imperial projects produce' can be located, inter alia in the gradated sovereignty regimes which 'make up not the exception to imperial governance but such a widespread norm'.[81] These are amongst a number of 'imperial durations' – those 'sometimes intangible [colonial] constraints and confinements' which do more than just linger in the present but endure as 'active and violating forces in the world today'.[82] Nevertheless, Stoler describes how as 'connectivities between past and present… the geopolitical and spatial distributions of inequality which cast across our world today are not simply mimetic versions of earlier imperial incarnations but refashioned and sometimes opaque and oblique reworkings of them'.[83]

Indeed, read in dialogue with geographical scholarship on the so-called 'colonial present',[84] Stoler's work on the 'colonial presence' – those lingering durabilities of an imperial past 'that is imagined to be over but persists, reactivates, and recurs in transfigured forms' – is productive in understanding how British colonial practices of spatiality and territoriality indelibly shaped the making of both the Indian nation-state and its 'margins'.[85] In Chapter 4, I use this scholarship to explore how the long aftermath of British rule in India – its attendant classifications of people

[80]Sanjib Baruah, *In the Name of the Nation: India and its Northeast* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020).

[81]Ann Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities for Our Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). p. 15.

[82]ibid, p.15.

[83]ibid, p.4.

[84]Gregory, *The Colonial Present;* Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[85]Stoler, *Duress,* p.33.

within demographic groups, and its territorial division of space – has created the conditions for the terms on which Naga territorial struggles against the postcolonial Indian state are made. Crucially, however, postcolonial scholarship also helps foreground Naga agency within these processes.[86] Indeed, I show how Naga actors have consumed, refashioned, and resisted colonial spatialities and categories – including 'Naga', 'tribe', 'the nation' and 'Christian' – for heterogeneous audiences and to diverse ends.

Nevertheless, postcolonial approaches are insufficient on their own to grapple with Naga claims to territorial sovereignty as they have been articulated since the transfer of power. Decolonial approaches are also necessary. The reasons for this are twofold. First, despite calls by geographers to pay attention to ongoing and non-Western forms of colonialism,[87] postcolonial approaches continue to privilege the 'post' of coloniality. This temporal sleight of hand understands decolonisation, particularly in South Asia, as a finished event, one which rests 'quite comfortably in the space of the hyphen [of post-colonialism]'[88] and which concluded with the establishment of the nation-states of India, Pakistan (and later, Bangladesh) and Sri Lanka.[89] This is in spite of an emergent body of scholarship which has employed a colonial analytic to argue that formal decolonisation has merely led to reconfiguration of the tools of the colonial state toward a majoritarian project of nation building at India's geographical and sociological margins. Mushtaq and Amin, for instance, propose settler colonialism as an interpretative framework for

[86]ibid, p 4.

[87]Rhys Jones and Richard Phillips, 'Unsettling Geographical Horizons: Exploring Premodern and Non-European Imperialism', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95 (2005) 141-161; James Sidaway, Chih Yuan Woon, Jane Jacobs, 'Planetary postcolonialism' *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 35 (2014) 4-21.

[88]Namakkal, *Utopia,* p.26.

[89]Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives are frequently overlooked in discussions of decolonisation in South Asia.

understanding the configuration of assimilationist and eliminationist tactics in Kashmir.[90] At India's eastern margins, Townsend Middleton uses the language of internal colonialism to rethink the relationship between Bengal and its peripheries.[91] Similar critiques have also been advanced vis-à-vis the activities of the Indian state towards communities in the Northeast in addition to the Andaman Islands.[92] From a historical perspective, Jessica Namakkal unsettles accounts of colonialism in India as ending with British withdrawal. From the vantage point of the former French territory of Pondicherry, Namakkal illustrates how state-sponsored decolonisation provided opportunities for 'settler-utopian' colonial projects to take root.[93] These settler communities persist today.[94] Namakkal foregrounds the 'messiness' produced by multiple colonialisms within a single place. For local communities, 'settler-utopian' projects were

[90]Samreen Mushtaq and Mudasir Amin, '"We will memorise our home": exploring settler colonialism as an interpretive framework for Kashmir', *Third World Quarterly* 42 (2021) 3012-3029. Also see Goldie Osuri, 'Imperialism, Colonialism and Sovereignty in the (Post)colony: India and Kashmir', *Third World Quarterly* 38 (2017) 1–16.

[91]Townsend Middleton, 'Provincialising Bengal: the view from Darjeeling', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 43 (2020) 32-51. Also see Willem van Schendel, 'Rebuffing Bengali dominance: postcolonial India and Bangladesh', *Critical Asian Studies* 1 (2022) 1-31.

[92]On Northeast India see Sanjib Goswami, 'Identity and Violence in India's North East: Towards a New Paradigm (unpublished PhD thesis, Swinburne University of Technology, Australia, 2016); Dolly Kikon, 'Educating the Naga Headhunters: Colonial History and Cultural Hegemony in Post-Colonial India', in *Cultural Genocide and Asian State Peripheries,* ed. by Barry Sautman (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), pp.139-163 (p.161). On the Andaman Islands see Uditi Sen, 'Developing Terra Nullius: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Indigeneity in the Andaman Islands', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59 (2017) 944-973.

[93]Namakkal, *Utopia*, p. 11.

[94]ibid, pp.201-204.

themselves overlaid by the violence of the postcolonial Indian state, which sought to negate the existence of French-Indian identities through asserting a homogenous national subject.[95]

This thesis thus contributes to scholarship which has unsettled the received spatialities and temporalities of decolonisation and which posits decolonisation as an ongoing process.[96] By narrating a timeline spanning the period before, during, and after the transfer of power from British colonial to Indian postcolonial rule, I show how, for the Nagas, formal decolonisation did not offer political emancipation. Instead, Naga claims to self-determination have been articulated with reference to a critique of the ongoing coloniality of Indian state power. It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed analysis of the spatialities of Indian colonialism in its north-eastern margins.[97] Moreover, I am mindful of the potential pitfalls of such a project. For one, the application of the umbrella term 'settler-colonialism' risks reducing the socio-spatial dynamics of the Naga context to a 'settler-colonised binary',[98] while 'internal-colonialism' naturalises the territorial bounds of the Indian nation-state. Instead, as part of the geography of intellectual thought presented here, I am interested in the specific vocabularies through which Naga nationalists past and present have narrated a colonised (geo)political and national subjectivity to audiences across

[95]ibid, p.11.

[96]ibid; Also see Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, 'Manifesto: Networks of Decolonization in Asia and Africa', *Radical History Review* 131 (2018) 176–82; Amanda Behm, Christienna Fryar, Emma Hunter, Elisabeth Leake, Su Lin Lewis and Sarah Miller-Davenport, 'Decolonizing history: Enquiry and practice', *History Workshop Journal* 89 (2020) 169-191.

[97]For this, see Goswami, Identity and Violence.

[98]As described in Chapter 6, reducing the situation in Naga areas to a 'settler-colonised' binary ignores how many 'settlers' in Northeast India are the descendants of former indentured labourers who would today be considered 'Adivasi' within central India. On the dangers of a 'settler-colonised' binary see Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1 (2012) 1-40.

varied sites and scales. How, for instance, have anxieties concerning internal- or settler-colonialism shaped Naga nationalist geographical imaginaries? How has this critique been used to advance and legitimate Naga political claims internationally? What is the relationship between this anticolonial critique and claims to a Naga Indigenous identity? And how has the Nagas' critique of Indian coloniality been used to articulate international affinities with some communities and create distance from others?

In questioning nationalist South Asian historiography which sees Indian independence as the inevitable outcome of a twentieth-century anticolonial struggle, scholarship which challenges teleological and universal narratives of decolonisation also opens up space to investigate alternative territorial futures. If the postcolonial nation-state was not inevitable, what 'alternative forms of belonging and organisation' might have been – and perhaps continue to be – possible outside of the Westphalian state form?[99] Why, when, and how were these alternative futures foreclosed? What is the relationship between these efforts to imagine alternative futures and other 'big space' political projects, namely nationalism, imperialism and internationalism? It is through considering historical and ongoing efforts to materialise alternative Naga geopolitical futures – by the Nagas, the British, and India – that these questions gain empirical and political purchase. As I discuss in Chapter 4, 1929-1947 saw the Nagas debate numerous proposals for their geopolitical future, many of which, while not signalling the end of Imperial rule, were a far cry from calls for the establishment of a separate Naga nation-state and were at considerable remove from an Indian nationalist project. As I elaborate in Section 3, however, this is not to discount the importance of the nation-state to Naga political imaginaries, but to highlight its contingency.

[99]Bérénice Guyot-Réchard, 'Tangled Lands: Burma and India's Unfinished Separation, 1937–1948', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 80 (2021) 293-315. p. 314.

Second, postcolonial approaches are also deficient in analysing the Naga case because they neglect the spatial formations associated with claims to Naga Indigeneity, both in international fora and on the ground. While postcolonial geographies emerged out of a poststructuralist tradition – one associated with the work of Said, Bhabha and Spivak – Indigenous geographies are rooted in decolonial scholarship, which conceptualises decolonisation as both an epistemological and territorial project.[100] As to the former, Indigenous geographers have foregrounded how Indigenous communities have articulated 'Other' socio-political formations and forms of sovereignty in opposition to settler-colonial violence.[101] Walter Mignolo, has argued there is a pressing need to '"delink" from Eurocentric epistemologies in order to understand histories prior to and independent of European conquest'.[102] As to the latter, Tuck and Yang, writing in a North American context, understand decolonisation as an ongoing political struggle for the return of land to Indigenous communities.[103] I discuss in the next section how claims to an Indigenous identity have not gone uncontested amongst Naga nationalists. Nonetheless, in thinking through these different forms of Indigenous decolonial critique, this thesis thus asks how Naga geopolitical imaginaries – including Naga theories of the state, territory, and sovereignty – have been informed

[100]On the similarities and differences between postcolonial and decolonial approaches see Andrew Davies, *Geographies of anticolonialism: Political networks across and beyond South India, c. 1900-1930* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2019); Sarah Radcliffe, *Decolonizing Geography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).

[101]On Indigenous geographies see Andrew Curley and Sara Smith, 'Against colonial grounds: Geography on Indigenous lands', *Dialogues in Human Geography* 10 (2020) 37-40; Sarah Hunt, 'Ontologies of indigeneity: The politics of embodying a concept', *Cultural Geographies* 21 (2014) 27-32; Deondre Smiles, 'Reflections on the (continued and future) importance of Indigenous Geographies', *Dialogues in Human Geography* (2023) https://doi.org/10.1177/20438206231179229

[102]Namakkal, *Utopia*, p.9. Also see Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality Concepts, Analysis, Praxis* (Durham NC: Duke University Press 2018).

[103]Tuck and Yang, Decolonization is not a metaphor.

by self-described Naga Indigenous values and modes of political and cultural life, and in opposition to perceived Indian coloniality.

Nevertheless, this thesis does not purport to be an overtly decolonial project. Instead, I seek to understand the historic and contemporary interplay between the categories of Western modernity and Indigenous territorial configurations. How do questions of postcoloniality *and* indigeneity shape Naga identities and spatial imaginaries? How have Naga imaginaries been forged both against British coloniality, but also in the wake of alleged Indian settler-colonialism? How do contemporary Naga actors draw on popular and scholarly discourse concerning the possibilities of epistemic, ontological, and territorial decolonisation to refashion Naga (inter)national claims? I thus use this case to raise questions about the relationship between post- and decolonial futures and to think creatively both about the possibilities of forging futures outside of the Westphalian state and the limits of territorial frames of reference in materialising putatively decolonial futures.

Also inhabiting the space in between post- and decolonial approaches, however, is anticolonial geographies scholarship. Andrew Davies argues that anticolonial geographies are 'closely linked to, but different from post- and decolonial approaches':[104]

> They differ from postcolonial approaches because of their explicitly political nature. It is also a somewhat broader concept than decoloniality, which is often (and necessarily) rooted/routed through the specific circumstances of colonialism in particular places/spaces – something like a broad stance rather than a toolkit for precise circumstances.[105]

[104]Davies, *Anticolonialism,* p. 12.

[105]ibid.

Davies' argument – that anticolonialism constitutes a diverse set of activities which are 'productive of new geographies of the world' – has four implications for how I approach the Naga case.[106] First, in foregrounding the plural range of calculated *practices* associated with anticolonialism,[107] Davies' arguments have provoked an interest in both the discursive and theoretical articulations of Naga post- and decolonial imaginaries, and the situated and embodied means through which Naga actors have resisted British and Indian colonial power on the ground. As I show in Chapters 5 and 7, these included civil disobedience, walking, and cultural performance. Second, through foregrounding the *spatialities* of anticolonialism, Davies and others illustrate how anticolonial struggles are simultaneously networked and transnational and constituted by diverse sets of elite and marginal actors.[108] This provides a useful frame for connecting Naga (inter)nationalist practices across different sites and scales and to foreground how Naga anticolonial nationalism makes space. Third, by refusing the idea that anticolonial struggles are consigned to the past,[109] this scholarship provides a productive lens for locating *ongoing* claims to, and articulations of, Naga self-determination within longer genealogies of anticolonial thought and practice. Finally, in drawing attention to how anticolonial practices are not necessarily directly oppositional to colonialism, but area always *alternative*,[110] anticolonial geographies scholarship opens up conceptual space for thinking about how Naga anticolonial nationalists have sought to materialise futures for the Nagas after colonialism which are neither entirely de- nor postcolonial.

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[106]ibid, p. 2.

[107]ibid, p. 25.

[108]Davies, *Anticolonialism.* Also see David Featherstone, 'Maritime labour and subaltern geographies of internationalism: Black internationalist seafarers' organising in the interwar period', *Political Geography* (2015) 7-16.

[109]Davies, *Anticolonialism,* p. 12.

[110]ibid, p.11.

The Nagas' complex colonial geographies – which reflect the uneasy and shifting relationship between the Nagas and both the British and India – raise questions, however, regarding the analytical terminology through which to comprehend Naga actors' political subjectivity and actorness. Should, for instance, the Nagas be considered unrecognised state actors? a marginal group within India experiencing internal colonialism? or even an Indigenous community? And what are the analytical and material implications of these different designations for how we comprehend Naga (inter)nationalism? It is to a discussion of how to understand Naga geopolitical subjectivity to which I now turn.

3. Comprehending Naga geopolitical subjectivity

With reference to her engagement with the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation ('UNPO') – a coalition of 44 stateless nations, Indigenous communities and national minorities who are denied a place within international diplomatic fora – Fiona McConnell discusses the politics of labelling inherent to describing this organisation's members.[111] Using 'terms that include a negative prefix – *un*recognised states, *un*represented peoples, *non*-states – can problematically infer subscription to the existence of a zero-sum-game of sovereign statehood'.[112] Scholars writing about the Nagas encounter similar difficulties. As Lydia Walker argues, 'the inability to address the question of and come up with an adequate label for minority peoples within post-colonial states was the limit and the consequence of national liberation'.[113] Naga groups

[111]Fiona McConnell, 'Liminal geopolitics: The subjectivity and spatiality of diplomacy at the margins', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 42 (2017) 139-152. p.139. The NSCN-IM have been an UNPO member since 1993.

[112]ibid, p.145.

[113]Walker, Decolonization, p.262.

refuse the label minority, arguing it naturalises their inclusion within India.[114] Similarly, in implying 'a centre from which the margin is distant and different'[115], the term 'marginal' also orientates the Nagas towards the same Indian heartland which they have long distanced themselves from. Moreover, as I discuss in Chapter 6 – while many Nagas increasingly identify as Indigenous, some nationalists fiercely reject this designation, arguing that it also suggests the Nagas are an Indian minority.[116] On its own, this label is also ill-equipped for grappling with the tensions between post- and de-colonial imaginaries which cohere within the Naga nationalist political project.

Mindful of these critiques, I considered (and ruled out) various conceptual frames for comprehending the Nagas' international political subjectivity, including 'minority' and 'Indigenous' internationalism. Instead, I contend that Naga nationalists' efforts to articulate alternative geopolitical imaginaries and forms of political subjectivity constitute a form of 'subaltern geopolitics'.[117] Nevertheless, I am mindful that the use of the term 'subaltern' in the Naga context is also not straightforward. The Subaltern Studies Collective ('SSC') has been criticised by O'Hanlon and others for reconstructing a subject of history which resembles the 'classic figure of Western humanism'.[118] Understood this way and subaltern subjects – as

[114]'Nagas are not a minority group or an Indigenous people of India': NNC, *The Morung Express* (online), 10 August 2021.

[115]McConnell, Liminal geopolitics, p.145.

[116]Nagas are not a minority, *The Morung Express* (online), 10 August 2021.

[117]Jo Sharp, 'Geopolitics at the margins? Reconsidering genealogies of critical geopolitics', *Political Geography* 37 (2013) 20-29. Also see Jo Sharp, 'Subaltern geopolitics: introduction', *Geoforum* 42 (2011) 271-273.

[118]Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia', *Modern Asian Studies* 22 (1988) 189–224. p.191.

sovereign and self-determining actors – were seen to resist the colonial state on the basis of pre-existing solidarities and an essential consciousness.[119] Not only has this approach been critiqued for denying heterogeneity and the existence of internal hierarchies within subaltern communities,[120] but, in reifying tribal communities as 'primitive rebels', SSC scholars constructed Adivasi and tribal subjects as the 'authentic anti-colonialists' par excellence,[121] erasing the 'complex ways in which [they] resist and negotiate their subjecthood'.[122] In the Naga context, this problematic rendering of agency – which reifies opposition between 'state' and 'tribe' – fails to capture the shifting, entangled, and often ambivalent relationship between Naga communities and both the colonial and postcolonial state. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter 4, Northeast India was absent from SSC scholarship, while the collective has been critiqued for a reliance on European theorists to the neglect of those from the Global South.[123] The associations between subaltern studies scholarship and postcoloniality also sits uneasily with claims that India is yet to be fully decolonised, and points to the danger of enfolding articulations of 'Indigenous aspiration' within broader claims to 'subaltern resistance'.[124]

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[119]Kalyanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan, 'Situating the subaltern: History and anthropology in the subaltern studies project', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 8 (1995) 395-429. Also see Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* ed. by Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 271-313.

[120]Kalyan Das, Subaltern Historiography to Dalit Historiography: Tracing Heterogeneity in Dalit 'Subalternity', *EPW* 50 (2015) 60-65.

[121]Uday Chandra, 'Towards Adivasi Studies: New perspectives on 'tribal' margins of modern India', *Studies in History* 31 (2015) 122-127. p.124.

[122]Uday Chandra, 'Beyond subalternity: Land, community, and the state in contemporary Jharkhand', *Contemporary South Asia* 21 (2013) 52-61. p.53.

[123]Radcliffe, *Decolonizing Geography,* pp.62-63.

[124]Elspeth Iralu, 'Technologies of Territoriality: Indigeneity, Surveillance, and the State' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of New Mexico, 2022). p.68

More recently, however, mindful of these critiques, scholars working with Naga and other Indigenous and marginalised communities within South Asia and elsewhere, have advanced a 'Subaltern Studies 2.0', which aims to take seriously the relationship between Indigenous modes of theorising, resistance, and forms of political subjectivity which have hitherto been flattened or eclipsed in accounts of subaltern history.[125] This thesis draws these efforts to reclaim the term 'subaltern' into dialogue with critical geopolitics scholarship which has brought to the fore those ways of doing and thinking about geopolitics which are typically excluded from hegemonic accounts of geopolitical knowledge production.[126] Crucially, whilst scholars of subalternity have typically used the subaltern as both an empirical and analytical category to refer to the 'experiences of those non-(colonial, nationalist, or academic) elites who are placed beyond and escape representation',[127] Jo Sharp's call for a 'subaltern geopolitics' returns to the term's original military etymology as those of 'a lower rank – neither the commander, nor outside of the ranks'.[128] In adopting this definition, Sharp echoes discussion within International Relations, including Mohammed Ayoob's work on 'subaltern realism'.[129] As Sharp argues, Ayoob's 'oxymoronic pairing of terms' ties together a 'position of structural weakness' which characterises the experience of the vast majority of states, with a 'dominant way of seeing, ordering and organising

[125]Milinda Banerjee and Jelle Wouters, *Subaltern Studies 2.0* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

[126]Sharp, Margins; Federico Ferretti, 'Geopolitics of decolonisation: The subaltern diplomacies of Lusophone Africa (1961–1974)', *Political Geography* 85 (2021) 1-12; Sharon Cheong, 'A Subaltern Geopolitics', *Geopolitics* 24 (2019) 989-994.

[127]Tariq Jazeel and Stephen Legg, 'Subaltern Studies, Space and the Geographical Imagination' in *Subaltern Geographies,* ed. by Tariq Jazeel and Stephen Legg (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019). p.2.

[128]Sharp, Subaltern Geopolitics, p.272.

[129]Mohammed Ayoob, 'Inequality and theorising in international relations: the case for subaltern realism', *International Studies Review* 4 (2002) 27-48.

the world'.[130] Whilst Ayoob's formulation is a critique of 'conventional realism which considers only the experiences of the Great Powers as having relevance to the unfolding of world events', Sharp's approach attends to those hitherto neglected strands of geopolitical thought and practice which occupy an ambiguous relationship to both Western political thought and to the interstate system.[131]

To date, existing accounts of subaltern geopolitics have tended to focus either on the geopolitical practices and visions of newly post-colonial elites, or the micro-geographies of those experiencing geopolitical uncertainty.[132] There is thus a need to pay closer attention to those occupying a more ambiguous relationship to the interstate system. This thesis addresses this lacuna by foregrounding the subaltern geopolitics of Naga nationalist claimants who simultaneously reject membership of the post-colonial Indian state while articulating alternative internationally legible geopolitical projects. The framing of subaltern geopolitics helps focus attention on three aspects of Naga (inter)nationalists' political subjectivity.

First, subaltern geopolitics captures those forms of politics which occupy 'an ambiguous position of marginality',[133] neither fully 'inside' nor 'outside' the interstate system.[134] By acknowledging those forms of political subjectivity that do not rely on a sense of 'otherness',

[130]Sharp, Margins, p. 21.

[131]ibid.

[132]On newly postcolonial elites see Ferretti, Geopolitics of decolonisation; Sharp, Margins; Ruth Craggs, 'Subaltern geopolitics and the post-colonial Commonwealth, 1965-1990', *Political Geography* 65 (2018) 46-56. On the everyday see Chris Harker, 'Geopolitics and family in Palestine', *Geoforum* 42 (2011) 306–315; Ron Smith, Graduated incarceration: the Israeli occupation in subaltern geopolitical perspective, *Geoforum* 42 (2011) 316-328; Chih Yuan Woon, 'Undoing violence, unbounding precarity: beyond the frames of terror in the Philippines', *Geoforum* 42 (2011) 285–96.

[133]Sharp, Subaltern Geopolitics, p.271.

[134]Sharp, Margins, p.22.

'resistance' and 'alternative' to hegemonic Western geopolitical thought and practice, subaltern geopolitics instead recognises the 'entangled nature of global social relations'.[135] This framing captures how Naga nationalists construct forms of geopolitics which occupy an ambivalent and dynamic relationship to the interstate system. Second, subaltern geopolitics, with its attentiveness to those marginal geographies and geopolitical actors that have been 'differentially entangled with networks of domination and resistance', challenges understandings of the subaltern as always trapped in place.[136] By attending to the international character of Naga geopolitical actors, theories, and practices, I disrupt those histories which depict Naga nationalism as 'place bound'.[137] Finally, as Chih Yuan Woon argues, subaltern geopolitics shares the impulse of feminist geopolitics to 'move past problematisations of discourse towards the possibility of a worked out alternative project.'[138] This speaks to the plural and creative (and often contradictory) ways through which Naga (inter)nationalists have re-imagined and articulated understandings of Naga political space, national identities, and geopolitical futures in opposition to hegemonic scriptings of the international order. Such efforts are the subject of this thesis.

Nonetheless, this thesis also extends the notion of subaltern geopolitics in two ways. First, by reassessing the role of the (postcolonial) state in subaltern geopolitics. Writing in 2013, Sharp urged geographers not to overlook the 'ongoing struggle over the role of the state' in the rush to uncover 'alternative spaces of politics'.[139] She thus distinguished subaltern geopolitics from anti-geopolitics, arguing that unlike the latter, the former does not 'position its subjects outside of the

[135]ibid. Also see Woon, Undoing violence.

[136]Sharp, Margins, p.28.

[137]ibid.

[138]Woon, Undoing violence, p.286.

[139]Sharp, Margins, p.21.

state and associated institutions'.[140] According to Sharp, researchers needed to instead acknowledge the 'lived importance of such "scales" while simultaneously highlighting their social and spatial construction'.[141] This was evident in Sharp's own empirical analysis, which elucidated how Joseph Nyerere used the newly independent Tanzanian state as a vehicle for advancing a continental geopolitical imaginary which challenged dominant neo-realist projections.[142] In the years since, however, this aspect of Sharp's scholarship has been curiously underplayed. Geographers have instead turned their attention to geopolitical activity below, above, or outside of the boundaries of the nation-state.[143] Simultaneously, an emergent body of historical scholarship has drawn attention to attempts by diverse political actors to re-shape the international order in the wake of administrative decolonisation – for instance, through the creation of regional federations, a Commonwealth of Nations, or the articulation of an anti-imperial internationalism.[144]

Yet, as Samuel Fury Childs Daly argues with reference to the short-lived history of Biafra, the 'possibility of imagining alternative political forms to the nation [state] should not be overdrawn'.[145] As I illustrate, this is especially true for those groups who – like the Nagas – were

[140]ibid, p.22.

[141]ibid, p.21.

[142]Sharp, Margins.

[143]For instance, see Harker, Geopolitics and family; Woon, Undoing violence; Craggs, Subaltern geopolitics.

[144]Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Daniel Haines, 'A "Commonwealth Moment" in South Asian Decolonization', in *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating Independence,* ed. by Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). pp.85–202; Michael Collins, 'Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24 (2013) 21–40; Manu Goswami, 'Imaginary Futures and Colonial Internationalisms', *American Historical Review* 117 (2012) 1461–1485.

[145]Samuel Fury Childs Daly, 'A Nation on Paper: Making a State in the Republic of Biafra', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 62 (2020) 868-894.

constructed as minorities within newly established postcolonial states at the moment of decolonisation, and thus had few other options for articulating their political claims.[146] Thus, despite the creativity of these aforementioned postimperial projects – although not a telos – the nation-state ultimately won.[147] For scholars of subaltern geopolitics, paying attention to the specific form such (real and imagined) state making projects took is therefore crucial. In what follows, I explore how Naga anticolonial nationalists sought to reconcile their broader aspirations, for autonomy, sovereignty, and territorial control, with the structures of the interstate system.

Second, by bringing subaltern geopolitics scholarship more explicitly into dialogue with the geographies of legitimacy. As Jeffrey, Wilson and McConnell argue, legitimacy remains an under theorised concept within geography, yet provides a productive and flexible tool to understand those plural expressions of political authority which exceed or exist outside of the state.[148] It is thus a useful lens for 'opening up and exposing connections' between issues of 'power, authority, rights, recognition, consent [and] sovereignty'.[149] Thus, if subaltern geopolitics speaks to those forms of political subjectivity which straddle the margins of the interstate system, then attending to the construction of legitimacy can help us start to get a handle on *how* subaltern

[146]For a comparable case of a community whose independence claims were foreclosed, see Emma Kluge, 'West Papua and the international history of decolonization, 1961-69', *The International History Review* 42 (2020) 1155-1172.

[147]Antony Anghie, 'Bandung and the Origins of Third World Sovereignty' in *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Pasts and Pending Futures,* ed. by Luis Eslava, Michael Fakhrie and Vasuki Neisiah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.535–551; Priyasha Saksena, 'Building the Nation: Sovereignty and International Law in the Decolonisation of South Asia', *Journal of the History of International Law* 23 (2020) 52-79.

[148]Alex Jeffrey, Fiona McConnell, and Alice Wilson, 'Understanding legitimacy: Perspectives from anomalous geopolitical spaces', *Geoforum* 66 (2015) 177-183.

[149]ibid, p.180.

geopolitical actors carve out space as recognised geopolitical actors. Crucially, legitimacy can be understood as both a 'processual technique of governance', but also a normative aspiration.[150] Thus, throughout this thesis I explore how the production and maintenance of legitimacy emerges – on the one hand – as a conceptual bridge for understanding the relationship between Naga political aspirations on the ground and their articulation within international fora and – on the other hand – as a series of situated performances and practices through which Naga actors demonstrate the validity of various geopolitical projects to multi scalar audiences.[151]

However, while a burgeoning body of scholarship has highlighted the role of mimicry and hybridity as legitimating strategies for non- or aspirant state actors,[152] I use the Naga case to draw attention to other, more heterogeneous means through which subaltern geopolitical actors attempt to garner international recognition. As Christopher Browning and Antonio Ferraz de Oliveira argue, Sharp's initial reading overemphasised the 'rational dimensions of subaltern geopolitics'.[153] By focusing only on the 'material structural weakness of the subaltern', they argue, Sharp effaced how 'a position of ambiguous marginality is intertwined with questions of identity and psychology'.[154] Specifically, the authors call for greater attention to the 'historical *experience* of colonialism' and its impact on geopolitical identity formation amongst subaltern geopolitical

[150]ibid, p.179.

[151]On practices of legitimacy see Craggs, Subaltern geopolitics.

[152]Fiona McConnell, Terri Moreau, and Jason Dittmer, 'Mimicking state diplomacy: The legitimizing strategies of unofficial diplomacies', *Geoforum* 43 (2012) 804-814. Also see Wilson and McConnell, Constructing legitimacy; Craggs, Subaltern geopolitics.

[153]Christopher Browning and Antonio Ferraz de Oliveira, 'Reading brand Africa geopolitically: Nation branding, subaltern geopolitics and the persistence of politics', *Geopolitics* 22 (2017) 640-664. p.645.

[154]ibid p.646

actors.[155] Attending to these experiences draws to the fore the creative means through which subaltern geopolitical actors both leverage *and* resist subalternity to demonstrate legitimacy. As I illustrate with reference to the Nagas, these include the invocation of moral and religious registers, and cultural performance.

Given the protracted duration of the Naga self-determination struggle, this case also offers a particularly instructive insight into the temporality of legitimacy, specifically how concepts and practices of legitimacy have evolved under conditions of stasis, and the role of claims upon the near and distant past in shaping contemporary Naga political aspirations. Moreover, the Naga case also provides a revealing lens for tracing a shift in post-1945 international norms of political recognition and subjectivity. In suggesting that Naga nationalist thought and practice is shaped by a desire to produce legitimacy in the eyes of both domestic and international audiences, it is thus necessary to turn to more critical and expansive understandings of what constitutes 'the international' and its relationship to Naga nationalism. In turn, engaging with this literature through the case of aspirant polities like the Nagas brings to the fore questions around the production, performance, and strategic use of particular scalar identities. It is to this discussion to which I now turn.

4. Scales of Naga (inter)nationalism

In Chapter 1, I described how the so-called Naga 'issue' provokes a conundrum: at what scale should we comprehend this phenomenon? As a domestic Indian issue? An Indo-Burman concern? A regional South Asian problem? Or even a specifically Northern South Asian conundrum? On this matter, Naga nationalists have long been unequivocal: the Nagas are international actors, and

[155]ibid p.646.

the Naga issue is an international concern. This assertion, however, raises its own questions: what constitutes 'the international' scale? And who gets to be an 'international' actor? In addressing these issues, this thesis brings into dialogue subaltern geopolitics scholarship with the geographies of internationalism. The former sheds light on how Naga spatial imaginaries have been forged in dialogue with the legacies of British and Indian coloniality and the hegemonic interstate order. The latter, meanwhile, reveals how this apparently stable international order became hegemonic, in addition to how Naga practices of internationalism both inform and legitimate subaltern geopolitical claims. In bringing these bodies of literature into conversation, this thesis seeks to understand how, when, and why terms like nation, self-determination and sovereignty become the cornerstone of Naga thought, and why the Nagas appear to place so much faith in the legitimacy of a stable, rights-based international order. There is particular impetus for addressing these questions because the genesis of a Naga (inter)nationalist geopolitical subjectivity can be located in the interwar period – an interval in which the eventual hegemony of the postcolonial nation-state was far from inevitable.[156] I thus seek to understand how, in making a claim to be 'international' actors, Naga politicians have articulated their own understanding of who and what constitutes 'the international' at different points in history. Before elaborating on how I engage with the geographies of internationalism in this thesis, it is necessary briefly to discuss how I approach the notion of 'scale'.

While there exists extensive debates about scale within history and geography,[157] this thesis takes as its starting point geographical scholarship which rejects scale as an ontological category,

[156]Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[157]On geographer's engagement see Andrew Herod, *Scale* (Routledge: Oxford, 2012); Sallie Marston, John Paul Jones III, and Keith Woodward, 'Human geography without scale', *Transactions of the Institute of*

whilst also recognising the 'discursive-practical' work involved in its deployment by differently positioned actors.[158] Offering particularly revealing lenses on the scalar politics of Naga actors are two strands of related scholarship, both of which emerged in opposition to calls for a 'human geography without scale'.[159] The first is the work of historical geographer Stephen Legg which de-reifies both 'processes which are proclaimed to operate semiautonomously at particular scales'[160] and 'state apparatuses [that] work to create that impression that scales are ahistorical [and] hierarchical'.[161] Nevertheless, Legg cautions against abandoning scale in a world where 'scalar rhetoric and technologies' structure – 'both epistemologically and ontologically' – historical and contemporary realities. Instead, Legg suggests that scales be understood as 'networks of differing lengths' and as the 'nominalist effects of naming'.[162] The former speaks to how scales are the

British Geographers 30 (2015) 416-432. On historian's engagement see Sebouh David Asanian, Joyce Chaplin, Ann McGrath, and Kristin Mann, 'AHR Conversation How Size Matters: The Question of Scale in History', *The American Historical Review* 118 (2013) 1431-1472. Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, Jacques Revel, 'Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History', *The International History Review,* 33 (2011) 573-584.

[158]Keith Woodward, John Paul Jones III, and Sallie Marston, 'The politics of autonomous space', *Progress in Human Geography* 36 (2012) 204-224.

[159]Marston, Jones, and Woodward, Geography without Scale.

[160]Legg, *Prostitution and Empire,* p.32.

[161]Stephen Legg, 'Of scales, networks and assemblages: the League of Nations apparatus and the scalar sovereignty of the Government of India', *Transitions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34 (2009) 234-253. p.234.

[162]Legg, *Prostitution and Empire*, p. 4. Legg's work draws on and complements scholarship from the fields of 'New Imperial' and 'Interimperial' Histories on the analytical potential of networks, webs, and circuits in comprehending the plural and multi-scalar histories of Empire. See Alan Lester, 'Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire', *History Compass* 4 (2006) 124-144; Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, ''Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a research agenda' in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* ed. by Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Berkley: University of

effect of complex and heterogeneous connections across distance(s) which have both 'de-territorialising and de-scaling and re-territorialising and re-scaling tendencies'.[163] The latter recognises how the act of naming things as local, national, or international has material effects on how particular phenomena are apprehended. Second, Robert Kaiser and Elena Nikiforova also approach scale through a poststructuralist lens and understand scales as *effects*.[164] However, while Legg draws upon actor-network theory and assemblage thinking,[165] Kaiser and Nikiforova employ the notion of performativity to foreground how scale effects are 'socially produced' through 'reiterative and citational practices'.[166] The authors show how multiple scales are enacted and experienced within and through a single site, but also how 'scale talk and scale politics' shape 'identification processes and place making'.[167] I find this largely discursive analysis to neglect the relationship between scale's discursive and material effects and to underplay its networked dimension. Nevertheless, Kaiser and Nikiforova's work usefully demonstrates the diversity of actors involved in 'performing scale… in everyday life', in addition to how the 'scalar stances' adopted by different actors varies according to sociospatial context.[168]

California Press, 1997) p.1-56; Christoph Kamissek and Jonas Kreienbaum, 'An imperial cloud? Conceptualising interimperial connections and transimperial knowledge', *Journal of Modern European History* 14 (2016) 164-182; Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2014).

[163]Legg, Of scales, p.240

[164]Robert Kaiser and Elena Nikiforova, 'The performativity of scale: The social construction of scale effects in Narva, Estonia' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008) 537-562.

[165]For an alternative poststructuralist critique of scale using ANT see Chris Collinge, 'Flat ontology and the deconstruction of scale: a response to Marston, Jones and Woodward', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31 (2006) 244–51.

[166]Kaiser and Nikiforova, Performativity of scale, p.537.

[167]ibid, p.542.

[168]ibid, p.537 and p.544.

What both of these poststructuralist understandings of scale bring to the fore is the use of scale as a political strategy.[169] In foregrounding how particular scalar categories and discourses are *named* and *performed* into being, this scholarship sheds light on how Naga (and Indian) actors strategically articulate different scales to naturalise and legitimate particular territorial projects, in addition to how 'scale talk' shapes Naga identity formation and place making.[170] Throughout this thesis, I consider the networked practices which constitute the Nagas' engagement with various scales – including their integration into globally dispersed Christian internationalist and Indigenous communities – and the ambivalences that mark the articulation of particular Naga scalar identities. In doing so, I consider the power relations inherent in different Naga scalar political projects to draw out, on the one hand, the apparent scalar hierarchies which condition how Naga actors operate within heterogeneous scalar networks and, on the other, the material factors which both enable and constrain the ability of Naga actors to articulate, fix, and unsettle particular scalar discourses, including 'the international'.

Returning to the geographies of internationalism, these critiques of scale thus bring to the fore how, rather than a pre-existing domain inhabited by states and other putatively international organisations (such as the UN) internationalism (and thus, 'the international') is 'created and enacted through specific sites, practices, and people'.[171] In this vein, the last decade has seen a flourishing of geographical scholarship concerned with 'the international'. Much of this work has

[169]On scale as a political strategy see also Adam Moore, 'Rethinking scale as a geographical category: from analysis to practice', *Progress in Human Geography* 33(2) 203-225; Danny MacKinnon, 'Reconstructing scale: Towards a new scalar politics', *Progress in Human Geography* 35 (2010) 21-36; Jaime Hoogesteger and Andres Verzijl, 'Grassroots scalar politics: Insights from peasant water struggles in the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Andes, *Geoforum* 62 (2015) 13-23.

[170]Kaiser and Nikiforova, Performativity of scale, p.452.

[171]Hodder, Legg, and Heffernan, Historical internationalism, p.3.

been authored in response to a *Political Geography* special issue on the historical geographies of internationalism, edited by Jake Hodder, Stephen Legg, and Michael Heffernan.[172] The authors drew attention to the heterogenous ways in which internationalism has been understood and mobilised for diverse political ends. In asking 'who could articulate the international and from where?', Hodder and colleagues call for greater attention to the spatialities of internationalism. That is:

> By examining spaces and sites not previously considered in internationalist histories; by considering the relationship between the abstractions of internationalism and the geographical and historical specificities of its performance; and by analysing the interlocking of internationalism with other political projects.[173]

This approach to the study of internationalism proves to be an instructive framework for exploring how differently located Naga (inter)nationalists actors have articulated heterogenous understandings of the international across time and space. Responding to Hodder and colleagues' call to consider the relationship between internationalism and 'the other "big space" political ideas that have shaped the modern world', this thesis therefore also seeks to understand not only how Naga nationalist identities have been expressed in internationalist terms,[174] but also the engagement between Naga (inter)nationalism and regional solidarity movements, including Pan-Asianism and Northeast Indian tribal solidarity initiatives. I also extend the temporal gaze of

[172]Special Issue: Historical geographies of internationalism, 1990-1950, ed. by Jake Hodder, Stephen Legg, and Michael Heffernan, *Political Geography* 49 (2015) 1-73.

[173]Hodder, Legg, and Heffernan, Historical internationalism, p.3.

[174]Jake Hodder, Michael Heffernan, and Stephen Legg, 'The archival geographies of twentieth-century internationalism: Nation, empire and race', *Journal of Historical Geography* 71 (2021) 1-11. p.2.

studies on the relationship between internationalism and imperialism by considering how claims on and to 'the international' have been used to advance and unsettle first British and then Indian imperial projects over an eight-decade period. My approach also draws upon scholarship on the relationship between the shape and location of archives and practices of internationalism to ask what the geographically dispersed Naga nationalist archive reveals about the relationship between Naga (inter)nationalism and these heterogeneous, multi-scale political projects.[175] In Chapter 4, for instance, I consider how drawing from an imperial source base can be a revealing way of foregrounding the relationship between the emergence of Naga nationalism and both imperialism and internationalism; while in Chapter 5, I consider what a multi-scalar 'scavenger methodology'[176] (one which attends to fragments of A. Z. Phizo's geopolitical thought across multiple continents) reveals about the relationship between Phizo's (inter)nationalist thought and both space and place.

This thesis also draws upon scholarship on 'the international' from outside the geographical discipline. South Asian studies scholar Itty Abraham, for instance, has described international space as 'a product of struggle: over things, boundaries, membership, movement and passage, rules and ideas'.[177] Specifically, Abraham locates the emergence of 'the international' in 'struggles taking place at multiple locations among and between globally dispersed empires, territorial states, anti-systemic political movements, campaigns for national liberation… socially committed civil society, and religious organizations working in different parts of the globe'.[178] Elsewhere, amidst debates over what constitutes the core idea or methodology of international

[175]ibid.

[176]Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). p.13.

[177]Abraham, Germany Has Become Mohammedan, p.915.

[178]ibid.

relations, scholars of that field and of international political sociology have redefined the international as a sphere of 'multiplicity' – the lateral co-existence of, and interaction between, various social entities characterised by *difference*.[179] In both of these definitions, the international – as both a situated sphere of political struggle and claims making *and* a domain of heterogeneity – comes to cohere as a site of tension and negotiation between supposedly universalist ideas, practices, vocabularies, and institutions, and the ongoing existence of spatial plurality and hierarchies of difference. Thus, as Hodder has argued, 'the international' is 'not a given category or scale, but a way of encasing different conceptions of the world which were tied to the places in which [internationalism] was debated and sustained'.[180] This thesis adds empirical depth to this literature by showing what happens when these different conceptions of 'the international' come into dialogue, both in international fora and on the ground. For instance, in Chapter 6 I elucidate what happens when Naga (inter)nationalists' professed commitment to universal Indigenous self-determination at the UN comes into tension with efforts to navigate the Nagas' regional relationships with neighbouring Northeast Indian Indigenous communities.

Also navigating this tension between the universal and the geographically particular is Adom Getachew's *Worldmaking after Empir*e.[181] Getachew uses the term 'worldmaking' to describe how Black Atlantic thinkers and politicians sought to create an egalitarian postimperial world in the wake of decolonisation.[182] Specifically, Getachew focuses attention on how the idea of self-determination was appropriated and remade as part of a universal ambition toward non-domination, the constitution of regional federations in Africa and the Caribbean, and the creation

[179]Bigo and Walker, Political Sociology and the International; Kukri and Rosenberg, Multiplicity.

[180]Hodder, Conferencing the international, p.40.

[181]Getachew, *Worldmaking.*

[182]ibid, pp.2-5.

of a New International Economic Order.[183] Crucially, Getachew arrived at the concept of 'worldmaking' as a way of 'thinking about internationalism that was not anti-national or anti-state'.[184] Echoing the above discussion about the role of the postcolonial state within practices of subaltern geopolitics, Getachew's theorisation has much in common with the Naga anti-colonial (inter)nationalist projects and imaginaries I describe throughout this thesis, where the Westphalian state and the concomitant institutions of sovereignty, territory, and nationhood continue to loom large, if at times ambivalently. However, while I return to the idea of worldmaking in Chapter 7, I continue to use the language of internationalism and 'the international' throughout this thesis for two reasons. First, because this is the term which was used by my interlocutors to describe their activities, both in the archive and in interviews. Second, reflecting the above discussion of the nominalist and performative effects of scale, because 'the international' was continually invoked by Naga actors as a discursive and material domain with specific properties and political purchase. It is thus necessary to investigate how Naga actors have negotiated, performed, and projected an alternative vision of internationalism on these terms.

In doing so, however, this thesis also shares Getachew's preoccupation with the specific vocabularies through which anticolonial nationalists articulate their international political claims. Indeed, Getachew's interest in the generative means through which Black Atlantic thinkers recuperated and reimagined categories of modernity – including the nation-state, development, and self-determination – has much in common with the epistemological project of subaltern

[183]ibid, pp.2-5.

[184]Ayça Çubukçu, Adom Getachew, Darryl Li, Karim Malek, and Shaunna Rodrigues, 'Worldmaking and Empire: Humanity and Universals Not Sought', *Borderlands,* 4 February 2021, https://www.borderlines-cssaame.org/posts/2021/1/28/worldmaking-and-empire-humanity-and-universals-not-sought, last accessed 23 August 2023.

geopolitics. While Getachew's book unsettles what Liane Hartnett describes as 'a historical preoccupation with mid-twentieth century accounts of decolonisation'[185] by focusing on worldmaking projects *after* empire, this thesis extends Getachew's account by considering how Naga conceptions of self-determination, nation, and regional and international political space have been (re)fashioned over nearly eight decades. Moreover, by considering the spatially situated nature of Naga claims upon the international and the internal contradictions, ambivalences, and tensions within Naga (inter)nationalist projects, I unsettle genealogies of transnational advocacy which posit a linear shift from 20th century anticolonial self-determination movements focused on 'promoting the state sovereignty of oppressed peoples' to more recent human rights advocacy focused on 'challenging the sovereignty exercised over these people by their rulers'.[186] Instead, I seek to understand how Naga self-determination claims have been re-articulated throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in a context of ongoing political stasis and protracted uncertainty, in addition to how Naga politicians have articulated self-determination relationally, with reference to both the specific locality, and the term's status in international law.[187]

By exploring how Naga anticolonial nationalists conceive of the international and make use of it for their own ends, this thesis responds directly to Legg's provocation to geographers to ask: 'where was the international?'[188] In doing so, this thesis investigates three further aspects of

[185]Liane Hartnett, 'Love is worldmaking: Reading Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora* as international theory', *International Studies Quarterly* 66 (2022) https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqac037.

[186]Alex De Waal, 'Genealogies of Transnational Activism', in *Advocacy in Conflict: Critical Perspectives on Transnational Activism* ed. by Alex De Waal (Zed Books: London, 2015), pp.18-44 (p.27).

[187]Shona Loong, Alex Manby, Fiona McConnell, 'Rethinking the Geographies of Self-Determination: Colonial and Relational Geographies in Asia', *Territory, Politics, Governance* (2023) https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2023.2232410

[188]Legg, International anomaly, p.96.

the Naga case. First, I investigate the *actors* involved in articulating 'the international'. Much has been written about the role of elite actors, including statesmen, diplomats, and scholars in internationalist projects, particularly in South Asia.[189] An emergent scholarship has also begun to attend to the production of heterogeneous forms of internationalism 'from below'.[190] Moreover, scholars have unsettled the association between internationalism and mobility by drawing attention to the in situ circulation of internationalist discourses.[191] Together, this varied scholarship encourages us to expand the empirical gaze of studies of internationalism to consider a more heterogenous range of actors. In this vein, my approach follows Guyot-Réchard and Leake's call for a 'non-state centred international histor[y] of South Asia', one which 'restores an international ecosystem constituted by day-to-day encounters and initiatives by a multiplicity of actors'.[192] Thus, I interweave the thought and practice of the late anticolonial nationalist leader A. Z. Phizo with discussion of the activities of three contemporary Naga civil society organisations engaged in international advocacy.

Second, geographers and historians have drawn attention to the diverse modes and practices of internationalism. Within geography, there is a burgeoning body of literature attentive

[189]For instance, Sinderpal Singh, 'From Delhi to Bandung: Nehru, "Indian-ness" and "Pan-Asian-ness,"', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 34 (2011) 51–64; Itty Abraham, 'From Bandung to NAM: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947-65', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 46 (2008) 195-219.

[190]Featherstone, Maritime labour, p.7.

[191]Emma Hunter and Leslie James, 'Introduction: Colonial Public Spheres and the Worlds of Print' *Itinerario* 44 (2020) 277-242.

[192]Bérénice Guyot-Réchard and Elisabeth Leake, 'Introduction', in S*outh Asia Unbound: New International Histories of the Subcontinent*, ed. by Bérénice Guyot-Réchard and Elisabeth Leake (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2023), pp, 15-38 (p.18).

to the spatialities of diplomacy.[193] McConnell and colleagues, for instance, have drawn attention to how non-state actors strategically mimic and hybridise formal diplomatic discourse to generate legitimacy and recognition within the interstate system.[194] Others, like Sneha Krishnan, have foregrounded the role of print culture, including letters, journals, pamphlets, and newspapers in furthering internationalism.[195] An emergent body of thought has also considered the performative, social, and affective dimensions of international conferences.[196] With this diverse scholarship in mind, this thesis accordingly adopts an expansive view of what constitutes internationalism. This approach offers valuable conceptual space to extend existing studies of Naga internationalism which have principally focused on Naga attempts to engage with the UN,[197] by investigating a wider range of Naga (inter)nationalist practices. Thus, I also seek to understand how Naga actors have engaged with international fora. However, by bringing Kaiser and Nikiforova's work on the

[193]Fiona McConnell, 'Rethinking the Geographies of Diplomacy', *Diplomatica* 1 (2019) 46–55; Merje Kuus, 'Symbolic power in diplomatic practice: Matters of style in Brussels', *Cooperation and Conflict* 50 (2015).

[194]McConnell, Moreau, and Dittmer, Mimicking diplomacy.

[195]Sneha Krishnan, 'Ideal girls for Christian internationalism: the YWCA in early twentieth-century South Asia', *Social History* 48 (2023) 17-42.

[196]Hodder, Conferencing the international; Craggs, Subaltern geopolitics; *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences and the Making of the Modern World*. ed. by Stephen Legg, Michael Heffernan, Jake Hodder, and Benjamin Thorpe (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021); Stephen Legg, '"Political Atmospherics": The India Round Table Conference's Atmospheric Environments, Bodies and Representations, London 1930–1932', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110 (2020) 774-792.

[197]Walker, Decolonization; Bengt Karlsson, 'Anthropology and the "Indigenous Slot": Claims to and Debates about Indigenous Peoples' Status in India, *Critique of Anthropology* 23 (2003) 403-423.

performative dimensions of scale into dialogue with the geographies of internationalism, I further ask how 'the international' has been felt, embodied, and performed on the ground.[198]

Finally, scholars have investigated the role of identity politics in shaping practices of internationalism. Hodder, for instance, has documented how interwar race reformers invested (ultimately misplaced) hope in the League of Nations to reform international governance of the so-called 'race question'.[199] The significance of missionary and Christian networks in shaping twentieth-century internationalism has also been well documented.[200] Nevertheless, as Hodder and colleagues describe, 'the porous boundaries of [common identity]… categories [like race, gender, class, sexuality] and how they are strategically and politically mobilised remains a key underexplored theme' within studies of internationalism.[201] Hodder and colleagues' provocation is particularly pertinent to the Naga case, where nationalists have variously articulated claims on the international on the basis of ethnicity, religion and Indigeneity. This raises questions concerning the relationship between these different categories as they are mobilised internationally and on the ground. How, for instance, do Naga actors refashion a global Indigenous identity – one

[198]Federico Ferretti, '"Historical Geographies of Internationalism": Still a source of inspiration', *Political Geography* (2023) 102831 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2023.102831.

[199]Jake Hodder, 'The Elusive History of the Pan-African Congress, 1919–27', *History Workshop Journal* 91 (2021) 113-131. p.113.

[200]Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States Between the Great War and the Cold War* (London: Cornell University Press, 2015); Michael Brunner, 'From converts to cooperation: Protestant internationalism, US missionaries and Indian Christians and "Professional" social work between Boston and Bombay (c. 1920-1950)', *Journal of Global History* 16 (2021) 415-434. On evangelical Christians' rejection of international institutions, see Markku Ruotsila, *The Origins of Christian Anti-Internationalism: Conservative Evangelicals and the League of Nations* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008).

[201]Hodder, Legg and Heffernan, Historical internationalism.

with its roots in liberal democratic, Anglo-American settler-colonial contexts – to further their struggle for self-determination against the postcolonial Indian state? What is the relationship between articulations of Indigeneity by Naga groups in international fora and Naga claims to statehood? And how does the Nagas' Baptist Christian identity intersect with Naga internationalist thought and practice? These are among the questions this thesis seeks to address.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued for examining the geopolitical thought and practice of Naga (inter)nationalists with reference to scholarship from post-, de-, and anticolonial geographies and the geographies of internationalism. In this conclusion, I briefly outline how these strands of literature provide productive conceptual tools to attend to this thesis' research objectives.

This thesis' first objective is to examine the spatial vocabularies and geographical imaginaries underpinning Naga nationalist political claims and how they have been reinterpreted over time. This chapter has argued that postcolonial geographies scholarship is vital in understanding how the long aftermath of British colonialism has created the conditions for the terms on which Naga territorial struggles against India are made. Nevertheless, I have also argued that decolonial geographies scholarship is necessary to comprehend how Naga spatial imaginaries are also articulated with reference to Naga Indigenous territorial formations and a critique of ongoing Indian coloniality. Located between these two bodies of scholarship, anticolonial geographies literature brings to the fore the plural range of space-making practices which accompany expressions of Naga anticolonial (inter)nationalism, in addition to how the Naga self-determination movement is simultaneously networked, transnational, and constituted by diverse sets of elite and subaltern actors.

I have argued that these complex colonial geographies raise questions regarding the analytical terminology through which to comprehend Naga geopolitical subjectivity. In this vein, I have drawn upon scholarship on marginal and non-state geopolitical actors to make the case for understanding expressions of Naga (inter)nationalism as a form of subaltern geopolitics. I have argued that subaltern geopolitics provides a generative framework for capturing the ambiguous and ambivalent relationship that Naga geopolitical thought occupies vis-a-vis the interstate system, while also making the case for re-centering the postcolonial state at the core of subaltern geopolitics scholarship. Echoing the concerns of my second research objective – to investigate the sources of political legitimacy Naga nationalists draw upon when articulating their political claims – I have argued for the necessity of bringing into conversation subaltern geopolitics scholarship with the geographies of legitimacy to foreground how the construction of legitimacy emerges as a conceptual bridge connecting Naga geopolitical imaginaries across multiple scales.

Finally, to achieve my third objective – to explore how Naga (inter)nationalism has been created and enacted through specific sites, practices, and people – this thesis draws upon scholarship on the historical geographies of internationalism. I have argued that scholarship on the discursive-practical work involved in the deployment of scale provides a productive tool for interrogating the strategic mobilisation of scale as a political strategy by Naga (inter)nationalists. Poststructuralist critiques of scale also destabilise received understandings of 'the international' as a pre-existing domain of states and 'international' organisations. This opens up conceptual space for interrogating how 'the international' has been theorised by Naga actors, the plural practices of and varied actors engaged in Naga (inter)nationalism, and the relationship between Naga (inter)nationalism and other 'big space' political ideas.

In sum, through bringing scholarship on the geographies of internationalism into conversation with colonial geographies scholarship, I have argued for investigating not only how Naga (inter)nationalists have imagined and materialised alternative conceptions of 'the international' and the Nagas' place within it, but also how they have done so as part of efforts to advance a critique of ongoing Indian coloniality. This thesis is an attempt to situate and diversify the geographies of internationalism by exploring how 'the international' looks and feels from the perspective of those at the margins of the nation, of empire, and of the interstate system. To challenge effectively the terms upon which internationalism has conventionally been studied, a methodological approach is required which extends our empirical gaze away from the historical study of large international organisations and is instead attentive to a broad range of 'international' sites and actors. How I developed such a methodological approach to study the historical and contemporary geographies of Naga (inter)nationalism is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3 | Researching Naga (inter)nationalism: Methods and approaches

1. Introduction

The methodologies employed in this research have been inspired by the conceptual framework detailed in Chapter 2. In an effort to pluralise the geographies of internationalism, I sought to develop an approach which could attend both to how Naga (inter)nationalism has been enacted through specific sites, practices, and people, and to how the Naga political claim has been (re)interpreted over time. Moreover, the Nagas' relative position of marginality vis-à-vis the hegemonic interstate system necessitated looking beyond formal sites of internationalism, such as the UN, to elucidate how the spatial imaginaries underpinning Naga geopolitical claims have been forged, articulated, and legitimated at and across multiple sites and scales.

I also designed my research methodology in response to logistical constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. I had originally intended to research how Naga youth figure the future under conditions of geopolitical uncertainty. However, the pandemic – which began in the UK six months after starting my DPhil – made the ethnographic fieldwork required for this project impossible. I thus redesigned my research to adapt to remote working conditions. In making this shift, I was inspired by methodological scholarship which has explored the potential of both the 'transnational' and 'digital' turns within the historical and social sciences, and the opportunities these offer for studies of internationalism.[202] This scholarship gained increased attention in light

[202]Hodder, Heffernan, and Legg, Archival internationalism. Also see Lara Putnam 'The transnational and text-searchable: digitized sources and the shadows they cast', *American Historical Review* 121 (2016) 377-402; Roy Rosenzweig, 'Scarcity or abundance? Preserving the past in a digital era', *The American Historical Review* 108 (2003) 735–62; Patricia Clavin, 'Time, manner, place: Writing modern European history in global, transnational and international contexts', *European History Quarterly* 40 (2010) 624-640.

of the travel restrictions imposed by Covid-19, and, while I was acutely aware of the difficulties of conducting 'remote' research during the pandemic, I was interested in how these conditions could be generative in telling an alternative, international, and more historically and geographically expansive story of the Naga struggle.

This research thus adopts what Jack Halberstam terms a 'scavenger methodology' – one which combines 'methods, geographies, histories and archives' which have hitherto been disconnected from one another.[203] Halberstam's formulation, with its focus on those actors who have been 'deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behaviour', was developed for the study of sexuality and the writing of queer histories.[204] However, I found that this interdisciplinary approach also had much to offer to the writing of the historical and contemporary geographies of other marginal geopolitical actors whose voices are largely silenced in existing scholarly accounts. Moreover, while Halberstam adopts a 'scavenger methodology' to challenge the normative constraints of disciplinary boundaries, I found it to be a generative and rewarding means of overcoming the research constraints brought about by the pandemic.

Initially unable to travel, I thus began my research by consulting Naga collections held in state and non-state archives in the UK, alongside conducting both virtual interviews with Naga activists and an analysis of Naga newspapers and social media. Following the re-establishment of air travel between the UK and India, in August 2022, I conducted one month of in-person fieldwork in Northeast India.[205] I was based in Kohima – the state capital of Nagaland – while also visiting Dimapur, Mokokchung, and Wokha. These places were where my interlocutors lived and were

[203]Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, p.13.

[204]ibid.

[205]The length of my visit was constrained by the Indian visa restrictions in operation in 2022 which limited visits by British nationals to thirty days.

important sites for the Naga nationalist movement. I also travelled to Imphal (the state capital of Manipur) to familiarise myself with the ongoing tensions between Naga and Manipuri communities over calls by Naga nationalists for the territorial integration of Naga inhabited areas across the Nagaland-Manipur border. Throughout my visit, *The Highland Institute,* a local research establishment, provided logistical support and occasional interview interpretation services.[206] During my visit, I consulted archives and libraries, conducted additional interviews with Naga activists, and attended the NNC's '75th Naga Independence Day' celebrations. I also observed other Naga nationalist performances broadcast online. Finally, I consulted the archives of the UNPO in Antwerp as well as Naga submissions to the UN's Indigenous Peoples forums held in the DOCIP online archives.[207]

With reference to the broader aims of this thesis, the utility of this multi-sited and mixed method approach was threefold. First, this 'scavenger methodology', which involved hunting for traces of the Naga nationalist movement across disparate archival collections, including those of foreign governments, transnational organisations, and the Nagas' Western supporters — was revealing of the myriad connections which have existed between Naga nationalists and diverse global actors past and present. Reflecting my research interest in the relationship between Naga (inter)nationalism and other 'big space' political ideas, bringing together these diverse sources helped to elucidate how Naga nationalism has increasingly emerged through its engagement with other scales of activity – including the international and the imperial – in addition to how Naga (inter)nationalist thought has been shaped by the grounded sites in which it has been developed. While this approach was necessitated by the lack of a singular archive documenting Naga history,

[206]The Highland Institute, https://highlandinstitute.org/ last accessed 23 August 2023.

[207]I describe this archive in Section 2.

it also speaks to scholarship on nationalism described in Chapter 2 which is increasingly taking the *trans*- and *inter*national seriously,[208] and scholarship concerning the relationship between the 'form and location of the international archive' and historical internationalism(s).[209]

Second, attending to both high level pronouncements of Naga nationalist actors (for instance in international forums) and to more quotidian engagements with Naga nationalism – as articulated online, in newspapers, and in activist interviews – allowed me to develop a multi-scalar geography of Naga statehood. That is, one which considered the historical and contemporary views of elite political actors, and popular cultural discourses around Naga nationhood and self-determination as well as the circulation of these ideas across these different domains. As I will show, such an approach reveals how Naga political thought inscribes materially meaningful geographies. Moreover, with reference to this thesis' second research objective, this approach was vital in elucidating how Naga political actors have sought to generate both domestic *and* international political legitimacy.

Third, this methodology illustrated the contextual and relational construction of Naga political subjectivities, identities, and (inter)national claims. In seeking to understand how Naga nationalist discourses and geographical imaginaries are articulated and vary across different sites and scales as is evident in archival, digital, and interview-based data, this approach thus speaks to the geographical theorisations of relational space. As described in Chapter 2, such scholarship recognises that space is the product of social 'interrelations' and 'interactions' occurring across all spatial scales.[210] Drawing on the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2, however, I did not

[208]Getachew, *Worldmaking;* Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[209]Hodder, Heffernan, and Legg, Archival internationalism, p.1.

[210]Massey, *Space, place and gender,* p.265.

conceive of scales as natural or pre-existing phenomena, but instead explored how such scales have been reified and 'named into being' in part through the self-conscious efforts of Naga nationalist claimants to fashion an international geopolitical subjectivity.[211]

This chapter describes the component parts of this 'scavenger methodology'. In Sections 2, 3, and 4, I discuss the use of archival, interview, and digital methods respectively. In Section 5, I consider issues of positionality, while in Section 6 I discuss research ethics. I conclude with some reflections on the value of integrating historical and contemporary source material.

2. Archival approaches

This thesis draws on archival material pertaining to the Nagas in the colonial and the post-colonial era. Much of this material is based in the UK, reflecting the Naga Hills' location as the 'cradle of British anthropology',[212] and the fact that several Naga nationalists – including A. Z. Phizo – sought to internationalise the Naga self-determination struggle from the UK in the second half of the twentieth century.[213] Inspired by Hodder and colleagues' call for scholars to 'read across a fuller array of spaces in which internationalism was devised and archived', this thesis thus drew on state and non-state archives held in the UK, Nagaland, Belgium, and Switzerland.[214] These collections fell into five categories.

First, records relating to the genesis of the Naga nationalist movement in the colonial period were accessed in the collections of British officials formerly based in the Naga Hills. These

[211]Legg, Of scales, p.248.

[212]Jelle Wouters and Michael Heneise, 'Nagas in the 21st Century (Introduction)' in *Nagas in the 21st Century,* ed. by Jelle Wouters and Michael Heneise (Kohima: Highlander Books, 2017), pp.1-12. (p.5).

[213]Walker, Decolonization.

[214]Hodder, Heffernan, and Legg, Archival internationalism, p.2.

officials included William George Archer ('W. G.' Archer) – Additional Deputy Commissioner to the Naga Hills 1946-1948 – and his wife Mildred. These documents are held in the British Library in London and the Centre of South Asia Studies ('CSAS') at the University of Cambridge. I visited the British Library in person. The documents held by CSAS have been digitised and were accessed online.[215]

Second, files pertaining to the Indian government's response to the Naga self-determination movement during the 1940s and 50s were consulted at the Nagaland State Archives in Kohima. These included letters and pamphlets produced by the NNC and personnel files of NNC leaders produced by Indian intelligence agencies.

Third, materials relating to the international activities of Naga nationalists and their transnational supporters in the 1960s were accessed at the British National Archives in Kew and in the papers of David Astor held at the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford. Astor was the former editor of *The Observer* newspaper and worked closely with Phizo as part of a network of western advocates to publicise the Naga cause.[216] His collection includes letters and pamphlets written by Phizo and circulated amongst Naga advocacy communities and more quotidian records of Phizo's life in the UK. At the British National Archives, I consulted government correspondence concerning Phizo's time in the UK and Naga affairs in Nagaland produced for both the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Office.[217]

Fourth, I read letters, memorandums, and pamphlets relating to the twentieth and twenty-first century activities of Naga nationalists in Nagaland and to the Nagas' international engagement

[215]Digital Himalaya, https://wwwe.lib.cam.ac.uk/nagas/coll/4/xintroduction/detail/all/index.html last accessed 23 August 2023.

[216]Walker, Decolonization.

[217]These two departments merged in 1968 to form the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

with the Global Indigenous Peoples' Movement at the Naga Archives and Research Centre (NARC) in Dimapur. The NARC was established by the Naga Baptist Minister Rev. Dr. Vetsotsü Kepfozü Nuh ('V.K.' Nuh) and opened in 2015. The collection contains 40,000 files collected by Nuh since the 1950s. Ashmore and colleagues assert that accessing '[personal] archival collections requires forming relationships with their holders' and is thus often a 'sociable occasion'.[218] In this vein, I was fortunate to speak with Nuh during my visit, who described the challenges of curating and maintaining his collection when, prior to the Indo-Naga ceasefire of 1997, possession of Naga nationalist literature could have led to his arrest. Nuh has compiled many of the most significant documents in a book, *The Naga Chronicle*, which I also consulted frequently.[219] A further selection of Phizo's speeches have also been reprinted and published online and were accessed through the NNC's website.[220]

Fifth, materials relating to the NCSN-IM's membership of the UNPO were studied at that organisation's archive, held at the National Movements Archive (AVDN) in Antwerp, Belgium. This collection included the NSCN-IM's UNPO membership application, and documents pertaining to the Nagas' engagement with the UN's Indigenous Peoples' mechanisms.

Finally, submissions and speeches given by Naga advocates in UN forums from the 1990s onwards were accessed online via the digitised archives of 'DOCIP', 'The Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information'.[221] DOCIP has digitised more than 10,000

[218]Paul Ashmore, Ruth Craggs, and Hannah Neate, 'Working-with: talking and sorting in personal archives', *Journal of Historical Geography* 38 (2012) 81-99. p.83.

[219]*Naga Chronicle*, ed. by Nuh and Lasuh.

[220]Naga National Council letters, http://naganationalcouncil.org/letters.html last accessed 29 August 2023.

[221]For more information, see DOCIP, https://www.docip.org/en/our-services-solutions/documentation-center/ last accessed 23 August 2023.

documents pertaining to the participation of Indigenous people at the UN and other international forums, including statements made by Indigenous delegates at international conferences, UN resolutions, and legal instruments regarding the rights of Indigenous People. Analysis of contemporary Naga digital and print media publications is discussed in Section 4.

The archives I consulted in the UK were online or freely open to the public and therefore I did not encounter any access issues. Access to the UNPO's archive was facilitated by the organisations' secretariat as part of my ongoing collaboration with the UNPO which I describe below. As I go on to discuss, archives pertaining to the Naga nationalist movement are highly fragmented, while questions of ownership and legitimacy invariably shape the historical account it is possible to write. I was only able to consult the NARC collections as a result of my engagement with networks of Naga activists based in the UK and Nagaland, while access to the Nagaland State Archives was facilitated by *The Highland Institute.* A number of interviewees also shared relevant documents with me through personal correspondence. The archival and interview components of this thesis were thus very much married.

With few exceptions, all archival sources were in English, reflecting that it is the most widely spoken shared language amongst Naga communities and is employed by Naga nationalists in their communications with external audiences. I read the archives both *against* and *along* the grain. This approach involved – on the one hand – attending to the silences, gaps, and absences of Naga actors from within the archival collections of colonial and postcolonial administrators and Western advocates and – on the other hand – attending to 'archival form': the power relations underpinning the production, curation, and physical maintenance of archival collections.[222]

[222]Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). p.2.

Acknowledging 'archiving-as-process' as well as 'archives-as-things'[223] involved attending to how the 'topography of physical information'[224] concerning the Naga struggle and the circulation of writings *within* and *between* archival collections is indicative of the networked and multi-scalar geographies of Naga (inter)nationalism.

In engaging the aforementioned sources, I sought critically to reflect on how my reading of the archive was shaped by my positionality — as a white, male, British scholar who, on first encounter with most of the archives described above, had been unable to travel to the Naga homeland – and by the social, political, and epistemological contexts within which I was working. On the one hand, I was aware of the archival geographies of exclusion that make it easier for scholars working in the West to access some Naga archival collections more easily than those in Naga areas, and the challenges this poses for representation. I reflect on this further in Chapter 4. I was also conscious that my university affiliation often afforded an ease of access that is unavailable to all researchers, particularly when working in Nagaland. On the other hand, I was also mindful of those voices who were absent or erased from the archives, particularly those outside of the immediate leadership of the NNC or elite Naga advocacy communities. As a result, the historical components of this thesis are, by necessity, principally focused on the narratives of a small number of elite men, whilst the voices and contributions of those around them – particularly women and their families – are absent.

Writing at geographical and personal distance created feelings of discomfort in terms of contextualising and responsibly presenting material. When reading the archive, I thus attempted

[223]Ann Stoler, 'Colonial archives and the arts of governance: on the content in the form' in *Refiguring the archive,* ed. by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylot, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (Dordrecht: Springer, 2002), pp.83-102. (p.87).

[224]Putnam, The text-searchable, p.380.

to embrace what Jazeel describes as 'uncertainty' and 'translation'. I sought to avoid reading Naga geopolitical theory through universalised Euro-American concept metaphors, while attending to the specificity of language through which Naga space is written.[225] Naga English is one of the many forms of 'Global Englishness' which is spoken and written around the world.[226] I paid close attention to the idiomatic expressions used by Naga writers in articulating their claims and to how these varied between archival sources. Mindful of Stoler's contention that the historian's engagement with the archive is 'layered with the received account of earlier events and the cultural semantics of a political moment', I situated my reading of the archive alongside a broader contextual understanding of Naga political and social life as well as the interpretation of these same archives by the Naga activists I interviewed.[227] In Chapter 6, I consider how many of the archival documents I encountered continue to underpin Naga internationalist imaginaries. Moreover, in Chapter 7, I consider the relationship between these archives and the repertoire of embodied Naga (inter)nationalist performances.

Reflecting on the challenges of archival research in 'post-colonial Africa', Childs Daly describes how access issues and the 'fragmentary' nature of state archives mean that historians of the 'recent past' must often do with 'less material' than those researching the colonial period, 'even though the time period they consider is closer to our own'.[228] In response, he argues, historians

[225]Tariq Jazeel, 'Subaltern geographies: Geographical knowledge and postcolonial strategy', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 35 (2014) 88-103. p.98.

[226]Nina Laurie and Diana Richardson, 'Geographies of stigma: Post-trafficking experiences', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 46 (2020) 120-134. p.132.

[227]Stoler, Colonial archives, p.92.

[228]Samuel Childs-Daly, 'Research Note Archival Research in Africa', *African Affairs* 116 (2017) 311-320. p.313.

must return to 'a broad and omnivorous approach to sources taken by earlier generations'.[229] I encountered similar difficulties. Discussions of the Naga nationalist movement in the Nagaland State Archives are scant whilst ongoing violence and destruction in Naga areas mean that few documents from the NNC's early years survive. Furthermore, ongoing tensions between different elements of the Naga political movement make it difficult to access those archival collections that do exist. As Kewada argues, a 'sparse and fragmented postcolonial archive necessitates a dynamic and generative methodological approach'. [230] In addition to triangulating the records in archives in Nagaland with those I had already seen in the UK, I thus adopted two additional historical approaches to supplement my reading of the Naga (inter)nationalist archive.

First, I conducted four in person oral history interviews: three with Nagas who had been involved with the NNC in the organisation's early years and one with a Western advocate who was involved with Naga international advocacy in the 1980s and 90s. These interviewees were all between 60 and 90 years old. Our discussions lasted between one to two hours and were held at interviewees' homes. These interviews were arranged through the snowball sampling methods described below. Two were conducted in English while two were conducted with a Tenyidie language interpreter.[231] Though few in number, these interviews provided a fuller picture of historical Naga political life and helped me better understand A. Z. Phizo. I was mindful of critiques of oral history approaches which note the method's vulnerability to the fallibility of

[229]ibid.

[230]Rakhee Kewada, 'The Postcolonial Archive and Methods: Field Notes from the Tanzania National Archives', *The Professional Geographer* 74 (2022) 553-561. p.553.

[231]Tenyidie is the language of the Angami Naga community.

human memory.[232] However, echoing Portelli's contention that the 'importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them', I embraced the ambivalences and inconsistencies of such accounts as revealing of contemporary efforts to (re)fashion Naga political subjectivities and naturalise particular historical pasts.[233]

Second, I analysed a number of biographies or autobiographies of Naga nationalists leaders. These included: *The Prisoner from Nagaland* (Dalle Namo, 1987); *Memories of a Naga Centenarian* (Pfüron Sentsi, 2004); *Wounded Tiger: The Papers of Khodao Yanthan* (Abraham Lotha, 2017); *A Naga Odyssey* (Visier Sanyü, 2018); *The Battles We Fought: Indo-Naga War* (Sanguto Chase, 2018), and *The World's Youngest General* (Kuhoi Zhimoni and Khekaho Zhimomi, 2022). In approaching these sources, I was inspired by Deepak Nair's use of official biographies to overcome the dearth of information available about the 'off-limits' interactions underpinning diplomatic sociability.[234] These texts are not without their limitations: they are often written many years after the events being recounted, are often tied to particular political and social agendas, or are attempts to rehabilitate their subjects. Nevertheless, these books are instructive in understanding NNC politicians in the immediate postcolonial period. Furthermore, understood as an intervention into Naga political and social life, these memoirs shed light on ongoing efforts by various Naga politicians to (re)write Naga history today. Parsing the points of tension between

[232]Mark Riley and David Harvey, 'Talking geography: on oral history and the practice of geography', *Social and Cultural Geography* 8 (2007) 345-351.

[233]Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop Journal* 12 (1981) 96-107. p.100.

[234]Deepak Nair, 'Sociability in International Politics: Golf and ASEAN's Cold War Diplomacy', *International Political Sociology* (2019) 196-214.

these different historical recollections revealed some of the issues at stake in contemporary attempts to recover Naga history.

3. Interviews

This thesis also draws on online and in-person interviews conducted with members of three Naga civil society organisations: the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights ('NPMHR'), the Forum for Naga Reconciliation ('FNR'), and the Global Naga Forum ('GNF'). While the Baptist church has long played an important role in reducing hostilities between the Nagas and India, since the 1990s Naga civil society groups have become increasingly involved in the Indo-Naga peace process.[235] In particular, the period since the 1997 Indo-Naga ceasefire has seen the emergence of what Manchandra and Bose describe as a growing 'middle-space' within the Indo-Naga peace process.[236] This 'non-partisan' and 'non-sectarian' arena – the authors argue – exists 'between the factions, between the state and the armed political groups, and between Naga society and the NSCN', and is largely occupied by a growing number of 'Naga social organisations', whose members comprise a 'new [Naga] middle class'.[237] The roots of this middle class can be found not in the 'tribal institutions of Naga society', but in members' 'urban location', experience of higher education, the 'credentials, money, [and] job opportunities [they] have accrued' through 'the benefits of the Indian state structure', and engagement with 'national and international ideas of development'.[238]

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[235]Chongpongmeren Jamir, *Christianity in Northeast India: A Cultural History of Nagaland from 1947* (Oxford: Routledge, 2020). p.124.

[236]Rita Manchanda and Tapan Bose, 'Expanding the Middle Space in the Naga Peace Process', *EPW* 46 (2011) 51-60. p.51.

[237]ibid, p.53.

[238]ibid, p.55.

The NPMHR, FNR, and GNF, are all significant players in this 'middle-space'.[239] As I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7, while firmly committed to collective Naga self-determination, these organisations possess considerable agency in producing and circulating alternative imaginaries of Naga nationhood. All three organisations advocate for Naga self-determination in UN forums and/or enact a version of Naga self-determination in local communities. They seek both to nudge the NPGs towards reconciliation and articulate creative solutions to the so-called 'Naga problem' on the ground, outside of the formal Indo-Naga peace process. Further information about each organisation is presented in Box 1. In total, I conducted 31 interviews with 27 interviewees. A breakdown of demographics can be found in Table 1 and a list of interviewees in Appendix B. Interviews typically lasted between one and three hours. These were 'key-informant interviews', in which 'opinion leaders' within the Naga activist community shared their experiences of advocacy and their own conceptions of Naga nationhood.[240]

[239]Some interlocutors were cautious that the term 'middle-space' implied a dilution of calls for Naga self-determination. This is not my intention. Instead, I use the term to describe those groups engaged in creative, bottom-up efforts to re-imagine meanings of Naga self-determination in the context of ongoing uncertainty and political stasis.

[240]Ellena Barnidge, Catherine Radvanyi, Kathleen Duggan, Freda Motton, Imogene Wiggs, Elizabeth Baker, and Ross Brownson, 'Understanding and Addressing Barriers to Implementation of Environmental and Policy Interventions to Support Physical Activity and Healthy Eating in Rural Communities', *The Journal of Rural Health* 29 (2013) 97-105. p.98.

Box 1: Biographies of Naga civil society organisations

Naga People's Movement for Human Rights ('NPMHR')
The NPMHR was established in 1978 as a pan-Naga body dedicated to monitoring human rights violations committed by Indian military forces in Naga areas.[241] Prior to the Indo-Naga ceasefire, the organisation facilitated dialogue between NPG members and the public.[242] In 1982, the NPMHR brought an appeal in the Supreme Court of India, challenging AFSPA's constitutional basis. The case, though unsuccessful, increased Indian public awareness of Indian military repression against the Nagas.[243] The NPMHR is committed to collective self-determination without being aligned to any particular NPG. The organisation has been involved with the UN's Indigenous Peoples' mechanisms and has mobilised international solidarity in support of Naga political rights.[244] In the early 2000s, the NPMHR launched 'A Journey of Conscience'. This initiative saw the NPMHR organise 'meetings, public forums, and fact finding missions' across the Indian subcontinent in order to communicate 'the story of the Naga struggle' and 'foster respect' amongst the Nagas and Indian civil society.[245] Today, the NPMHR has chapters within Nagaland and in Delhi. The cessation of Indo-Naga hostilities has reduced the organisation's public profile. Nevertheless, it continues to be involved in local and international human rights advocacy, organising public protests and civil society dialogues concerning the Indo-Naga negotiations. In Chapter 6, I describe both the NPMHR's historic engagement with the UN and the organisation's more recent efforts to re-imagine Naga self-determination.
The Forum for Naga Reconciliation ('FNR')

[241]Nandita Haksar, 'Naga People's Movement for Human Rights: A Report', *EPW* 20 (1985) 2201-2203. p.2201.

[242]Interview 23 August 2022.

[243]*Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v. Union of India* (1998) 2 SCC 109. The full judgement is available at https://main.sci.gov.in/jonew/judis/13628.pdf last accessed 2 September 2023.

[244]I describe the NPMHR's engagement with global Indigeneity in Chapter 6.

[245]NPMHR, Kuknalim! Oh Kuknalim! (date unknown, probably 2008), File regarding UNPFII in New York, 2002-2010, 7th Session, 2008, National Movements Archive, Antwerp (ADVN)/UNPO/D17994(1/1).

The FNR was established in 2008 during a prayer workshop. The FNR has two aims: the cessation of armed confrontation between the Naga factions and the establishment of a single political organisation representing all Nagas.[246] The context for the FNR's emergence can be located in how, although the 1997 ceasefire halted Indo-Naga military hostilities, violence between the NPGs continued. Thus, whilst previous Naga peace initiatives mediated between the GoI and the NPGs, the FNR 'pursues Naga reconciliation on the basis of the historical and political rights of the Naga people'.[247] Although the FNR is not affiliated with any NPG, the organisation's aims are certainly political.[248] As Kethosier Kevichusa (a Naga scholar and FNR member) argues, it may seem incongruous for the struggle for 'historical and political rights' to forge the basis of Naga reconciliation — not least because the struggle for these rights underpins both the Indo-Naga conflict and the tensions between the NPGs.[249] On closer analysis, however, it is unsurprising that the FNR adopted this as their guiding philosophy and the basis for their programme of reconciliation, since it is the struggle for Naga historical and political rights which is common to all the NPGs.[250] Moreover, Kevichusa argues, without this 'guarantee that the Naga nationalist struggle will not be sacrificed on the altar of reconciliation', the different NPGs would never have agreed to work with the FNR.[251] The organisation initially worked to reduce tensions between the NPGs. These activities saw several successes, including the signing of the 'Covenant of Reconciliation' (2009), the 'Naga Concordant' (2011), and the 'Lenten Agreement' (2014) by NPG leaders.[252] Today, the organisation has more than 30 members, including representatives from other

[246]Kethoser Aniu Kevichusa, 'Tribal Conflicts in India: The Case of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation' in *Mission as Ministry,* ed. by Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford; Regnum, 2013), pp.301-308.

[247]FNR, Public Statement, p.23

[248]ibid.

[249]Kevichusa, Tribal Conflicts, p.308.

[250]ibid.

[251]Ibid. Also see Jamir, *Christianity,* pp.86-91.

[252]These agreements variously saw the NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K commit to end armed conflict between the NPGs, work toward the formation of 'one national government' and remain open to working with other NPGs. FNR, 'Public Statement', pp.23-30.

Naga civil society bodies from Nagaland and neighbouring states – including the NPMHR.[253] The organisation also has roots in the Baptist and Catholic churches. It enjoys broad support across Naga society,[254] though as I describe in Chapter 7, the organisation has not been without criticism.[255] Today, the FNR acts as an umbrella body which coordinates the involvement of different civil society bodies in the Indo-Naga peace process. Though the FNR does not engage with the UN, it has close ties with both American Baptist and English Quaker movements,[256] and broadcasts many of its events 'internationally' via social media. I describe one of these events – Naga Day (2018) – in Chapter 7, with reference to the FNR's efforts to re-orientate its activities towards achieving reconciliation within Naga society as the basis for collective self-determination.

The Global Naga Forum ('GNF')

The GNF was established in September 2020, as a 'platform of Nagas from different walks of life living in different parts of the world… [who] wish to contribute towards achieving… [Naga] self-determination'.[257] The organisation has two objectives. First, 'to amplify the voice and story of the Naga struggle through various mediums and media'.[258] Second, 'to connect the Nagas across tribes and borders and also to the world through [the Naga] story'.[259] Unlike the FNR and the NPMHR, GNF leaders argue that the organisation is independent of other Naga civil society and religious bodies and that their membership draws from a broader range of Naga publics, including a wide range of different Naga tribes.[260] Nevertheless, many members of the GNF have been or continue to be involved in the NPMHR and/or the FNR, and other forms of Naga activism. As hinted by the organisation's name, the GNF is particularly focused on fostering a 'global' Naga sensibility through forging links between the Nagas living in Nagaland, members of the Naga diaspora (including in Europe and the United States), and Nagas living 'across borders' in Myanmar,

[253]Jamir, *Christianity,* p.125.

[254]Kethoser Aniu Kevichusa, *Forgiveness and Politics* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2021), p.71.

[255]On critiques of the FNR also see Manchanda and Bose, Middle Space.

[256]Kevichusa, *Forgiveness and Politics,* p.72.

[257]The Global Naga Forum, *Nagaland Post* (online), 29 September 2020.

[258]ibid.

[259]ibid.

[260]Interview 20 August 2023; Interview 25 August 2023.

Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. In recent years, the GNF has superseded the NPMHR as the principal civil society body representing the Nagas at the UN and, along with the NPMHR, has been at the forefront of efforts to re-imagine meanings of Naga self-determination in line with shifting international norms.[261] The organisation has led humanitarian work in Myanmar and has lobbied Indian officials involved in the Indo-Naga peace process.[262] The organisation has a growing public presence, including through TV appearances, public statements, and through organising the 'Naga Solidarity Walk' in July 2022 (described in Chapter 7).

Interviews occurred in two stages. First, fifteen remote interviews were conducted between July and September 2021. Participants were accessed in collaboration with the UNPO, an international membership-based NGO who work with Naga political and civil society groups to challenge their marginalisation within international fora.[263] Interviews were conducted remotely, via JITSI, a secure video-call platform. Given the sensitivities involved in discussing the Indo-Naga conflict and following revelations that Naga leaders' data featured in the Pegasus spyware records,[264] I was initially concerned that interviewees would be hesitant to speak online. However, perhaps reflecting the increasingly digital nature of their advocacy, interviewees appeared comfortable with this format. Interviews centred on interlocutors' experiences of international advocacy, their understandings of self-determination, sovereignty, and peace, and their aspirations for the Nagas' future. Interviewees were based in Nagaland and neighbouring Indian states, and, reflecting the

[261]I describe these efforts in Chapter 6.

[262]Global Naga Forum women delegation meets National Security Adviser for an early solution to Naga problem, *India TodayNE* (online), 6 October 2020; Global Naga Forum sends Relief Mission to fire victims of Solo Chiu Village: a report, *Ukhrul Times* (online), 15 March 2023.

[263]I described the UNPO in Chapter 2 with reference to the politics of labels.

[264]Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, 'Despite Modi's "Historic" Nagaland Deal, Top NSCN Numbers Figure in Snoop List', *The Wire* (online), 21 July 2021.

transnational nature of the Naga advocacy movement, also included members of the Naga diaspora in India, America, and Europe.

Sixteen additional interviews were conducted in August 2022 in Nagaland.[265] These included follow-up interviews with some of those I had previously interviewed online, in addition to conversations with other activists approached via snowball sampling or via my affiliation with *The Highland Institute.* Whilst I initially sought to contact participants using my university email address, I quickly found that most participants preferred to keep in touch via 'WhatsApp' or 'Signal'. These platforms also allowed participants easily to share photos, documents, and web links, including after I had left the field. As Chan argues, snowball sampling has the advantage of 'preserv[ing] the information of the network structure'.[266] Given my focus on the Naga advocacy community as a transnational network, this approach helped me to understand the various connections which existed between Naga activists and civil society organisations.

Whilst these latter discussions covered similar topics to the remote interviews, I also used them to understand how interviewees and their organisation(s) were situated within Naga society. I also sought clarification about the meaning of geopolitical events which occurred during my visit. I took advantage of the altered temporality of fieldwork – whereby in-person fieldwork took place after I had drafted two of the thesis' empirical chapters, and eight months after the initial set of interviews – to seek responses to the arguments that I had begun to formulate in my written work.

Although I have been learning Nagamese, the *lingua franca* in Nagaland, both sets of interviews were conducted in English, a language all interlocutors spoke fluently. Nevertheless,

[265]This includes the four oral history interviews described above. These interviews were 'hybrid' interviews which included both an oral history interview, and a discussion of contemporary Naga politics.

[266]Julian Chan, 'Snowball Sampling and Sample Selection in a Social Network', *SSRN,* 1 September 2015, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3369071 last accessed 23 August 2023.

my knowledge of Nagamese was useful in building a rapport with interviewees. Interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, reflecting a desire to allow interviewees space to articulate their own understandings of Naga nationhood, Indigeneity, sovereignty, and self-determination. I refined my interview guide after each interview to seek clarification around emerging themes and as a way of responding to shifting political events. With participants' consent, most interviews were recorded. Where participants requested not to be recorded, I took written notes. After each interview, I produced digital field notes where I described interview context, including location, the influence of place on our discussion, and interviewee-interviewee dynamics. I also noted any evidence of the interpersonal dynamics between members of Naga civil society groups, including how activists referred to each other and to one another's ideas. In particular, I observed that the level of respect accorded to Naga civil society actors was often granted according to age.

Table 1: Interviewee demographics

Age		**Gender**	
21 - 30	3	M	19
31 - 40	4	F	8
41 - 50	6	**Residency**	
51 - 60	4	Nagaland	19
61 - 70	4	Manipur	2
71 - 80	3	Delhi	2
81 - 90	3	Myanmar	1
Ethnicity		Europe	2
Naga	26	Americas	1
Non-Naga	2		

During my research, I was mindful that the majority of interviewees (eventually 19 of 31) were men. In part, this reflects the male dominated nature of Naga politics.[267] Nevertheless, cognisant of recent efforts by Naga civil society organisations such as the GNF to engage more women in their advocacy, in Nagaland I specifically sought out women respondents who were active in public life. These conversations helped me to understand how gender intersected with other facets of Naga identity. As to age profile, interviewees were broadly evenly distributed by age, with a slight skew toward those over 40. This reflects how this age group has historically dominated Naga nationalist politics.

The majority of my interviews were 'elite' interviews conducted with highly educated members of Naga society who were well integrated within global networks of thought and practice. Often drawing upon decades of experience of Naga advocacy and activism, interviewees were usually confident speaking extempore about even the most granular issue concerning the Naga struggle. Indeed, a small number of interviewees were themselves 'scholar-activists', who had conducted research into the Indo-Naga conflict which then informed their advocacy.[268] These interviewees were well-versed in relevant academic debates which informed their responses to my questions. I reflect in Section 6 on the challenges of interviewing activists and advocates. For now, however, I echo scholars of post- and decolonial geographies by acknowledging my interviewees as experts and geopolitical theorists in their own right.[269]

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[267]Matthew Wilkinson, 'Masculinity in the margins: men and identity in twenty-first century Nagaland', *The South Asianist,* 5 (2017) 140-161.

[268]Jennifer Mendez, 'Globalizing Scholar Activism: Opportunities and Dilemmas through a Feminist Lens' in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship,* ed. by Charles Hale (London: University of California Press, 2008), pp.136-163.

[269]Radcliffe, *Decolonizing Geography.*

4. Print and digital media analysis

Finally, I also consulted materials on Naga social media pages, websites, and local newspapers. As to the first of these, I used the internet to scope out alternative research approaches in the wake of the travel disruption imposed by Covid-19. Moore and Rogers distinguish between social media as an *object* and an *instrument* of research.[270] In practice, however, I found this distinction to be artificial: what began as a way to gather contextual information to inform later fieldwork quickly emerged as a locus of geopolitical analysis. Building on scholarship which recognises the inseparability of 'off' and 'online' worlds, [271] I saw analysis of social media not as a substitute for on the ground fieldwork, but as complementing archival and interview approaches.

In developing this approach, I was inspired by scholarship on social media as a space where geopolitical discourses are forged, circulated, consumed, and contested.[272] Pinkerton and Benwell, for instance, foreground how social media platforms offer opportunities for 'citizen statecraft', blurring the distinction between politicians, diplomats, journalists, and 'ordinary' citizens.[273] Similarly, Harris has called for a 'Facebook Geopolitics', which explores how social media platforms collapse boundaries between producers and consumers of geopolitical knowledge.[274]

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[270]Scott Rogers and Susan Moore, 'Researching Urban Life Through Social Media' in *Researching the City: A Guide for Students* ed. by Kevin Ward (California: Sage, 2020), pp.165-180.

[271]Agnieszka Leszczynski, 'Spatial media/tion', *Progress in Human Geography* 39 (2015) 729–751.

[272]Orlando Woods 'Clashing cyphers, contagious content: The digital geopolitics of grime', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 46 (2021) 464-477; Jason Dittmer and Daniel Bos, *Popular Culture, Geopolitics and Identity* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019).

[273]Alasdair Pinkerton and Matthew Benwell, 'Rethinking popular geopolitics in the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty dispute: Creative diplomacy and citizen statecraft', *Political Geography* 38 (2014) 12-22. p.20.

[274]Jonathan Harris, 'Nativist-populism, the internet and the geopolitics of indigenous diaspora', *Political Geography* 78 (2020) 102124 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102124.

'Facebook Geopolitics' requires a methodological approach which reproduces the ethnographic tenants of participant observation online, including by attending to 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' on social media, in addition to textual and visual elements.[275] Echoing Postill and Pink's call to replace 'internet ethnography' with 'internet related ethnography',[276] Harris calls researchers to triangulate social media data with interview and participant observation data.[277]

Inspired by Harris' approach, I analysed Naga nationalist Facebook pages. Scholars have illustrated the important role that 'WhatsApp' plays in political debate within South Asia.[278] It was impossible, however, for me to access these 'private' spaces from the UK. There is also comparatively little engagement with Twitter (now renamed 'X') amongst Naga activist communities. Interlocutors instead advised me which Facebook pages were popular amongst those debating Naga geopolitics. These included *The Naga Blog* – a group of 130,700 members, which, to the best of my knowledge, is the largest Facebook group focused solely on Naga issues – as well as *WE THE NAGAS (CHATROOM)* (53,000 members) and *The Chronicles of Naga* (17120 members). I negotiated access through group administrators who – after I had explained my research – granted me permission to 'lurk'.[279] In the interests of transparency, I used my personal Facebook account to access these spaces. The platform's enhanced privacy settings meant that my

[275]ibid.

[276]John Postill and Sarah Pink, 'Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web', *Media International Australia* 145 (2012) 123–134. p.125.

[277]Harris, Nativist-populism.

[278]Philippa Williams, Lipika Kamra, Pushpendra Johar, Fatma Matin Khan, Mukesh Kumar, Ekta Oza, 'No room for dissent: Domesticating WhatsApp, digital private spaces, and lived democracy in India', *Antipode* 54 (2020) 305-330.

[279]Gabriele de Seta, 'Three Lies of Digital Ethnography', *Journal of Digital Social Research* 2 (2020) 77-97.

name, profile picture, and institutional affiliation were publicly visible, but additional personal details were hidden.

I conducted a period of focused observation of these pages throughout October 2020, a flashpoint in the Indo-Naga negotiations.[280] For two weeks, I read all the contributions to each group. I also used the search function to look at older posts related to the nationalist movement using search terms including 'Indigenous', 'NNC', 'NSCN', 'Independence', 'UN', 'Nagalim' and 'Phizo'. Alongside digital field notes, I took screenshots using screen-capture software called 'Snagit'. Posts were anonymised and coded according to a set of predetermined themes relating to Naga politics. I conducted a similar exercise on the public social media pages of the GNF and the Naga Students Federation ('NSF'). The laborious nature of this process made it impossible to sustain this intensity of analysis during the latter research period. Nonetheless, I continued to 'lurk' and read posts on these pages throughout November 2020 to September 2022. In respect of users' privacy, I have not reproduced screenshots or verbatim quotes in the thesis. Instead, I used this material to provide contextual information to support my analysis, or as the basis of interview discussions.

This approach complemented the archival and interview approaches described above in three ways. First, social media allowed me to stay in touch with Naga political and social life from afar. Social media alters the temporalities through which people engage with geopolitical discourse: through allowing users to respond to posts in real time, it accelerates a back and forth

[280]In 2019, the Government of India announced an ultimatum that all talks with the NSCN-IM had to be concluded by 31 October 2020, otherwise negotiations would be abandoned. The talks were inconclusive. Nevertheless, India remains in negotiations with the NSCN-IM.

previously limited by television schedules and print runs.[281] Digital media thus collapse geographic distance by cultivating a 'shared political temporality' across space.[282] Politics is thus not simply reported or discussed online, but actively plays out on social media. Social media analysis therefore enabled me to follow the shifting contours of Naga politics in real time from the UK and observe how putatively 'local' Naga issues are intertwined within the broader nationalist struggle. This informed my reading of the archive and helped contextualise interview responses.

Second, this approach allowed me to understand how so-called 'ordinary' Naga citizens[283]– albeit those who were predominantly young, digitally literate, and politically engaged – engage with Naga nationalist discourses outside of formal political spaces. Social media is characterised by both its multivocality and dialogicality,[284] empowering individuals to exercise agency in producing and contesting geopolitical knowledge(s).[285] I observed how social media users responded to Naga nationalist textual and visual content, including extracts from historic speeches given by A. Z. Phizo and contemporary writings shared by the Naga civil society groups described above. The latter included news opinion pieces, but also the text and video of speeches given by Naga activists at the UN. In the chapters to come, I situate these emergent digital circulations within a broader genealogy of Naga nationalist print culture.

Third, I used social media to identify relations between the geographically dispersed Naga activists I interviewed. Echoing scholarship which illustrates the role of digital spaces in

[281]Yarimar Bonilla, and Jonathan Rosa, '#Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States' *American Ethnologist* 42 (2015) 4-17.

[282]ibid, p.4

[283]Pinkerton and Benwell, Rethinking geopolitics, p.20.

[284]Bonilla and Rosa, #Ferguson, p.4.

[285]Woods, Clashing cyphers; Harris, Nativist-populism.

maintaining transnational communities,[286] I found social media to be an important means through which the Naga diaspora interacted with activists in the homeland. Attending to these interactions revealed the divergences between the responses of interviewees based in Nagaland and those outside.

Alongside analysis of digital media, I conducted critical discourse analyses of Naga print media. I saw print and digital media analyses as complementary – not least because print media articles are often discussed in Naga nationalists Facebook groups. Newspapers were identified through interlocutors. I conducted a focused analysis of the print version of *The Morung Express* newspaper during the October 2020 Indo-Naga peace negotiation. Established in 2005 by self-described Naga Indigenous scholar and activist, Dr Akum Longchari, *The Morung Express* is an English language newspaper which aims to provide an 'alternative voice to the dominant status quo in Nagaland... conceived from the Naga people's historical realities'.[287] Such references to the Nagas' 'historical realities' are employed by activists as shorthand for a distinct Naga temporality outside of Indian nationalist historiographies. Thus, the publication reports on issues concerning all Naga inhabited areas (rather than only Nagaland State) and discusses Naga issues generally without framing them with reference to India. In doing so, the newspaper discursively prefigures an imagined space in which the Nagas are united and outside of India. *The Morung Express* currently has a print circulation of nearly 41,000, alongside a significant online readership. The publication is independent from state, NPG, and commercial actors. When analysing *The Morung Express,* I adopted similar codes to those used to analyse interview material.

[286]Victoria Bernal, 'Digital media, territory, and diaspora: the shape-shifting spaces of Eritrean politics', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 32 (2020) 60-54.

[287]The Morung Express, About us, https://morungexpress.com/about-us last accessed 18 May 2022.

Throughout the DPhil (October 2019-September 2023) I also closely monitored the websites of other Naga newspapers – *The Naga Republic*, *The Eastern Mirror,* and *The Nagaland Post* – for articles referring to the nationalist movement and publications written about/by members of the groups I interviewed.[288] News websites are frequently used by Naga civil society groups to publish public interventions into the Indo-Naga peace process. Relevant articles were captured using 'Snagit', while accompanying notes and textual extracts were recorded using Google Docs.

The transnational nature of Naga advocacy means that – even prior to the pandemic – activist events were often broadcasted online. Accordingly, I spent time watching Naga civil society dialogues, solidarity videos, and nationalist celebrations from the period 2019-2022. Two of these – 'Naga Day' and the 'Naga Solidarity Walk' — are described in detail in Chapter Seven. I identified these videos via social media, news coverage, or interlocutor recommendations. Videos uploaded to YouTube were publicly available. I was afforded access to private events by interviewees. Online events included sessions of the NMPHR's 'Morung Dialogues' where attendees discussed issues affecting Naga society with the objective of furthering 'democracy, Justpeace and social justice'.[289] Rather than actively participating, I observed these events and took field notes. The content of these online events often formed the basis of interview discussions. As described in the introduction to this chapter, in Nagaland, I also attended the NNC's '75th Naga Independence Day ('NID')' celebrations in Chedema Village. Here I watched nationalist cultural and military celebrations and spoke with and shared food with attendees. Though open to the Naga public, access to the celebrations was facilitated by the owner of my hostel in Kohima, who

[288]The Naga Republic, www.thenagarepublic.com last accessed 23 August 2023; Nagaland Post, www.nagalandpost.com last accessed 23 August 2023; Eastern Mirror, www.easternmirrornagaland.com last accessed 23 August 2023.

[289]18th NPMHR's Morung Dialogue: To Freedom: A Human Story, *E-PAO* (online), 19 September 2020.

attended in a personal capacity but had links to the NNC. With organiser permission, I took photographs and made field notes. From the UK, I re-watched a video of the celebrations on YouTube and made additional field notes. This experience is described in Chapter 7.

5. Positionality

Throughout my research I drew on insights from feminist, postcolonial, and poststructuralist scholarship to reflect critically on how my positionality shaped interviewer-interviewee power relations. Prior to visiting Nagaland, I was conscious of being an 'outsider' to the Naga context and the challenges this posed contextualising interviewee responses. Nevertheless, perhaps reflecting their experiences communicating the Naga political issue to external audiences, I rarely had to ask interviewees to clarify their responses. While some interviewees appeared surprised that I was interested in Naga politics, all appeared at ease throughout our discussions. I established trust with interviewees by familiarising myself with their work prior to our meeting. I demonstrated my familiarity with the historical and political context of the Naga self-determination movement, whilst adapting my interview questions to reflect the content of our conversations. I was aware that the methodological pivot from ethnographic methods towards remote interviews was accompanied by a shift in the nature of the thesis. Rather than seeking to ascertain the broader political opinions of Naga communities, I now had a narrower focus on the intellectual thought of a small number of civil society leaders.

More significant than my ethnicity, nationality, or outsider status in shaping relations with interviewees, however, was my identity as an associate of the UNPO and as a student at the University of Oxford. Given the privileged access afforded to me by the former organisation, I

wanted to produce research outputs which would contribute to participants' advocacy work.[290] As such, responding to Richa Nagar's call for researchers to consider how they can act as conduits between scholarly and activist communities,[291] I have been working with the UNPO to produce a report summarising Naga activists' plural understandings of self-determination. This draws on previous work with the UNPO documenting the experiences of unrecognised diplomats at the UN.[292] However, whilst I was aware of the advantages that my UNPO affiliation afforded in building trust with participants, I often also found it difficult navigating the tensions inherent to inhabiting a dual identity as both a researcher and an advocate.[293] Whilst I made it clear to interviewees that I supported Naga self-determination, I avoided commenting on the actions of specific NPGs. This was relatively straightforward, given that civil society activists often felt ambivalent toward the NPGs. Nevertheless, I remained conscious that activists' responses were often informed by their advocacy goals. In one memorable interview, a Naga student politician invited four of his colleagues to watch our conversation, before answering my questions with well-rehearsed answers which had little relation to the questions posed. Only once we were alone and the audio recorder was switched off did he offer a franker assessment of his organisation's advocacy. Other interviewees asked for my assistance in communicating Naga political demands

[290]Kevin Mason, Gavin Brown, and Jenny Pickerill, 'Epistemologies of participation, or, what do critical human geographers know that's of any use?', *Antipode* 45 (2013) 252-255.

[291]Richa Nagar, 'Footloose researchers, 'travelling' theories, and the politics of transnational feminist praxis' *Gender, Place & Culture* 9 (2002) 179-186. p.185.

[292]Fiona McConnell, Alex Manby, and Mercè Monje Cano, and Ralph Bunche, *Compromised Space and Undiplomatic Immunity* (UNPO, 2020).

[293]Matilda Aberese-Ako, '"I won't take part!": exploring the multiple identities of the ethnographer in two Ghanaian hospitals', *Ethnography* 18 (2017) 300-321; Fiona McConnell, *Rehearsing the state: The political practices of the Tibetan government-in-exile* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

to British government officials or international media publications, or expressed their belief that my affiliation with Oxford University would help increase the movement's international presence. In navigating these multiple positions, and negotiating the potential power imbalances these created, I sought to be realistic with interviewees about the nature of my research and my capacity to achieve change, such that they could make an informed decision about the information they felt comfortable sharing.

As Johnsen and Fitzpatrick argue, religion has been neglected in accounts of researcher positionality.[294] Yet, they argue, 'metaphysical position' and 'religions identity/ies' should be understood as a 'sui generis aspect of positionality' which cannot be folded into existing analytic categories.[295] Religion was central to my relationship with interviewees. Nagaland is overwhelmingly Christian, and Baptist theology is inextricably tied to articulations of Naga nationalism. Though raised in the Church of England, I am no longer a practising Christian. Nevertheless, knowledge of Christian teachings helped to build relationships with research participants. Religious reference points littered our discussions, and my knowledge of the Bible was invaluable in interpreting interviewees' narratives. Such is the centrality of Christianity to the Naga nationalist movement that interviewees often opened our conversation by asking which denomination of Christianity I belonged to (assuming that I must be a Christian). Several interviewees ended our encounters with a blessing or prayer for the success of my research. On

[294]Sarah Johnsen and Suzanna Fitzpatrick, 'Faith, values, and metaphysical positionality in qualitative research', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 47 (2022) 229-242. p.231.

[295]ibid, p.231. For exceptions see Lily Kong, 'Mapping 'new' geographies of religion: politics and poetics in modernity', *Progress in Human Geography* 25 (2021) 211–233; Avril Maddrell and Richard Scriven, 'Celtic pilgrimage, past and present: from historical geography to contemporary embodied practices', *Social and Cultural Geography* 17 (2016) 300-321.

[295]Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, Faith and values, p.231.

two occasions, interlocutors described their belief that my presence in Nagaland was the product of divine providence. In a context where religion is a key source of legitimacy for the Naga nationalist movement, my interest in their advocacy was thus considered auspicious. I found these moments uncomfortable because I felt unable to live up to interlocutors' expectations for the research. Here again, I sought to be transparent and open with interviewees about the potential impacts of my research whilst respecting their faith. With this in mind, I turn now to consider the broader ethical considerations underpinning this project.

6. Ethical considerations

Four principal ethical considerations arose during my research. The first concerned the importance of obtaining informed consent from research participants. Prior to conducting both online and in-person research, I gained approval from the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). Given the sensitivities of conducting fieldwork in the Naga context, and the fact that some participants were reluctant to document their participation formally, I sought verbal, rather than written consent. As part of this process, I set out clearly my institutional affiliation(s), the purpose of our interview, and how interview data would be managed and used. Recognising that obtaining informed consent is an ongoing, situated, and relational process,[296] however, I began each interview by emphasising to interviewees that they were free to end our discussion at any point. Where participants gave permission to record the interview, I explained that the audio file would not be shared with others and that the text file would be anonymised upon transcription.

[296]M. Ariel Cascio and Eric Racine, 'Person-oriented research ethics: integrating relational and everyday ethics in research', *Accountability in Research: Ethics, Integrity and Policy* 25 (2018) 170-197.

Where other data was obtained from participants, for example documents shared over WhatsApp, I sought clarification from interlocutors around how they envisaged this data being used.

Second, throughout my research I was committed to a process of reciprocity, or 'giving back' to participants.[297] Alongside working with the UNPO, I identified areas where I could be useful to my interlocutors. For example, I shared documents in Naga archival collections in the UK with Naga activists. I also ran a training session for junior staff at *The Highland Institute* on writing literature reviews. As part of a commitment to ongoing dialogue and avoiding extractive research, I have maintained relationships with participants via WhatsApp and email. Whilst I was able share preliminary findings with participants during my in-person fieldwork, in the spirit of both transparency and accountability, I intend to continue this process, eventually disseminating my findings and the concomitant UNPO report with participants.

Third, given the history of conflict in Naga areas, I was conscious that my research did not exacerbate tensions, both between Naga groups and the Indian state and within Naga communities.[298] This required being sensitive to points of tension between Naga activists. I sought to be transparent with participants regarding who else I had interviewed, both to establish trust, and to ensure that participants could make informed decisions about sharing information. Working in this context required paying attention to the politics of anonymity. Whilst the public facing nature of the organisations described here mean that I have chosen to use their names, I use pseudonyms in place of participant identifiers throughout.

[297]Matej Blazek and Kye Askins, 'For a relationship perspective on geographical ethics', *Area* 52 (2020) 464-471.

[298]Jonathan Goodhand, 'Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability', *Forced Migration Review* 8 (2009) 12–15.

Fourthly, there were specific ethical considerations involved in conducting research on Facebook, where the public-private boundary is blurred. As Willis argues, in these circumstances it is necessary to take seriously not only the technical level of access afforded to a researcher to an online space, but also the 'level of privacy or publicness as perceived by the users' of such spaces.[299] Thus, I decided that the size of the groups analysed here and how this contributes to notions of 'publicness' amongst members, meant that my research on social media was 'comparable to observational research in a public space' and thus did not require informed consent from all group members. Indeed, that would have been impossible to obtain.[300] As described in Section 3, I instead approached group administrators, who understood the social dynamics of each page, to ask permission to join and 'lurk'. I explained the nature of my research and how, at that time, the Covid-19 pandemic had left me unable to visit Nagaland. As outlined above, in seeking to avoid online contributions being digitally traced and the identity of group members inadvertently being revealed, I have not reproduced screenshots or verbatim quotes in the thesis. I am mindful that this raises additional ethical questions regarding the extent to which online users can be credited for the knowledge they produced.[301] However, I decided that, given this data was principally contextual in nature and was primarily collected to support the analysis of archival and interview material, this approach was warranted.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the utility of a 'scavenger methodology' involving multi-sited archival, interview, and digital methods both in comprehending articulations of Naga

[299]Willis, Observations online, p.4.

[300]ibid.

[301]De Setta, Three Lies of Digital Ethnography, p.89.

(inter)nationalism over a period of nearly eight decades *and* as a means of adapting to the research constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. I have also discussed how ethics and positionality shaped this research. I use this conclusion to explain the importance of integrating these various approaches. Indeed, although presented separately here for clarity, the different methods described above should be seen as complementary. This integrative, multi-sited, and multi-scalar approach is key to foreground how Naga (inter)national political subjectivities have been forged *across* and *with reference to* a multitude of different sites and scales. I illustrate in the subsequent chapters how juxtaposing archival and contemporary source material is vital to enable an analysis of the reception history of twentieth-century Naga geopolitical thought. As I will show, in a context where efforts to reconstruct and naturalise a timeless national past frequently underpin Naga political claims, it is necessary to direct attention to the dis/continuities underpinning the formation of a Naga geopolitical subjectivity.

Moreover, by supplementing interview, digital, and archival data with a discussion of a brief period of in-person field work, I also hold in tension the discursive and imaginative elements of Naga (inter)nationalist intellectual thought with an understanding of how Naga spatial imaginaries are lived, embodied, and materialised**.** As I described in Chapter 1, rather than an exhaustive history of the development of Naga nationalism, I thus use this approach to demonstrate both the historical contingency of present-day Naga political thought, and the openness of Naga geopolitical futures. With these considerations in mind, I now turn to outline the historical context for the rest of the thesis through both a review of secondary literature and by introducing primary sources that will be elaborated on in the chapters to follow. In doing so, I consider the utility of Imperial era sources in understanding the internationalist character of Naga nationalism. I also consider the enduring legacies of a series of alternative attempts to reshape the Nagas' territorial

settlement in the closing decades of colonial rule on the subsequent trajectories of Naga (inter)nationalism.

Chapter 4 | Situating Naga (inter)nationalism: Colonial histories of Naga nationhood

1. Introduction

> Nagaland is a land of festivals… it's [sic] people belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock, whose ancestors lived off nature's abundant gifts, blessed with sturdy formidable disposition. Above all, the people here are warm hearted and extremely hospitable.
>
> **Government of Nagaland[302]**

> The Nagas are of the Mongolian racial groups. Unable to conduct a proper census due to abnormal situation created by India, the population is roughly estimated at 3 million. From time immemorial, Nagas have been living independently in their self-contained Village-Republics democratically. The Nagas have carved out a distinct socio-cultural [sic] of their own and has no shared political history with any of its immediate neighbours. Nagas are predominantly Christian, about 90%.
>
> **The Naga National Council[303]**

> Naga Nation is an imagined creation, a historical process and a historical necessity forced by colonialism, conversion, a fast-changing world and more…Nagas are not primitive hill tribes, but peoples… Nagas are still a colonised people, but when the colonials - both Europeans and Indians - refer to the Nagas as 'Indian tribes', it insinuates that Nagas are somewhat backward and primitive… The terminology, 'tribe', does not even exist in any Naga language… There are no people without a unique history of their own… The Naga story is the history of several nations, often at war with each other, that were gradually brought together by the powerful impacts on them by colonialism, conversion and Western education.
>
> **Dr Visier Sanyü, Forum for Naga Reconciliation[304]**

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[302]GON, 'Nagaland Profile*'* https://nagaland.gov.in/pages/nagaland-profile last accessed 6th July 2023.

[303]NNC, 'Nagaland'*,* http://naganationalcouncil.org/Nagaland.html last accessed 6th July 2023.

[304]Visier Sanyü, 'Nagas: A Nation of Peoples' in *Naga Day: A Day Where All Nagas Come Together and Stand as One People,* ed. by FNR (Dimapur: Heritage Publishing House, 2017), pp.8-12 (p.7).

The question of 'Who are the Nagas?' is deceptively difficult to answer. For the NPGs such as the NNC quoted above, the Naga nation is a primordial entity, forged out the Nagas' ancestral migration from Mongolia, China, Thailand, and even the ancient Kingdom of Israel (Samaria) to their current homeland.[305] Such politically charged accounts emphasise the Nagas' Christian character and are utilised by the NPGs to create historical distance between the Nagas and India.[306] The Government of Nagaland ('GON') promotes its own essentialist narratives, reproducing colonial era representations of the Nagas' as care-free pastoralists enjoying a timeless way of life. The tagline 'land of festivals' – adopted by the GON in the early 2000s – speaks to how such depoliticised representations are increasingly used to attract tourists to an area long associated with insurgency.[307] Increasingly, however, Naga human rights activists – like Naga scholar Dr. Visier Sanyü – reject such primitivist representations and embrace claims as to the constructedness of Naga nationhood. Rather than a critique of its fragility, however, such an acknowledgment is used as evidence of the Naga nation's indomitable spirit against British and Indian colonial power. Importantly, these accounts of Naga history exist in opposition to Hindu nationalist counter-

[305]Naga nationalists sometimes claim that the Nagas are a 'lost tribe' of Israel. For instance, see *Naga Chronicle*, ed. by Nuh and Lusuh, p.13. Also see Shonreiphy Longvah, 'Christian conversion, the rise of Naga consciousness, and Naga nationalist politics' in *Nagas in the 21st Century,* ed. by Jelle Wouters and Michael Heneise (Kohima Highlander Press, 2017), pp.131-150.

[306]On Naga origin myths see Marion Wettstein, 'Origin and Migration Myths in the Rhetoric of Naga Independence and Collective Identity', in *Origins and Migrations in the Extended Eastern Himalayas,* ed. by Toni Huber and Stuart Blackburn (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 213-238.

[307]Arkotong Longkumer, 'Who sings for the Hornbill?: the performance and politics of culture in Nagaland, Northeast India', *The South Asianist Journal* 2 (2013) 87-96.

narratives which script the 'civilisation and familial' connections between the Nagas and those inhabiting the rest of the subcontinent.[308]

Any attempt to understand these diverse narratives must be grounded within political and scholarly discourse concerning Northeast India. Before turning to that discourse, there is the logically prior question of what is meant by 'Northeast India'. As Sanjib Baruah argues, Northeast India is a recent addition to the spatial vocabulary of South Asia, a 'postcolonial coinage that took root in the 1970s' to describe collectively the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura.[309] Far from a vernacular designation, the territorial construction of 'the Northeast' is deliberately adopted by officials in Delhi to refer to an organised region with its roots in the sovereignty regimes of the British Raj.[310] Today, Northeast India as a regional label and a spatial imaginary is loaded with contradictions. On the one hand, with its directional reference to the Indian heartland, the construction of the 'Northeast' reflects an attempt by Indian bureaucrats, military strategists, and nationalist politicians to inscribe what was once an imperial frontier with the status of an integral component of the Indian national geo-body. On the other hand, the term, along with the often-pejorative label of 'Northeasterner', continues to be charged with a sense of alterity, and is used within political and popular discourse to position the region and its inhabitants at the cultural, political, and social margins of the nation-state.[311]

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[308]Arkotong Longkumer, 'The power of persuasion: Hindutva, Christianity, and the discourse of religion and culture in Northeast India', *Religion* 47 (2017) 203-227. p.303.

[309]Baruah, *Name of the Nation*, p.1.

[310]ibid, p.1.

[311]Dolly Kikon and Bengt Karlsson, *Leaving the Land: Indigenous Migration and Affective Labour in India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

In this context, where the legacies of colonial era sovereignty regimes continue to shape contemporary imaginaries of the Northeast, this chapter elucidates how British colonial practices of spatiality and territoriality shaped the making of *both* the Indian nation-state *and* its northeastern 'margins' – including the Naga homeland. By reviewing secondary literature (including historical and anthropological accounts of the development of Naga nationalism) and various primary sources, I explore the historical context for the emergence of a Naga nationalist consciousness in the twentieth century. The primary sources include memorandums, treaties, and pamphlets authored by Naga politicians, British administrators, and Indian officials in the decades preceding the transfer of power. Many of the documents which are introduced in this chapter will be examined in greater depth in the chapters that follow. These sources were principally consulted at the British Library and the Naga Archives and Research Centre, but many have also been widely reprinted in Naga nationalist literature. I also draw on copies of *The Naga Nation*, the print organ of the NNC, published September 1946-October 1947.[312] That publication was freely distributed to government buildings around the Naga Hills and enjoyed at least 250 paid subscribers.[313] The magazine features detailed discussion of the debates occurring in the NNC regarding the Nagas' political future and has hitherto received scant scholarly attention.

I offer a fresh approach to analysis of the emergence of Naga nationalism in the late colonial period by reading these primary and secondary sources through a spatial and temporal

[312]The magazine was banned by the Indian administration in the late 1940s. Copies were consulted at BL/Archer/Mss Eur F236/364.

[313]The figure of 250 subscribers comes from NNC, *The Naga Nation* (henceforth 'TNN'), Volume 1: Issue 12 (July 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364. Drawing from American Baptist Historical Society Archives, however, Longkumer has found evidence of a print run of 500. See Arkotong Longkumer, "Along Kingdom's Highway": The proliferation of Christianity, education, and print amongst the Nagas in Northeast India, *Contemporary South Asia* 27 (2019) 160-178. p.167.

lens. As to the former, I highlight how the operation of colonial power across the Naga Hills was a spatially differentiated process, one which relied on the production of a series of (often contradictory) geographical and historical imaginaries. I foreground the effects of these imaginaries in the Naga context because of their material legacies on subsequent efforts to realise Naga geopolitical futures. I also consider the impact of alternative state-making and territorialising projects in shaping the development of a Naga consciousness in the late colonial period – projects which I argue are underplayed in existing histories of Naga nationalism. As to a temporal lens, I use these sources to interrogate the temporal politics undergirding efforts to materialise Naga geopolitical futures in this period. I use these sources to consider moments where the Nagas' political future was foreclosed to unsettle the teleology of both the Nagas' claim to statehood and Indian sovereignty over Naga territories. Moreover, I consider how a politics of deferral was adopted by Naga, British, and Indian actors to justify particular territorial arrangements.

Before discussing the content of these primary and secondary sources, I begin by discussing the nature of historiography in the Naga context and the challenges of using imperial sources to document the late colonial period. With these challenges in mind, I next consider what these sources tell us about the spatialities of British rule over Naga territories and how this shaped the emergence of a Naga nationalist consciousness in the late colonial period. Thereafter, I turn to discuss three documentary proposals through which Naga elites, colonial administrators, and Indian officials attempted to reconcile this nascent Naga political consciousness with the shifting local, regional, and international political contexts in the years 1929-1947. I conclude by explaining how this analysis prefigures the chapters to come.

2. Colonial historiographies of Naga nationalism

Before moving to the substance of this chapter, I first turn to discuss briefly the specific challenges of writing a history of the Nagas focusing on the late colonial/early postcolonial period and how these challenges have shaped the narrative in this chapter. Northeast India occupies an ambivalent space within broader South Asian historiography. The region – particularly its tribal communities – is marginal to both Marxist and Nationalist histories of India. Moreover, despite numbering 12 volumes, there is not a single essay about the region in what was formerly the vanguard of South Asian historical scholarship: the *Subaltern Studies Series.*[314] In recent years, attempts to provincialise area studies scholarship under the guise of 'Zomia' studies has stimulated interest in the region, both as a lens through which to examine so-called regional 'heartlands', and as a fulcrum from which to write new histories of the global.[315]

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[314]On Northeast Indian historiography see Anandaroop Sen, Genealogies of exception: Writing histories of North-east India, *History Compass* 20 (2022) 1-16.

[315]van Schendel proposes 'Zomia' as a highland region of Southeast Asia (including the Naga homeland) 'that did not make it as a world area' after World War II. van Shendel uses Zomia to critique the statist assumptions underpinning scholarly area designations and to reclaim the 'contextualised knowledge' that area studies produces to imagine other 'spatial configurations' centred around crosscutting areas, transnational flows, and borderlands. Scott extends Zomia to refer to a mode of behaviour exhibited by those evading the state in upland societies. Both authors' work has provoked scholarly interest in highland South/Southeast Asia. Willem van Schendel, 'Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: Jumping scale in South East Asia', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space D*. 20 (2002) 647–668; James Scott, *The Art Of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010). On historians' engagement with 'Zomia' see Jean Michaud, 'Editorial-Zomia and beyond', *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010), 187–214. On geographers' engagement see Richard Powell, Ian Klinke, Tariq Jazeel, Patricia Daley, Michael Heffernan, Adam Swain, Fiona McConnell, Andrew Barry, and Richard Phillips, 'Interventions in the political geographies of "area"', *Political Geography* 57 (2017) 94-104.

Nevertheless, the practice of writing histories of Indigenous, sub- and minority nationalist communities such as the Nagas, sits uneasily with these attempts to 'jump scale' and write 'connected' histories,[316] not least because they unsettle nationalist actors' efforts to construct their own 'unique' histories of the present.[317] Indeed, in the Naga context, historical writing is deployed to naturalise particular territorial arrangements. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British administrator-anthropologists produced numerous studies of Naga tribes in the service of British colonial power.[318] Seeking to garner parliamentary support for the creation of a state of Nagaland *within* India, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru commissioned anthropologist Virrier Elwin to write a history of the Nagas.[319] Conversely, international supporters of Naga independence, including British journalists Gavin Young and Neville Maxwell, published their own, popular accounts of Naga history for international audiences in the 1960s and 1970s.[320] Historical writing about the Nagas has thus been political for centuries and is perhaps inherently so. Of course, all history is in a sense political. Nevertheless, the Naga context is particularly acute because of the fact that, for many decades, there was a paucity of other sources beyond these often explicitly politicised accounts and, as I discuss further below, because Naga authors often do not cite their sources.

Those writing from within Naga areas have also produced rich accounts of the development of Naga nationalism in recent decades. However, while Indian restrictions on travel *into* Naga

[316]On the challenges of writing connected histories in 'Assam' see Indrani Chatterjee, 'Connected histories and the dream of decolonial history', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 41 (2018) 69-86. p.85.

[317]I discuss Naga claims to 'unique' histories in Chapter 8.

[318]On the legacies of such texts see Wouters and Heneise, Nagas in the 21st Century (Introduction).

[319]Virrier Elwin, *Nagaland* (Shillong: Research Department Secretariat, 1961).

[320]Neiville Maxwell, *India and the Nagas* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1973); Gavin Young, *The Nagas: An Unknown War* (NNC, 1961).

areas denied authors from outside access to locally held sources, archival geographies of exclusion have similarly prevented many Naga authors from accessing colonial era records held in the UK. Decades of conflict in Naga areas, beginning with the Japanese invasion of Kohima in 1944, has also resulted in the destruction of most in situ records pertaining to the late colonial and early postcolonial period. Moreover, as Franke notes, Naga authors writing during the second half of the twentieth century tended not to cite their sources, likely because of the political sensitivities associated with doing so during the Indo-Naga conflict and the Nagas' predominantly oral historical tradition.[321] Thus, while many of these narratives are rich and informative (and are cited below) it can be challenging to reconcile between conflicting accounts. Increasingly, scholars have begun to appreciate the role of storytelling, performance, and other oral traditions as alternative means of understanding these competing narratives, addressing archival silences, and contesting taken-for-granted histories.[322] Indeed, as Naga scholar Ilito Achumi observes, for 'communities with oral traditions like the Nagas, the absence of archives is not an absence of history'.[323] Nonetheless, there has been little work uncovering such Naga history in the late colonial period.

This chapter does not seek to write a comprehensive account of the emergence of a Naga nationalist consciousness. Nevertheless, it would be remiss not to acknowledge that, for the reasons described above and due to the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, this chapter is a colonial history based principally upon imperial sources. The obvious danger of relying upon such sources – particularly as they pertain to British colonial administration of Naga

[321]Franke, *Nationalism*, p.59.

[322]I discuss the relationship between the Naga 'archive' and 'repertoire' in Chapter 7.

[323]Ilito Achumi, "'Tell Them Our Story": Memories of the Sumi Naga Labour Corps in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 46 (2023) 55-70. p.56.

territories – is that Naga voices are largely absent.[324] An imperial history also risks over-emphasising how British political and economic decisions shaped the formation of a Naga political subject, flattening Naga agency in the process.[325] I address some of these archival silences in the chapters to come: Chapter 5 foregrounds Phizo's vision of the Naga nation, while Chapters 6 and 7 elucidate how Naga actors grapple with colonial categories to make multi-scale political claims.

These secondary accounts and primary sources, notwithstanding their limitations, enable us to understand how a Naga political subject was forged with reference to broader scale political, social, and economic processes in the imperial world. Imperial era sources are thus particularly revealing of how Naga nationalism was forged in dialogue with the *international*. This is not, however, to conflate the imperial with the international, but instead to acknowledge the opaque relationship between internationalism and imperialism in the interwar period, whereby practices associated with the former typically sustained the latter. Responding to Hodder and colleagues' call to attend to the relationship between internationalism and other 'big-space' political ideas (described in Chapter 2), the narrative in this chapter elucidates the complex and uneven relationship between Naga nationalism, internationalism, and imperialism in this period.[326] Equally important is the fact that colonial history and imperial sources tend to underpin Naga geopolitical imaginaries. Indeed, Naga politicians past and present have re-fashioned colonial writings to demonstrate Naga distinctiveness, while Naga nationalist literature relies on the colonial archive to demonstrate the legitimacy of their political claims.[327] I discuss the production

[324]I discuss the affective and embodied dimensions of contemporary Naga nationalism in Chapter 7.

[325]This is often the approach taken by critics of Naga nationalism. Baruah, Constructionism.

[326]Hodder, Heffernan and Legg, Archival internationalism, p.2.

[327]Baruah, Constructionism, p.322.

of history by Naga nationalist actors in subsequent chapters. For now, however, I turn to consider the origins of a Naga political subject in the late colonial period.

3. The origins of 'Naga': colonial categories and contestations 1830-1929

The term 'Naga' was adopted by British officials surveying the region for tea plantations in the 1830s; prior to then, there was no collective noun for the inhabitants of the area now known as the Naga Hills.[328] As Jane Jacobs argues, administrators used the term to distinguish between hill and plains communities and to overcome the 'ethnographic chaos they perceived around them', in which 'hundreds if not thousands of villages seemed to be somewhat similar to each other but also very different, by no means always sharing the same customs, political systems, art, or even language'.[329] As the colonial administrator and anthropologist John Henry Hutton wrote in 1922:

> [Naga] is useful as an arbitrary term to denote the tribes living in certain parts of the Assam hills… The south of the Manipur Valley roughly marks the point of contact between the "Naga" tribes and the very much more closely interrelated group of Kuki tribes — Thao, Lushei, Chin, etc.[330]

Hutton's understanding of Naga as an 'arbitrary term' speaks to how colonial officials recognised that the communities they called 'Naga' were extremely heterogeneous.[331] Indeed, pre-colonial hill communities had complex, fluid, and shifting relationships with one another and with lowland

[328]Joshi, Micropolitics, p.173.

[329]Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas: The Hill People of Northeast India: Society, Culture and the Colonial Encounter* (Stuttgart: Thames and Hudson, 1990). p.17.

[330]John Henry Hutton 'Introduction', in *The Lhota Nagas* ed. by James Phillip Mills (London Macmillan, 1922), p. xi–xxxix (p.xvi).

[331]On colonial efforts to categorise the Nagas, see John Henry Hutton, *The Angami Nagas, with Some Notes on Neighbouring Tribes* (London: Macmillan, 1921).

kingdoms.[332] This, according to Indirani Chatterjee, was a region characterised not by 'ideals of androcentric and absolutist sovereignty, of tribalism, and territoriality' but one of 'connective geographies, and co-governments, and cultural continuities between proximate people[s].[333] Jelle Wouters describes how throughout this period 'the locus and ethos of Naga political organisation was vested not in the tribe' – and certainly not in the idea of a unified nation – but instead in the Naga village, with each village largely practising self-governance.[334] In spite (or perhaps because) of this ethnographic diversity, the British adopted 'Naga' for administrative purposes, appending it as a suffix after the name of individual tribal groups.

How did an 'arbitrary term' become the basis for an eight-decade long struggle for collective self-determination? Popular accounts of the development of a pan-Naga political subjectivity in the late colonial period take one of two forms. First are those who – like the former chief minister of Nagaland S. C. Jamir – argue that, prior to being annexed by the British, the Nagas were not a distinct nation nor a fortiori unified.[335] Second, the NPGs who – like the NNC quoted above – reconstruct a 'unique' history of the Nagas which pre-existed colonial rule. The interplay between local agency and broader scale processes in the late colonial period has also troubled scholarly accounts of Naga nationalism. These accounts are often overly particularistic

[332]Baruah, Constructionism, p.342.

[333]Chatterjee, Connected histories, p. 85. Also see Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[334]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.14.

[335]In 2000 the then Chief Minister of Nagaland, S. C. Jamir published a pamphlet - *The Bedrock of Naga Society - which* argued that the Nagas did not exist as a nation prior to British colonisation. For discussion of the controversy the pamphlet provoked, see Jelle Wouters, 'Sovereignty, Integration or Bifurcation? Troubled Histories, Contentious Territories and the Political Horizons of the Long Lingering Naga Movement', *Studies in History* 32 (2016) 97–116.

(even exceptionalist), while also leaving little room for the Naga imagination in the face of foreign domination.[336] In short, there is often a paradoxical understanding of Naga nationalism as sui generis whilst nevertheless being the mere by-product of a broader British colonial movement.

Navigating between these binaries, I locate the formation of a Naga political subject on the grounds of what Mrinalini Sinha terms an 'Imperial Social Formation' – a complex and uneven zone of encounter between British colonialism and Naga communities. Sinha engages with putatively 'national' and 'local' histories as they are 'imbricated in a world system fashioned by imperialism and colonialism', while recognising that the 'social' exists at the 'intersection of [the] political, economic, and cultural'.[337] The utility of this analytic to the Naga context is twofold. First, in 'drawing attention to the concreteness of particular historical conjunctures whose dynamics are shaped not by predetermined foundations… but by the outcome of specific struggles in history',[338] Sinha's work speaks to the autonomy of Naga actors in articulating new subject positions in the context of a British and Indian colonial encounter, while rejecting exaggerated claims both to authenticity and invention. Indeed, while acknowledging the macro-political forces which shape identity formation, Sinha's approach 'allows for change – and thus political agency – because it exposes the concept of discourse' both to the 'effects of historical struggle' and to the

[336]Such histories attribute the emergence of Naga nationalism as a direct result of the convergence of the 3Cs ('commerce, Christianity, and colonialism') and/or the 3Ms ('military, money, and missions'). Tezenlo Thong, *Colonization, Proselytization, and Identity: The Nagas and Westernization in Northeast India* (London Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). p.11.

[337]Sinha, Social Formation, p.1077. For applications of Sinha's work see Stephen Legg, 'An intimate and imperial feminism: Meliscent Shephard and the regulation of prostitution in colonial India', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (2010) 68-94; Dörte Lerp, 'Beyond the Prairie: Adopting, Adapting and Transforming Settlement Policies within the German Empire', *Journal of Modern European History* 14 (2016) 225-244.

[338]Sinha, Social Formation, p.1078.

'force of rhetorical invention'.[339] This framing draws attention to the creative means through which Naga nationalists have appropriated colonially inscribed identities to heterogeneous ends. Second, by locating the Naga Hills within multi-scalar political structures and discourses, the imperial social formation recognises how, rather than a being remote, 'out-of-the-way', or at the margins of colonial and state space (as they are so often framed in both popular and scholarly discourses), the Naga Hills were firmly integrated within global scale processes and networks.[340]

Attending to the specifics of this imperial social formation, the remaining three subsections extend existing scholarship on British ethno-territorial practices in the Naga Hills – particularly Jelle Wouters' informative work on the genealogy of Naga ideas of tribe – with a discussion of the Nagas' integration within broader scale imperial networks. Specifically, I argue that, in the late colonial period, a Naga national identity thus began to emerge in negotiation *with* three interrelated multi-scalar colonial spatial practices: territorial partitioning of the hills and the plains; the territorialisation of tribal identities; and Naga encounters with Baptist Christianity. I consider each in turn.

3.1 Territorial partitioning of the hills and the plains

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the British initiated a process of territorial partitioning, which scaled Naga political and social life according to a separation between hill and plains communities. Contrary to claims that British colonisation was motivated by indifference or a paternalistic desire to protect the Nagas from exploitation, Marcus Franke details how British activity in the Naga Hills was 'perfectly in accord with the overall imperial project' to maximise

[339]ibid, pp.1081-1082.

[340]On the Naga Hills as a marginal space see Das, Understanding Margins.

resource revenue.[341] Far from a 'frontier margin', the Naga Hills were at the forefront of global capitalist expansion.[342] When, in the 1830s, the Assam[343] plains were found to be fertile ground for tea plantations, the British began encroaching into Naga ancestral lands, forcing the 'hill tribes up into the hills' and 'alienating them from land previously under their control'.[344] To restrict the return of local populations, the British encouraged the settlement of farmers from Bengal in presumed 'empty tracts' bordering the Naga Hills.[345] As I show in Chapter 6, the status of the descendants of these non-Naga inhabitants of Naga territories continues to be a bone of contention in the Indo-Naga negotiations. The formal separation of the Naga Hills from the plains below occurred in two phases.

First, in 1866, the Naga Hills District ('NHD') was established, marking the extent of formal colonial control in the region.[346] Nevertheless, by the transfer of power, large parts of Naga territory between the NHD and Burma remained 'unadministered', considered under 'political' rather than formal British control.[347] As Guyot-Réchard details, prior to the 1940s, the 'unadministered areas' had been understood as buffer zones, 'neither within nor without the

[341]Franke, *Nationalism*, p.20.

[342]Das, Understanding Margins, p.71-74.

[343]In the colonial period, the area known as 'Assam' was significantly larger area than the contemporary Indian state of the same name, and included large parts of what are now the Indian states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh.

[344]Bengt Karlsson, *Unruly Hills: A Political Ecology of India's Northeast* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), p. 270.

[345]Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). p. 93.

[346]The label 'Naga Hills District' was used from 1886. Prior to that, the region was known as the 'Naga Hills'. Longkumer, Kingdom, p. 175. Also see Theong, *Colonization, Proselytization, and Identity,* pp. 17-18.

[347]Franke, *Nationalism,* p.35.

Empire'.[348] The differential nature of colonial rule between 'administered' and 'unadministered' areas is today used by Naga nationalists as evidence that so-called 'Eastern Nagas' have always been independent.[349]

Second, in 1873 the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, or the 'Inner Line' was established across the region. Ostensibly introduced to limit land enclosures by British tea planters, the 'Inner Line' formally demarcated the 'hills' from the 'plains' according to a process of ethnic classification.[350] The line was underpinned by a logic of primitivism. Colonial administrators emphasised the 'intractable differences' between the 'advanced' Hindu and caste society of the plains and the 'childlike', 'primitive' and 'pre-Aryan' tribes of the hills.[351] These geographical imaginaries underpinned a colonial 'rule of difference'.[352] While caste society was governed according to the 'indirect rule of customary institutions', areas behind the line – which included both the administered and the un-administered Naga areas – were 'left to manage their own affairs' with only limited 'interference from frontier officers'.[353] The colonial administration also placed restrictions on movement behind the line by British and foreign subjects.[354] As Wouters argues,

[348]Guyot-Réchard, Tangled lands, p.298.

[349]This history of 'colonial absence' also underpins calls to establish a separate state of 'Frontier' or 'Eastern Nagaland' *within* India. On regional aspirations *within* the Naga nationalist movement, see Wouters, Sovereignty, Integration, Bifurcation.

[350]Das, Understanding margins, p.63.

[351]Hussain, *Inner Line,* p.270.

[352]Uday Chandra, 'Liberalism and Its Other: The Politics of Primitivism in Colonial and Postcolonial Indian Law', *The Law Society Review* 47 (2013) 135-168. p.144.

[353]Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1979). pp.89-90

[354]Baruah, *Durable Disorder,* p.93.

the ‘Inner Line’ ‘isolate[d] the Naga uplands in unprecedented ways’ such that the region experienced a light touch form of colonialism vis-a-vis the rest of the subcontinent.[355]

Claims to ‘backwardness’ would later underpin efforts to implement diverse territorial projects in the Naga Hills by the Nagas, and British and Indian officials. When officials proposed the ‘withdrawal’ or ‘modification’ of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation at the transfer of power, it was fiercely rejected by the NNC who argued that they would only consider joining the Indian Union on the condition that the Inner Line remain in place.[356] Attitudes towards the line throughout the postcolonial period have been ambivalent. For much of the twentieth century, the line was used by India to restrict access to the Naga Hills, including amongst academics, journalists, and non-Naga supporters of the nationalist movement.[357] Nonetheless, communities across the Northeast maintain that the Inner Line preserves their distinct identity.[358]

[355]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.17.

[356]The tensions over the withdrawal of the ‘Inner Line’ at the transfer of power are documented in Memo from the Secretary to the Governor of Assam in Shillong to the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills on the subject of Repealing of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 187329 March 1947, BL/Archer/ Mss Eur/F236/76. The maintenance of the inner line was one of the NNC’s conditions for signing the Hydari Agreement (described in Section 4.3).

[357]Joshi, Micropolitics, pp.164-167.

[358]Hussain, Inner Line, p.267.

3.2 Territorialisation of Naga tribal identities

Colonial rule also saw the emergence of Naga tribal identities, as British officials imposed a colonial 'ethno-territorial' administrative frame over the Naga Hills.[359] Colonial administrators-turned-anthropologists emulated the practices of the British in Africa to condense Naga social life into homogenous politically and territorially delimited units.[360] As Wouters argues:

> The notion of distinct, discrete, and politically organized tribes was institutionalized and etched itself at the heart of colonial administration and ethnological identification; districts were delineated on the basis of imagined tribal territories, monographs written on individual tribes, each tribe associated with particular behavioural traits, missionary stations setup tribe-wise and the Bible translated into selected languages, while the census, too, was conducted tribe-wise.[361]

Through this process, Wouters argues, 'ethnological and administrative categories came to mutually constitute one another'[362] with knock-on effects for how identity was 'experienced, enacted, and represented'.[363] These nascent tribal identities were unstable and constantly resisted. Nonetheless, local leaders began to articulate their socio-political aspirations through the language of tribal identification, whilst the locus of political organisation was upscaled from the clan and the village to the level of the tribe. This process –Wouters argues – contributed to the emergence

[359]Sanjib Baruah, 'Territoriality, Indigeneity and Rights in the North-East India', *EPW* 43 (2008) 15-19. p.16.

[360]Jelle Wouters, 'Tribe', in *Routledge Companion to Northeast India*, ed. by Wouters and Subba, pp.436-468.

[361]Wouters, *Shadows*, p. 62.

[362]Wouters, Tribe, p. 464.

[363]Wouters, *Shadows*, p. 62.

of a 'collective consciousness' of Naga society as a conglomeration of distinct tribes'.[364] As I will discuss, both the Naga Club and the NNC would later emphasise pan-tribal support for their geopolitical proposals, whilst Phizo saw the tribe as a key organising principle for his vision of Naga statehood. The postcolonial period has seen a hardening of tribal identities, not least because India employs the category of 'Scheduled Tribe' ('ST') as the basis for place-based rights. I illustrate in Chapter 6 how this supposed fixity between people and place underpins emergent claims to Naga Indigeneity.

3.3 Naga encounters with Baptist Christianity

Naga political subjectivity was also forged through an encounter between Naga communities and international networks of Christian missionaries. As I described in Chapter 2, an emergent scholarship has foregrounded the importance of *inter*nationalist thinking to the making of nationalist political subjects. In the Naga case, interaction with Christian internationalist thought and the concomitant emergence of an educated Naga elite was facilitated by the late nineteenth century expansion of mission schools across the Naga Hills.[365] Colonial officials saw Christian conversion as a bulwark against the domination of the Naga tribes by Hindu and Muslim plains communities and favoured the appointment of missionaries as schoolmasters as a means to encourage conversion while circumventing British policies on religious neutrality.[366] By 1941, the

[364]ibid.

[365]Longkumer, Kingdom's, p.161

[366]ibid, p.162.

proportion of Christians in the Naga Hills was 17.9%, significantly above average for British India.[367]

It is important to distinguish British missionary education from subsequent articulations of Naga Christianity (and the Nagas' ongoing engagement with Christian internationalism). Multiple Christian denominations exist today in Nagaland and the emergence of a distinct Naga Christian theology can be traced to the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century.[368] There is a growing body of scholarship which examines the relationship between Christianity and Naga nationalism.[369] Here, I build upon this work by foregrounding the *inter*nationalist dimensions of late colonial Baptist Christianity in the Naga Hills. In particular, I suggest that Christian conversion and missionary education equipped Nagas with the tools to articulate a simultaneously nationalist and internationalist subjectivity.

On the one hand, American Baptist missionary education led to the adoption of a shared language (English) and a shared Roman script amongst school attendees (while not displacing local vernaculars). This provided educated Nagas with a 'unified field of communication' which encouraged the development of pan-Naga solidarities across clan, village, and tribal lines.[370] The region's linguistic diversity had previously made this effectively impossible. As Arkotong Longkumer argues, Christian print cultures (including translations of the Bible) and the performance of Christianity through aural mechanisms, fostered a sense of cultural unity amongst

[367]John Thomas, *Evangelizing the Nation: Religion and the Formation of a Naga Political Identity* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016). p.5.

[368]Chongpongmeren Jamir, *Christianity.*

[369]G. Kanto Chophy, *Christianity and Politics in Tribal India: Baptist missionaries and Naga nationalism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2021); Thomas, *Evangelizing.*

[370]Longkumer, Kingdom, p.169.

disparate tribal communities, forged at least in part in opposition to Hindu and Muslim 'others'.[371] English language proficiency would eventually allow the Nagas to tap into networks of international support which were largely inaccessible to neighbouring communities, and communicate their political demands to international audiences through a series of canonical memorandums. As I illustrate in Section 4.1, it was via the English language that the Naga Club submitted the 1929 Naga Memorandum to the Simon Commission, the Nagas first claim to self-determination. By 1946, the NNC was similarly publishing *The Naga Nation* in English.

On the other hand, Christian networks allowed Nagas to access Western ideas of statehood, nationalism, and self-determination circulating in the early twentieth century. Longkumer describes the tensions between members of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society ('ABFMS') (based in the NHD from 1871-1955) and British officials. Whilst the latter sought to 'preserv[e]' Naga traditions, the former promulgated internationalist principles 'of social justice, conversion, education, and civilisation', as articulated at *The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh* in 1910.[372] Missionary practice emphasised the supposedly emancipatory and non-hierarchical nature of the American experience of democracy.[373] Moreover, rather than subscribe to newspapers from India, ABFMS members circulated American newspapers and magazines.[374] It is perhaps unsurprising that the discussions of international affairs contained within *The Naga Nation* focus on self-determination movements within the American context. For members of the

[371]ibid, p.170.

[372]ibid, p.167

[373]Frederick Downs, 'Miles Bronson – A Tale of Two Valleys', *American Baptist Quarterly*, 1&2 (2010) 46-62, cited in Longkumer, Kingdom, p.171.

[374]Longkumer, Kingdom, p.167.

NNC, these, rather than those in South Asia, appear most analogous to the Naga context. As Theyiechüthie Sakhrie – the NNC Secretary (discussed in Chapter 5) – wrote in October 1946:

> A good government is never a substitute for a National Government. The Philippine Islands were… ruled by the Spanish Government. They grew weary. At last the U.S. Government came to the rescue. Under the U.S Government they prospered, progressed; there was great advancement in all fields. A better government never dominated any foreign country. But, they grew tired again. They wanted freedom. The U.S. Government ruled there for 30 years. They were freed in 1946. Remember the Filipinos. We are not Californians. Whether Mexico or whether U.S.A there was no difference to them. It was their choice, and naturally they chose the better one. The Nagas have no choice to look for we have only our own Philippine Islands. Let us take it, or somebody else will.[375]

The late colonial period thus saw Naga socio-political life re-scaled according to a series of (often contradictory) spatial imaginaries, including the demarcation of hills and plains; backward and civilised regions; 'administered' and 'unadministered' areas; and of fixed tribal homelands. As I show in subsequent chapters, the identity categories associated with these shifting territorial units have been mobilised and refashioned by Naga actors to leverage both the British and Indian administrations. Amidst these local and regional transformations of Naga space, this period also saw the Nagas integrated into wider networks of thought and practice, through which educated Naga elites engaged with categories of Western modernity. A Naga nationalist consciousness thus emerged on the grounds of an imperial social formation, characterised, on the one hand, by contact between Naga elites, Baptist missionaries, and Christianity amidst British attempts to re-territorialise Naga space and, on the other, by the Nagas' engagement with heterogenous global networks, through which they were able to position themselves within the

[375]NNC, *TNN*, Volume 1: Issue 3 (October 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

international sphere.[376] This engagement was facilitated by the circulation of English language print media. Far from being exclusive or even contradictory processes, Naga nationalism and internationalism in the late colonial period were thus highly co-constitutive phenomena.

4. The discovery of Nagaland: shifting spatial imaginaries 1929-1947

I now consider how Naga elites, British administrators, and Indian officials attempted to reconcile a nascent Naga political consciousness with the shifting local, regional, and international political contexts of the final two decades of colonial rule. In doing so, I address the broader concern of this thesis, viz. to investigate how Naga spatial imaginaries and political claims have been (re)articulated in response to changing international conditions *and* shifting modalities of state and colonial power. This section analyses three documents: '*The Memorandum to the Simon Commission',* authored by the Naga Club in January 1929; '*The Crown Colony Proposals'*, by Sir Robert Reid, Governor of Assam in 1941; and '*The Hydari Agreement',* negotiated between the NNC and Sir Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam in June 1947. Each was published at a moment when the Nagas' geopolitical future appeared up for grabs. While not necessarily authored by the Nagas themselves, all three documents represented an attempt to imagine, communicate, and materialise alternative territorial futures for the Nagas between 1929 and 1947.

I adopt this documentary lens for two reasons. First, echoing the discussion above and prefiguring arguments to come, to illustrate print media's centrality to the fashioning of the Nagas' twentieth-century (inter)national political subjectivity and second, because of the material legacies of these early texts to the subsequent fashioning of the Nagas' (inter)national claim. These

[376]On the broader relationship between the British colonial state and the emergence of national identities in Northeast India, see Peter Robb, 'The Colonial State and Constructions of Indian Identity: An Example on the Northeast Frontier in the 1880s. *Modern Asian Studies,* 31 (1997) 245-283.

documents have been crucial to the production of Naga nationalist histories. English language proficiency allowed the Nagas to negotiate *with* and directly communicate their political demands *to* both British and Indian audiences. Contemporary (inter)nationalist actors frequently recount Naga history via these and other related documents. Indeed, it is difficult to overstate the significance of the role played by these documents in defining the terms upon which Naga international imaginaries have been built.

4.1 The Naga Club's Memorandum to the Simon Commission

To understand the importance of the Naga Club's authoring of the *Memorandum to the Simon Commission,* it is necessary to situate this episode in the context of Nagas' involvement in the First World War. That conflict saw 4,000 Nagas dispatched to the battlefields of France and the Middle East as members of the Naga Labour Corps.[377] Primary source material on the impact of the war on the Nagas is scant: Naga voices do not feature directly in British archival materials relating to the conflict, while relevant records based in Nagaland were destroyed during the Japanese invasion of Kohima in 1944.[378] Such experiences are instead recounted in the Naga community's oral history, though specific source attribution is rare.[379] Nonetheless, Naga historians argue that the experience enabled greater interaction between Nagas from different tribes, including between those from the 'administered' and 'unadministered' areas.[380] This fostered a spirit of 'belonging'[381] and 'political unity' amongst returnees, a spirit which would 'spearhead an upsurge of the Naga

[377]Franke, *Nationalism,* p.59.

[378]Achumi, Our Story. p.55.

[379]ibid.

[380]Horam, *Insurgency,* p.36.

[381]ibid, p.36.

nationalist movement'.[382] Moreover, in bringing into focus the hypocrisies inherent to imperial rule, Naga participation in the hostilities fed a growing resentment towards the British, while exposing participants to a world beyond their own.[383]

Importantly, several of the founders of the Naga Club, the first pan-Naga apex body, had fought in the First World War.[384] Initially envisaged as a social body, the Naga Club morphed into a political organisation as the possibility of Indian independence led members to debate the Nagas' post-imperial future.[385] In 1927, the British government established the 'Indian Statutory Commission' led by Sir John Simon (and thus referred to as the Simon Commission), to determine the future of British India. Members of the Commission arrived in Kohima in January 1929. Here, they were presented with a memorandum by the Naga Club (which principally comprised Naga interpreters, teachers, and other government servants).[386] The fact the Naga Club engaged with the Commission – which was boycotted by both the Indian National Congress ('INC') and the Muslim League – is in itself significant. The Naga Club's presentation of their memorandum to the Commission speaks to the Nagas' early divergence from the wider Indian freedom movement,[387] and the burgeoning apprehension felt by minority groups across India at the prospect of a Congress

[382]Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (New Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1974). p.126.

[383]ibid.

[384]Charles Chasie, *The Naga Memorandum to the Simon Commission, 1929* (Kohima: Standard Printers and Publishers, 2017). p.44.

[385]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.18.

[386]Chasie, *Memorandum,* p.50-66.

[387]Joshi, Micropolitics, p.179.

hegemony.[388]

The Naga Club's memorandum reveals the particular anxieties felt by Naga communities in this period. Consisting of four pages of typed text and written in English, the document describes how, prior to the arrival of the British, the Nagas were in a state of 'intermittent warfare' with both the Assamese and the Manipuris, yet had never been 'conquered' or 'subjected to their rule'.[389] The Naga tribes were disunited, lacking 'opportunity to improve in education', a shared language, and anyone who could represent them 'in any Council or Province'.[390] The memorandum continues: 'it was only the 'British Government that is holding us together now'.[391] The Nagas – it is claimed – were completely different to the plains people, and had 'no social affinities with Hindus or Muhammadans', who 'looked down upon' them because of their 'want in education' and consumption of both beef and pork.[392] Indeed, prefiguring Phizo's later arguments, the authors feared that the Nagas' 'small population' vis-à-vis 'the population of the plains district' would leave them outnumbered in any provincial legislature, leading to the 'introduction of foreign laws and customs to supersede' the Nagas' own customary law.[393] The signatories were gravely concerned that the Nagas' inability to pay 'new and heavy [land] taxes' would mean that they

[388]On the engagement of other minorities with the Indian Statutory Commission see Prakash, Decolonisation and Tribal Policy; Neeti Nair, 'Partition and Minority Rights in Punjabi Hindu Debates, 1920-1947', *EPW* 46 (2011) 61-69.

[389]Memorandum on the Naga Hills from the Secretary, Naga Club, Kohima, Naga Hills, 29 January 1929, to the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission), Volume of Memorandum and Evidence, Assam Memoranda, BL/India Office Records (IOR)/Q/13/1/1.

[390]ibid.

[391]ibid.

[392]ibid.

[393]ibid.

would be forced to sell their land and that such a 'life would not be worth living'.[394] The memorandum's signatories, who claimed to 'represent all tribes to which [they] belong[ed]', accordingly asked that the Commission withdraw the Naga Hills from the proposed reformed scheme and place the region under the direct control of the British Government.[395] The memorandum concludes with a clause which has become something of a shibboleth for contemporary Naga politicians:

> If the British government, however, wants to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves and to whom we were never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times.[396]

Historians are divided as to whether this clause should be read as a demand for Naga independence.[397] Virrer Elwin's suggestion – in his history of the Nagas commissioned by Nehru – that until 1947 there was 'no talk of separation [of the Naga Hills] from India' is an oversimplification.[398] The Nagas' primary demand in the Simon Commission Memorandum in 1929 was – to use their own words – to be 'directly under the [the British Government's] own protection' (that is, presumably administered by British officers and using central funds) rather than an Assamese provincial legislature, dominated as it was by people of the plains.[399] Failing

[394]ibid.

[395]ibid.

[396]ibid.

[397]For instance, Singh rejects Youno's claim that the Nagas' were demanding the 'restoration of their independence' that had been taken from them by the British. He instead contends that, at this point 'independence was not the main issue' for the Naga Club. Chandrika Singh, *Political Evolution of Nagaland* (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1981). p. 33.

[398]Elwin, *Nagaland*, p.51.

[399]Simon Commission Memorandum, 29 January 29 BL/IOR/Q/13/1/1.

that, the Nagas expressed their wish to be returned to their pre-colonial state. It is thus hard to construe these proposals otherwise than as a demand for separate administration from the rest of India.[400]

Following deliberations in the House of Commons, in which Commission members praised the Nagas' 'shrewd awareness' of the changes afoot,[401] *The Government of India Act 1935* declared the NHD an 'Excluded Area' to be excepted from legislation enacted elsewhere in India.[402] Instead, the NHD was to be directly administered by the Governor of Assam.[403] As Horam argues, however, this outcome, whilst exempting the Nagas from Indian administration, was 'not spectacular'.[404] Indeed, in spite of the Naga Club's 'apprehensions and plan for special administration', the NHD was simply given the same status as other tribal areas.[405] The act also saw the end to the colonial practice of treating the excluded areas as 'buffer zones', while the concomitant implementation of a separate constitution for British Burma formally separated Naga communities living across the Indo-Burma borderlands. In this episode, we also see the first traces of an ambivalent temporal politics of deferral which would go on to characterise efforts to forge Naga geopolitical futures. On the one hand, the memorandum's signatories drew on the Nagas' supposed 'backwardness' – particularly insufficient income, lack of education, and the ill-suited nature of the proposed representative mechanisms to the Naga context – to call for the postponement of British withdrawal from the region. On the other hand, the British deployed similar arguments to justify

[400]Singh, *Political Evolution,* p.33.

[401]M. Alemchiba Ao, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, Naga Institute of Culture, 1970). p.166.

[402]Government of India Act 1935, 26 Geo 5 & 1 Edw 8 c 2.

[403]Franke, *Nationalism,* p.41.

[404]Horam, *Insurgency,* p.40.

[405]ibid.

the continued paternalistic administration of the Naga Hills through implementing the *Government of India Act 1935*.[406] I return to these arguments with reference to Phizo's claims as to Naga self-sufficiency in Chapter 5.

The memorandum's principal significance lies, not in its effect upon the Simon Commission's report, but in its afterlife in Naga political thought. As Naga historian Zapuvisie Lhousa observes, the memorandum has become 'one of the first and foremost historical documents of internal value and distinction' within the Naga nationalist movement.[407] Chophy explains how it has been used widely to buttress claims that the Naga movement was 'never successionist since [the Nagas'] desire for self-determination pre-dated the formation of a new Indian-state'.[408] For historians, the memorandum also reveals how, despite an awareness of the inevitable changes Indian independence would bring,[409] the Naga Club firmly believed in 'a possibility of a return to a life outside of the worldwide state system'.[410] Wouters notes that the memorandum was not accompanied by discussion regarding what this 'return to "ancient times" would entail, or who the Nagas were before colonialism'.[411] As I illustrate in Chapter 7, however, the Simon Commission Memorandum now forms the conceptual bedrock of attempts to materialise a decolonial Naga future without borders.

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[406]On the temporal and spatial scalar politics of the Government of India Act 1919, see Stephen Legg, 'Dyarchy Democracy, Autocracy, and the Scalar Sovereignty of Interwar India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36 (2016) 44-65.

[407]Zapuvisie Lhousa, *Strange Country: My Experience in Naga Nationalism* (Kohima: Author, 2015). p.125.

[408]Chophy, *Christianity,* p.306.

[409]Elwin, *Nagaland,* p. 49.

[410]Franke, *Nationalism,* p.65.

[411]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.73.

4.2 The Crown Colony Proposals

Despite the Simon Commission Memorandum's enduring significance, at the time the document was drafted, nationalist sentiments were isolated to a narrow proportion of the Naga population.[412] The Second World War brought the possibility of an independent Naga nation sharply into focus. Between 1942 and 1945, the Naga Hills became the frontline in the Allied war against Japan. Following the Japanese occupation of Burma, thousands of Nagas volunteered (or were impressed) as labourers, stretcher-bearers, guides, and porters for the Allies.[413] Hundreds of Naga villages were destroyed in the fierce fighting of 1944. Nonetheless, scholars of Naga nationalism have neglected the Second World War in their accounts of this period.[414] Here, I address this lacuna by bringing this scholarship into dialogue with Bérénice Guyot-Réchard's work on the history of the Second World War in Northeast India. In the process, I extend Guyot-Réchard's analysis by foregrounding the impact of that conflict on the emergence of a Naga nationalist consciousness and on subsequent efforts to re-territorialise the Naga Hills through *The Crown Colony Proposals.*

As Guyot-Réchard argues, the Second World War caused an 'unprecedented penetration of the colonial state into [a] region hitherto… left to indirect rule'.[415] Alongside the expansion of communications infrastructure, the war saw the region connected to the rest of India via 'rail, road,

[412]Franke, *Nationalism,* p.61.

[413]Bérénice Guyot-Réchard, 'When Legions Thunder Past: The Second World War and India's Northeastern Frontier', *War in History* 25 (2018) 329-360.

[414]While Franke argues that the Second World War was the single biggest factor in the subsequent development of a Naga political consciousness, Singh and Alemchiba do not mention it at all in their accounts of Naga nationalism, while Horam discusses the conflict only in passing. Franke, *Nationalism,* p.65; Horam, *Insurgency,* p.41; Singh, *Political Evolution;* Alemchiba, *Historical Account.*

[415]Guyot-Réchard, Legions, p.330.

river, and air'.[416] Far from integrating the Naga Hills within India, however, this increased state presence 'facilitate[d] the revivification and reconfiguration' of the Nagas; 'local and *transnational* ties'.[417] On the one hand, increased mobility between villages, 'ethnically defined army levies'[418] and the abolition of the divisions between both the 'administered' and 'unadministered' Naga areas, [419] and the Naga inhabited areas of India and Burma, consolidated a pan-Naga identity, defined in opposition to the plains and to neighbouring hill communities. On the other hand, Naga communities' exposure to military personnel, goods, and ideas from across the Empire, the USA, and Asia, expanded the region's connection with a world *beyond* India. In reviving long-held ties between Assam, Tibet, Burma, and China, the war saw Assam and the Naga Hills increasingly positioned within an imaginative geography of Southeast Asia,[420] whilst cementing a Naga international consciousness which situated the Nagas alongside other 'myriad national liberation movements'.[421]

The Second World War thus made 'moot' colonial attempts to divide the region into a series of bounded spaces.[422] Crucially, in reshaping the region's territorialisation, the conflict prefigured later spatial imaginaries which integrate Naga inhabited areas within a single territorial unit. Notably, in 1941, the British Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Reid, published *'A Note on the Future of the Present Excluded, Partially Excluded and Tribal Areas of Assam'* ('The Crown

[416]Franke, *Nationalism*, p.61.

[417]Guyot-Réchard, Legions, p.334.

[418]ibid. p.345.

[419]Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas,* p.126.

[420]Guyot-Réchard, Legions, p.357.

[421]Franke, *Nationalism,* p.64.

[422]Guyot-Réchard, Legions, p.338.

Colony Proposals').[423] These were circulated amongst British government officials in the years prior to the transfer of power.[424] Reid's note proposed establishing a Crown Colony comprising the hill districts of Assam and Northwest Burma as well as the neighbouring unadministered areas. Crucially, Reid argued, these areas should be administered directly 'from Whitehall' and 'not from India to which the hill tracts are entirely alien'.[425] Reid's concerns were partly strategic, reflecting anxieties around the importance of the 'North East Frontier' viz-à-vis Tibet, China, Burma and Japan'[426] in the context of the war, but also spoke to his belief that the hill tribes were 'not Indian in any sense of the word' and had only been 'tacked on to an Indian Province' by 'historical accident'.[427] The protectorate, Reid argued, was necessary for the hill tribes to 'develop on their own lines and without outside interference'.[428]

Like the Simon Commission Memorandum before it, Reid's words speak to how, as a political strategy, the Crown Colony Proposals relied upon a logic of postponement. For Reid, the Nagas' spatial scalar identity was underpinned by a temporal imaginary which saw the Naga Hills at an earlier stage of a predetermined developmental trajectory. According to Reid, the Nagas were not ready for self-governance, but nor were they suitable for inclusion within an independent India. Thus – to Reid's mind – the only solution was a sui-generis arrangement in which the Nagas' were administered directly by Britain and not by India.

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[423]A note on the future of the present Excluded, Partially Excluded and Tribal Areas of Assam by Sir Robert Reid, 1941-1942, Printed papers, tour diaries and reports relating to the Manipur State and the Naga Hills, collected by Christopher Gimson, BL/IOR/Mss Eur E325/18.

[424]ibid.

[425]ibid.

[426]ibid.

[427]Robert Reid, 'Assam', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 92 (1944) 241-247. p.247.

[428]ibid.

Ultimately, the Crown Colony was never realised.[429] As historian David Syiemlieh illustrates, this was due in part to opposition from the India National Congress, who viewed British frontier authorities with suspicion,[430] but also the reluctance of the British government to preserve an expensive enclave of colonial rule on the subcontinent.[431] Moreover, the proposals were rejected by tribal leaders, including the Nagas, who argued that they were insufficient to ensure Naga autonomy.[432] Nonetheless, this episode is vital in understanding the subsequent trajectories of the Naga nationalist movement. First, these efforts to redraw the region's map would fuel a belief amongst Naga leaders that the transfer of power would offer a new opportunity to reimagine the territorial settlement of the Naga Hills in favour of integrating Naga areas from both sides of the international border.[433] NNC leaders including Phizo drew on the Crown Colony proposals to legitimate claims that the Naga Hills' territorial future should be distinct from that of the plains.[434] Second, the proposal speaks to how, in the years preceding the transfer of power, India and Burma were far from stable territorial units. As Guyot-Réchard illustrates, 1937-1948 saw heated debates amongst representatives from the colonial governments of India and Burma around where to locate the border between the two entities in a region hitherto characterised by 'fluid and fragmented

[429]For details of other plans which accompanied the Crown Colony Proposals see *On the Edge of Empire:* Four British Plans for North East India, 1941–1947, ed. by David Syiemlieh (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2014).

[430]ibid.

[431]Guyot-Réchard, Tangled lands, p.305.

[432]Syiemlieh, *Edge of empire.* p.12.

[433]Marcus Franda, 'The Naga National Council - Origins of a Separatist Movement', *EPW* 13 (1961) 153-156.

[434]Phizo's opposition to the Crown Colony is documented in Letter from A. Z. Phizo to H.E. Sri C. Rajagopalachari, Governor General of India, 22 November 1948, Naga National Council Online Letters Collection (NNC online).

local identities'.[435] In this context, far from being an aberration, the Nagas' subsequent claim to statehood is unsurprising, and must be understood as just one amongst multiple competing efforts to territorialise the region into various bounded spaces. Finally, the proposals reveal the ambivalent relationship between colonial officials and hill communities throughout the period. British officials like Reid, driven by opaque, shifting and at times contradictory motivations, saw themselves as the 'guardians for the highlanders, to be protected from Indians and Burmans' who they considered to be 'fundamentally different from them'.[436] Nevertheless, their advocacy was paternalistic, non-participatory, and increasingly at odds with the Nagas' emergent political aspirations. This complex interplay between imperial, national, and regional relationships has continued to structure the Naga nationalist movement throughout the postcolonial period.[437]

4.3 The Hydari Agreement

The repudiation of the Crown Colony proposals by both Naga leaders and the INC speaks to how, by the Second World War's end, debates about the future of India's northeastern margins were no longer isolated to a cadre of British officials.[438] In the wake of the conflict, Charles Pawsey, the District Commissioner for the Naga Hills, invited a group of Naga tribal elites to form the Naga Hills District Tribal Council ('NHDTC'). Pawsey intended for the NHDTC to help unify the Nagas along 'modern lines', and to aid in post-war reconstruction.[439] Members – who were principally part of a newly educated tribal elite who worked as teachers, clerks, and interpreters within the

[435]Guyot-Réchard, Tangled lands, p. 294.

[436]ibid, p.300.

[437]ibid, p.308.

[438]ibid, p.306.

[439]Horam, *Insurgency,* p.41.

British administration – quickly re-named the organisation the Naga National Council ('NNC') and used the body to debate the Nagas' post-imperial future. Every Naga was deemed to be an NNC member and all households were expected to contribute to its upkeep.[440] In the NNC's early years, the organisation's 29 representatives[441] (who by this point were drawn from communities across the administered and unadministered areas) were principally occupied with debate concerning the implementation of the Hydari Agreement. Before turning to that agreement, it is helpful to contextualise the operations of the NNC in the years preceding the transfer of power.

The Naga Nation aptly illustrates the strength of NNC members' motivation – from the earliest days of the organisation – to challenge the Nagas' colonial designation as primitive subjects in need of paternalistic support. In September 1946, Angami Kevichusa – the Nagas' first graduate – proposed rebranding the NNC's newspaper from *The Times of Kohima* to *The Naga Nation* in an effort to 'blend the various Naga tribes into a Naga nation'.[442] Kevichusa's words again point to the role played by print media in the fashioning of a Naga national consciousness; they also show how, in adopting the nomenclature of nation, the NNC rejected the designation of 'tribe', associated as it was with a pre-modern way of life, and scripted the Nagas as eminently modern subjects.[443] Indeed, throughout the late 1940s, contributors to *The Naga Nation* would stress the need for unity amongst the Naga tribes, arguing that this was a necessary precondition for self-governance. As Theyiechüthie Sakhrie wrote in the October 1946 issue, the Nagas' claim to nationhood did not require external validation:

[440]Alemchiba, *Historical Account*, p.166

[441]Udayon Misra, 'The Naga National Question', *EPW* 13 (1978) 618-624. p.619.

[442]NNC, *The Times of Kohima* (*TOK*), Volume 1: Issue 2 (September 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[443]Baruah, *Name of the Nation*, p.105.

> We have changed the name of our National Monthly. To my mind, it is quite just that it should be called "The Naga Nation". The Nagas are a nation, because we feel ourselves to be a Nation. But, if we are a Nation, why do we not elect our own sovereignty. We want to be free. We want to live our own lives. We love our own people. We like our own country. We do not want other people to live among us.[444]

While Indian and British officials continued to deny the Nagas' capacity for effective self-government, the NNC spent 1946-1947 making their own claim for modernity. As Franda argues, the organisation's early success can be attributed to the fact that it acted as a 'vehicle' through which an emergent educated elite could 'exercise its new-found authority' and which 'tribal rulers could use to replace that aura of legitimacy that had been lost with the authority of the British'.[445] Indeed, the organisation sought to emulate the functions of the departing colonial administration. *The Naga Nation* shows how the NNC established its own constitution, which territorialised its authority according to a system of central, tribal, and sub-tribal councils.[446] The NNC campaigned for a shared 'Naga dialect', a 'National Flag' and a 'National Anthem',[447] established a 'Social Services Association' to request rice from Manipur,[448] and sought to introduce a revised primary school curriculum which used *both* English and Naga languages.[449] The NNC was keenly conscious of events outside of Nagaland and spoke of the need to 'secure [the Nagas'] position in the Atomic World'.[450] In this vein, the body campaigned for the establishment of a new protestant

[444]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 3 (October 1946), BL/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[445]Franda, Origins, p.156.

[446]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 7 (February 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[447]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 4 (November 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[448]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 3 (October 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[449]NNC, *TOK,* Volume 1: Issue 2 (August 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[450]NNC, *TOK,* Volume 1: Issue 1 (August 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

college in Kohima and launched a 'literacy drive' across the Naga Hills.[451] As Sakhrie argued in a speech to the NNC (later reprinted in the October 1946 issue of *The Naga Nation*), education was vital in figuring a national self:

> A nation wide literacy campaign is being proposed. We look forward anxiously for the good results of it. We cannot be backward for a long time. Mexico became a literate country in six months. The people of Turkey changed their script and adopted the Roman character, and became literature in 10 years. Japan was educated in 40 years. If there is a will, there is a way.[452]

Once again, we see the intersection of spatial and temporal scalar imaginaries. In Sakhrie's mind at least, it was through overcoming 'backward[ness]' via education and scientific progress that the Nagas would be able to secure equal membership of an emergent international world order. Echoing this growing (inter)nationalist consciousness, fostered during the war and later mobilised as part of the struggle for independence, Sakhrie's speech compared the Naga anti-colonial struggle with that of Bhutan and the Philippines, both of whom were recently free of foreign rule. Similarly, Kezehol Pusa – an early Naga graduate and Gandhian activist – used the November 1946 issue of *The Naga Nation* to argue that the Nagas' future depended on eschewing isolation and adopting 'universal' international political and economic ideals:

> …unless all nations achieve a higher standard of unity in the largest possible unity, and that unity is settled by arbitration, and not by force, the world cannot establish a lasting peace and order. In view of events that happen daily in a higher circle of political thought, we see that no nation can be isolated without being brought under the current political and

[451]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 3 (October 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[452]ibid.

> economic ideas. Universal order is the goal planned ahead of us, which opens a bright chapter in politics, with a promise of freeing all classes of people.[453]

Decisions about the Nagas' future, Kezehol argued, should be 'governed by consideration of large issues concerning both home and foreign affairs' whilst education would ensure the Nagas' 'ability to live peacefully' with one another and with other nations.[454]

Amidst these conversations, NNC members sought to reconcile their claim to nationhood with the shifting territorial contexts of the transfer of power. As with the Simon Commission Memorandum, English language print media allowed the Nagas to articulate their political futures in a register which the NNC hoped would appeal to British audiences. In June 1946, the NNC submitted a four-point memorandum to the British Cabinet Mission.[455] First, the document claimed that the 'NNC stood for the 'solidarity of all Naga tribes, including those in the unadministered areas'.[456] Second, the NNC rejected the 'grouping of Assam with Bengal'.[457] Third, the memorandum demanded that the Naga Hills be constitutionally included 'in an autonomous Assam, in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas'.[458] Finally – fearing minority status among the plains population of Assam – the memorandum demanded separate Naga electorates.[459] This early expression of the NNC's future aspirations was itself a compromise position, reflecting divergent attitudes towards full Naga independence

[453]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 4 (November 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[454]ibid.

[455]NNC, *TOK,* Volume 1: Issue 1 (August 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[456]ibid.

[457]ibid. This was the proposal of the cabinet mission.

[458]ibid.

[459]NNC, *TOK,* Volume 1: Issue 1 (August 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

amongst members from the Ao and Angami tribes.[460] *The Naga Nation* illustrates how a range of other proposals regarding the Nagas' future were also considered during this period. The Assam Hill Students Association, for instance, urged NNC members to support a 'INDOBURMA movement', which would see the unification of 'all the parts of land lying along the border of India and Burma' inhabited by a 'similar kind of people'.[461] Several months later, the NNC would themselves urge the rest of the people of Assam to set up their own independent state 'free from Pakistan or Hindustan'.[462] A year later, a group of 'Southern Nagas' including Manipur Hill Nagas and Cachar Nagas, with Konyak Nagas' would also go on to express their desire for 'negotiation[s] to join Pakistan Dominion on suitable terms!'.[463]

By 1947, however, discussion of full Naga independence had become more prominent. This shift was motivated by at least two factors: Nehru's rejection of the NNC's demand for separate electorates,[464] and the announcement that the Advisory Committee to the Constituent Assembly – established to determine the future of the hill tribes – was dominated by Congress politicians from Assam.[465] In February 1947, the NNC submitted another memorandum to the British and the GOI, titled 'The Case Of the Naga People for Self-Determination'. It called for the establishment of an 'Interim Government OF THE NAGA PEOPLE' under a guardian power who

[460]Jelle Wouters, 'Difficult Decolonization: Debates, Divisions, and Deaths Within the Naga Uprising 1944-1963', *Journal of North East Indian Studies* 9 (2019) 1-28. pp.8-11.

[461]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 6 (January 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[462]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 10 (May 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[463]People's Independence League, *URRA DIE (Our Home News),* (undated, probably July-August 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/76.

[464]NNC, *TOK,* Volume 1: Issue 2, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[465]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.9.

would provide 'financial provisions for a period of ten years at the end of which Naga people will be left to choose *any* form of Government under which they themselves choose to live'.[466]

In June 1947, Nehru granted Sir Abkar Hydari – the Governor of Assam – far-reaching authority to negotiate an agreement with the NNC.[467] After three days of intense talks, the two parties concluded the 'Hydari' or 'Nine-Points' agreement.[468] Based on the principle that 'what the Naga Council is prepared to pay for the Naga Council should control', the agreement asserted 'the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes'.[469] It provided for a degree of judicial, executive, and legislative autonomy for the NNC, alongside powers of taxation, and a proposal to bring all Nagas 'under one unified administrative unit'.[470] The sticking point of the agreement was the infamous Clause 9:

> The Governor of Assam as Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the observance of the agreement, at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above

[466]NNC, 'The Naga Nation' Volume 1: Issue 7 (February 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364 (emphasis added). In May 1947, the NNC elaborated on their proposals, arguing that the Naga Interim Government would have full powers 'in respect of Legislation, Executive and Judiciary', whilst the 'Guardian Power 'would be responsible for maintaining an emergency force within Naga territory for the purposes of defence'. NNC, 'The Naga Nation' Volume 1: Issue 10 (May 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364. The intended identity of this 'guardian power' is disputed; Horam's view is India, Elwin's Britain. Wouters considers either is plausible. Horam, *Insurgency,* 41; Elwin, *Nagaland,* 51; Wouters, *Difficult Decolonization,* p.9.

[467]Franke, *Nationalism*, pp.86-87.

[468]Horam, *Insurgency,* p.42.

[469][SECRET] TRIBES REPRESENTED AT DISCUSSIONS ON THE 26TH 27TH AND 28TH JUNE 1947, AT KOHIMA, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/78.

[470]ibid.

agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of Naga people arrived at.[471]

Shortly after the ink of the agreement had dried, Hydari clarified that, after the ten years period elapsed, Clause 9 did *not* give the Nagas the right to full independence, only an opportunity to revisit the nature of their inclusion within India. This precipitated a split within the NNC.[472] Those in favour of independence – including A. Z. Phizo – left the organisation and declared Naga independence on 14 August 1947 via a memorandum to the UN.[473]

The remaining NNC members, who were in favour of Naga autonomy *within* India, were left disillusioned with the negotiations when just two weeks after the Hydari Agreement was signed, the Advisory Committee refused to recognise the instrument, and instead recommended that the Naga Hills be treated as part of Assam under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution.[474] This outcome thus satisfied none of the NNC's factions. The remaining members of the NNC petitioned Nehru to reinstate the Hydari Agreement. However – no longer satisfied by Indian assurances regarding Naga autonomy – they petitioned for a modified Clause 9 such that the Nagas would be 'free to decide their own future' (either *inside* or *outside* of India) after a 'period of ten years'.[475] Nehru refused to negotiate any further with the NNC – a decision which was consonant with the Congress leader's previous observation shortly prior that the Nagas were

[471]ibid.

[472]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.16.

[473]NNC Declaration of Naga Independence, 14 August 1947, in Nuh and Lasuh, *The Naga Chronicle*, p.121.

[474]NNC, *TNN*, Volume 1: Issue 10 (May 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur F236/364. Sub-committee members argued this arrangement was necessary to ensure that all the hill tribes were under the same administrative arrangement.

[475]Letter from Longri Ao, president of the NNC to W. G. Archer, 18 August 1947, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/76.

a ‘rather backward people who require considerable help’ and must therefore form an ‘integral part’ of Assam.[476] The organisation accused Nehru of a ‘negligen[t] and unsympathetic attitude’[477] toward the Nagas and the ‘continued abeyance of the Hydari agreement progressively strengthened the position of those demanding Naga independence’.[478] By the end of 1947, however, the Indian government had begun to extend its administration in the region and began repressive measures against the NNC, including the arrest of its leaders.[479] By August 1949, sentiment both within the NNC and amongst broader Naga publics had turned almost unanimously in favour of independence.[480] The failure to respect the Hydari agreement in either its original or modified form continues to be cited by Naga nationalists as proof of India’s bad faith approach to negotiations with the Nagas.[481]

Through this documentary history I have foreground how claims to Naga independence at the transfer of power were far from inevitable. Nevertheless, from the Nagas’ vantage point, neither was their inclusion within postcolonial India. In popular and scholarly discourse, the Nagas’ political choice is invariably presented as a binary between Naga independence – on the one hand – and greater autonomy within India, on the other.[482] As I have shown, however, between 1929 and 1947 the Nagas, the British, and India debated numerous alternative proposals for the Nagas’ future. These debates occurred amidst a continual re- and de-territorialisation of Naga

[476]Pandit Nehru on the Future of the Naga Hills Tribesman, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/76.

[477]NNC, Ultimatum to the Government of India, 4th November 1947, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/76.

[478]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.16.

[479]ibid.

[480]ibid, p.17.

[481]Brig. (Retd) S Singnya, ‘Naga Nationalism is essentially a movement for the restoration of our political & historical rights’, *The Morung Express* (online)*,* 14 August 2023.

[482]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.2.

space as a result of the implementation of the *The Government of India Act 1935*; the administrative division of the Naga Hills across the Indo-Burma borderlands; and the re- and de-territorialising effects of the Second World War. Claims of Naga independence emerged only once these alternative proposals had been forestalled – sometimes by the Nagas themselves and sometimes by the British or India. As I will show throughout the thesis, these documentary proposals and the alternative spatialities they envisage have continued to inspire efforts to materialise Naga geopolitical futures throughout the postcolonial period. For now, however, I turn to reflect on what the events of the late colonial period reveal about the broader spatialities, temporalities, and scales of Naga (inter)nationalism.

5. Spatialities, temporalities, and scales of Naga (inter)nationalism

I conclude by explaining *both* how the discussion in this chapter sharpens existing scholarly accounts of the histories of Naga nationalism *and* how it prefigures the discussion in the chapters to follow. I do so with reference to the spatialities and territorialities, temporalities, and scales of Naga (inter)nationalism.

This chapter has read the history of the Nagas in the late colonial period through a spatial and temporal lens. I have highlighted how the operation of colonial power across the Naga Hills was a spatially differentiated process, one which relied on the production of a series of (often contradictory) geographical and historical imaginaries. This, of course, was not unlike the rest of colonial South Asia, where the spatial and temporal politics of representation underpinned the maintenance of colonial rule. Nonetheless, I foreground these processes in the Naga context because of the material effects of these imaginations on subsequent efforts to realise Naga geopolitical futures. These imaginaries not only shape the working of the postcolonial state in Naga territories, but have also inspired and foreclosed a range of Naga nationalist geopolitical

projects. This is far from a deterministic reading of history. As I will show, Naga actors have continually re-articulated the identity categories associated with these geographical frames to heterogenous ends.

In this vein, I also suggest that existing accounts of Naga nationalism underplay the role of alternative state-making and territorialising projects in shaping the development of a Naga political consciousness. I have brought the work of historians of Northeast India such as Bérénice Guyot-Réchard and David Syiemlieh into dialogue with scholarship on Naga nationalism. While the latter highlights the impact of categorisation, conversion, and the failure of the negotiations surrounding the transfer of power in shaping the Nagas' call for statehood, both of these historians show us how the Nagas' demand for independence came in the wake of and were inspired by numerous attempts to reshape the territorialisation of Naga political and social life. These proposed and realised changes produced a region in territorial flux and cemented a belief that the transfer of power would offer the Nagas new opportunities to renegotiate their future. In internal discussions and negotiations with Indian and British officials, the NNC took as their departure point *not* the Nagas' ostensible inclusion within British India, but these ongoing and repeated efforts to re-territorialise the region. I return to how these various territorialising projects (or 'futures past') informed the geopolitical thought of A. Z. Phizo in Chapter 5 and of contemporary Naga nationalists in Chapters 6 and 7.

This chapter has also brought to the fore the *temporalities* underpinning Naga (inter)nationalist imaginaries. First, responding to Guyot-Réchard's call to attend to the 'multiple and dynamic spatial histories' of Northeast India (in this case, specifically the Naga Hills) in the late colonial period, I have foregrounded how, although the Nagas' demand for independence was

far from inevitable, *neither* was their inclusion within postcolonial India.[483] As Wouters argues, accounts of Naga nationalism variously narrate a 'relatively straight and uncomplicated historical trajectory', from the awakening of a pan-Naga consciousness in the early twentieth century to the Nagas' Independence declaration in 1947. I have shown however, how the late colonial period was characterised by multiple territorial conjunctures which, from the Nagas' perspective, the geopolitical future appeared uncertain.[484] Supplementing Wouters' work with reference to primary sources, the discussion above illustrates how, alongside negotiations over the Hydari agreement, Naga leaders called for the formation of 'IndoBurma', a sovereign state of Assam, and even for Southern Nagas to join Pakistan. Naga calls for statehood came to prominence only when these alternative forms of 'belonging and organisation' had been foreclosed.[485] In unsettling understandings of the state as the teleological outcome of decolonisation, I extend the work of scholars such as Getachew and Cooper beyond the African continent, while also foregrounding the post-imperial political thought of those who were neither elites nor statesmen.[486] I return to the notion of political futures opening and foreclosing in Chapter 5 via discussion of the ambivalence of the state in Phizo's geopolitics, and in Chapter 6 with reference to Naga claims to Indigenous self-determination.

The relationship between temporality and Naga (inter)nationalism is also prefigured in discussions over the politics of deferral in shaping efforts to figure Naga geopolitical futures. As a political strategy, time has continually been deployed by the Nagas, the British, and India to justify particular spatial and scalar arrangements in the Naga homeland. On the one hand, claims

[483]Guyot-Réchard, Tangled lands, p.309.

[484]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.2.

[485]Guyot-Réchard, Tangled lands, p.309.

[486]Getachew, *Worldmaking;* Cooper, *Empire and Nation.*

of backwardness were made by the Naga Club to argue for the Nagas' exclusion from a reformed British India, and by the NNC in their initial call for the establishment of an 'Interim Government'. On the other hand, these same assertions of primitiveness were used by Sir Robert Reid in his calls for a Crown Colony, and by Nehru and the postcolonial state when refusing to implement the Hydari agreement. In each of these instances, temporal and spatial scalar imaginaries were inseparable. In the 1940s, the NNC argued that they needed time to prepare for statehood and to enter the 'Atomic' (read: international) world, while Reid saw Naga primitivism as necessitating the future removal of Naga territories from under India's 'scalar sovereignty'.[487] Similarly, India's refusal of Naga statehood was motivated in part by representing the Nagas as pre-modern and thus not yet 'international' subjects. I return to the idea of deferral throughout this thesis, particularly when considering the Indian Government's ongoing use of the politics of stasis regarding the non-implementation of the Indo-Naga framework agreement.

Finally, this chapter prefigures this thesis' broader discussion as to the *scales* of Naga (inter)nationalism and particularly arguments as to the co-constitutive nature of Naga nationalism and internationalism. Challenging histories of the Nagas which are often highly 'local' or particularistic, I have argued that a Naga nationalist consciousness emerged on the grounds of an imperial social formation – an uneven zone of encounter between the Nagas and the British colonial world. Alongside an up-scaling of Naga political life, from the village to the tribe and – ultimately – the nation, this period saw Nagas increasingly integrated into global networks of thought and practice, through which they were exposed to the vocabularies of Western political modernity and were later able to position themselves as actors in the international sphere. This international engagement was sharpened by Naga experiences of both the two World Wars and

[487]Legg, Of scales, p.244.

was mediated by missionary education. Equally important, however, is the role of English language print media as a mode through which Naga actors have produced (inter)nationalism and articulated claims to political futures according to the spatial vocabularies and registers deemed acceptable to heterogeneous audiences. In Chapters 6 and 7, I situate the emergence of digital media as a means of figuring a Naga (inter)nationalist consciousness within the longer-term genealogies of print media set out here. However, having set out here how Naga claims to independence were foreclosed in the late colonial period, the next chapter considers the geopolitical thought of the architect of Naga claims to statehood – A. Z. Phizo.

Chapter 5 | Building statehood from the margins: The geopolitics of A. Z. Phizo

1. Introduction

This chapter explores the geopolitical thought and praxis of Angami Zapu Phizo in his advocacy for 'a national state of [the Naga] people' from 1946 to 1990. Elected NNC President in 1950, Phizo's leadership saw the organisation declare Naga independence, oversee the Naga independence plebiscite, and launch a decades-long programme of armed resistance against Indian military occupation of Naga territories. According to Wouters, 'it is nearly impossible to overstate the influence of Phizo' on the genesis and subsequent trajectories of the Naga self-determination struggle.[488] Described by scholars and activists as the 'father of the Nagas', Phizo has been likened to Ho Chi Minh,[489] Richard Nixon,[490] Mahatma Gandhi,[491] Nelson Mandela,[492] and even Moses.[493] Here, however, I use the archive to understand him on his own terms, as a 'Christian',[494] as 'the representative of [his]...people',[495] and – most importantly – as a Naga. I show how Phizo was both a highly significant anti-colonial nationalist leader and a geopolitical theorist in his own right.

[488]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.17.

[489]Namrata Goswami, *The Naga Ethnic Movement for a Separate Homeland: Stories from the Field* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). p.14

[490]A. Lanunungsang Ao*, From Phizo to Muivah: The Naga National Question in North-East India* (New Delhi: Mittal, 2002), p.21.

[491]Ao, *Phizo to Muivah,* p.20.

[492]Joel Nillo Kath, 'Could Phizo have Won the Nobel Peace Prize?', *Eastern Mirror* (online)*,* 22 December 2013.

[493]Horam, *Insurgency,* p.45.

[494]Ravi Sinha, 'Phizo in Exile', *Illustrated Weekly of India,* 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[495]The Nagas have a puppet government, *Sunday Magazine,* 20 November 1977, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

This chapter re-assembles the geopolitical imaginaries underpinning Phizo's theory of the Naga state. In doing so, I address a lacuna within critical geopolitics which has failed to take seriously geopolitical thought from the Global South.[496] I use fragments of Phizo's thinking from the archive to argue that Phizo's was both a material and epistemic project of decolonisation. On the one hand, Phizo sought an end to British and then Indian colonialism. On the other hand, he articulated an alternative model of the state which eschewed the 'adopt[ion] or imitat[ion] of foreign institutions' and thought. Instead, Phizo sought to build a hybrid Naga modernity based on Indigenous modes of Naga political, economic, and social life.[497] He infused this with a Naga Christian theology to redefine approaches to international relations, sovereignty, democracy, and national belonging to advance an understanding of the Naga state which would be both economically and epistemically self-sufficient and free from colonial relations of domination and dependence.

In what follows, I describe the character of Phizo's vision for Naga statehood. I begin by considering the grounded spaces which informed the development of Phizo's spatial imaginaries. Thereafter, I consider how Phizo used claims to and practices of political legitimacy to demonstrate the validity of his geopolitical vision, before considering how these claims to legitimacy shaped the domestic and international character of Phizo's theory of the Naga state. The fifth section seeks to understand the contemporaneous reception to Phizo's intellectual thought by considering

[496]For exceptions see Federico Ferretti, 'A coffin for Malthusianism: Josué de Castro's subaltern geopolitics', *Geopolitics* 26 (2021) 589-614; Jo Sharp, 'Practicing subalternity? Nyerere's Tanzania, the Dar School, and postcolonial geopolitical imaginations' in *Subaltern Geographies,* ed. by Tariq Jazeel and Stephen Legg (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2019) pp. 74-93.

[497]Angami Zapu Phizo, Naga Voluntary Plebiscite Speech, delivered in Kohima, 16 May 1951, Naga Archives and Research Centre, Dimapur (NARC). Note, documents held in the NARC do not have a catalogue number.

alternative strands of Naga geopolitical thought circulating after the transfer of power. I conclude by reflecting on Phizo's legacy.

2. The many lives of A. Z. Phizo

In elucidating Phizo's geopolitics, the broader contours of Phizo's life and the influences on his political thought bear reflection. Writing about Phizo, however, posed three challenges. First, there exists no single archive documenting the NNC leader's life. For the reasons described in Chapters 3 and 4, there is a paucity of in situ sources pertaining to the Naga nationalist movement and Phizo's involvement within it. This problem is sharpened by the fact that Phizo lived across at least five countries. Second, the practice of writing about Phizo's life is invariably tied up with questions of archival ownership. Indeed, Phizo's own personal papers are currently entangled within a dispute concerning Naga sovereignty, legitimacy, and international recognition amongst Naga nationalists, and research access is impossible.[498] Finally, Phizo's presence is still felt by Naga communities. Analysis of Phizo's life must sensitively negotiate the NNC leader's revered status and the 'imagined biographies' of Phizo which exist within Naga popular culture.[499] The

[498]Phizo's personal papers are currently in the possession of David Ward, the founder of Naga Vigil, a UK based activist network set up to publicise the Naga cause. It is unclear how Ward came to possess Phizo's archive. Following Phizo's death, Naga Vigil sought to establish a 'Naga Library' to house the papers in the UK. After the project failed to materialise, Ward publicly expressed his intention to return what he describes as the 'Naga National Archives' to the Naga people. The papers have since become entangled in complex debates concerning their stewardship, which are documented in 'Correspondence with and regarding David Ward, and papers of Naga Vigil Human Rights Group. 1993-2001' in BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/260. Also see 'Naga Vigil on Naga National Archives', *The Morung Express,* 24 October 2015.

[499]Elizabeth Baigent, 'Travelling bodies, texts, and reputations: the gendered life and afterlife of Kate Marsden and her mission to Siberian lepers in the 1980s', *Studies in Travel Writing* 18 (2014) 34-56. p.34.

reverence with which Phizo is held makes it difficult to engage critically with secondary accounts of Phizo's biography – which often border on the hagiographic, and rarely cite their sources.[500]

Rather than offer a full account of Phizo's life, this section instead engages with scholarship on 'life geographies' and 'new biography' amongst historians and geographers.[501] Grounded in feminist and poststructuralist traditions, such scholarship acknowledges the instability of identity across time and space. Accordingly, researchers eschew 'cradle to grave' biographical narratives in favour of an approach which embraces plurality and discontinuity. Instead of presenting '*the* life of the subject' in a 'linear and sequential way', 'spatial stories of lives' engage subjects geographically by examining the 'particular spaces and places' through which their life unfolds.[502] In this vein, this section considers five spaces or 'located moments' which – I argue – underpinned the development of the Phizo's geopolitical thought.[503] This approach embeds the gaps and

[500]There exists only one biography of Phizo's life, written by his friend Peiter Steyn and which draws on interviews with Phizo shortly before his death. While instructive, the text is drawn almost exclusively from Phizo's personal recollection; it is essentially memoir and not a critical biography. Steyn, *Zapuphizo.*

[501]On life-writing and geography see Cheryl McGeachan, 'Historical geography II: Traces remain', *Progress in Human Geography*, 42 (2018) 134–147; David Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*: *Geographies of Scientific Knowledge,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). On 'new biography' see David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction: Imperial spaces, imperial subjects' in *Colonial Lives Across in the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* ed. by David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006) pp.1- 31.

[502]Cheryl McGeachan, Isla Forsyth, and William Hasty, 'Certain subjects? Working with biography and life-writing in historical geography', *Historical Geography,* 40 (2020) 169–185. p.178. Emphasis in original.

[503]Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World 1550-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). p.383.

silences within the archive within an account of Phizo's life and embraces Phizo's 'productive uncertain[ty]' as a subject.[504]

Attending to the spatialities of Phizo's life has three advantages vis-à-vis the objectives of this thesis. First it foregrounds how *place* and *space* shaped Phizo's (inter)nationalism. I situate Phizo within historical geographies operating across multiple sites and scales to illustrate *both* the geographical particularities of Phizo's thought *and* the connections between his (inter)nationalism and other political projects. Second, this approach illustrates how the influences on Phizo's theory of the state varied through time as he encountered different audiences and 'speech spaces'.[505] I thus prefigure the discussion in Sections 4 and 5 on the contradictions and contingencies of Phizo's thought. Finally, by situating Phizo within the different geographies he inhabited, I eschew a 'spotlight' approach to biography which emphasises the 'uniqueness' of a particular subject, seen in individualised terms'.[506] I instead foreground the heterogeneous individuals who shaped Phizo's thought.

To negotiate the fragmentary and dispersed nature of Phizo's archive, I employed the 'scavenger methodology' described in Chapter 3. Biography is ultimately a 'means to mediate between memory and history'.[507] Thus, as well as archives in the UK and Nagaland, I draw on oral history interviews, memoirs of Phizo's contemporaries, and secondary accounts of Phizo's life. I

[504]McGeachan, Forsyth, and Hasty, Certain subjects, p.177. Also see: Nicola Thomas, 'Exploring the Boundaries of Biography: The Family and Friendship Networks of Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India 1898-1905', *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004) 496-519.

[505]David Livingstone, *Dealing with Darwin: Place, Politics, and Rhetoric in Religious Engagements with Evolution* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014). p. 2.

[506]Thomas, Boundaries of Biography, p.500.

[507]McGeachan, Forsyth, and Hasty, Certain subjects, p.171.

also sought to use the form and location of Phizo's archive as evidence of the spatiality of Phizo's life and thought.[508]

In what follows, I adopt a spatial and multi-scalar lens to recount how Phizo's thought was influenced by five spaces: Khonoma Village; Kohima Baptist Church; Rangoon; Switzerland; and London.

2.1 Khonoma Village

Phizo was born in Khonoma Village on 4 May 1904, where he lived until his teenage years.[509] Khonoma's importance to Phizo's geopolitics can be understood with reference to two memorials in the village. The first (figure 2) is located on the front of the 'Khonoma Fort' – a defensive stone citadel at the village's centre. Above the fort's door, an inscription reads: 'The fiercest of battles were fought between the British and the Nagas during 1850-1879 in this Semoma Fort of Khonoma. This Fort was described as one of the strongest in the North East by… the British Army'. In front, a standing stone documents the fort's history from 1825 to 1990 – a period in which the structure was twice destroyed during the 'Anglo-Khonoma' wars and once during the 'Indo-Naga Conflict'. The second memorial (figure 3) is located next to the Khonoma Baptist Church. A grey monolith topped with a Naga flag lists the names of forty-six people hailing from Khonoma who 'GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THE VISION OF A FREE NAGA NATION' between 1956 and 1992.

As the Semoma Fort memorial records, it was at Khonoma in 1880 that Angami tribes fought the final Anglo-Naga battle.[510] Stories of Angami military heroism and Khonoma villagers'

[508]Hodder, Heffernan and Legg, Archival internationalism, p.2.

[509]Chase, *Battles We Fought,* p.27.

[510]Franke, *Nationalism,* pp.18-30.

refusal to be subservient to the British have long dominated the community's oral history.[511] Phizo's great-uncle – Pelhu – led the Nagas' defence against the British and famously refused peace talks with the British army.[512] That a belief in his family's historical significance drove Phizo's own political ambitions was evident in a 1984 interview Phizo gave to an Indian newsmagazine. 'Historically' – Phizo claimed – his own family '[were] the ones who made history for the Nagas'.[513] Phizo would continue this familial legacy of anti-colonial resistance.

Khonoma also had a more material impact on Phizo's thought. As I show in Section 4, Phizo's model of the state – characterised by self-sufficiency and community land ownership – was, in effect, a larger-scale model of Khonoma Village. Village oral histories attribute Khonoma's increased prosperity vis-à-vis its nearest neighbours to the fact that the villagers were amongst the first to embrace sedentary agriculture.[514] While I have been unable to determine the veracity of these claims, they speak to the community's long-held belief that the village provides an example for other Nagas to follow.

The memorial to those killed defending a 'FREE NAGA NATION' speaks to how many other people from Khonoma Village supported Naga independence. When, in 1947, the NNC was divided between those favouring autonomy within India, and those campaigning for statehood, Phizo and other so-called 'Khonoma Nagas' dominated the latter camp.[515] Both British[516] and

[511]Interview 15 August 2023.

[512]ibid. Also see Steyn, Zapuphizo, p.17.

[513]Sinha, Phizo in Exile, 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[514]This fact was recounted to me by multiple residents of Khonoma Village. On Khonoma Village's oral history, see Visier Sanyü, A *history of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation* (*New Delhi:* Commonwealth Publishers, 1996).

[515]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.10.

[516]ibid.

Indian[517] officials believed that Phizo and his colleagues' demand for independence was motivated by a desire to re-establish pre-colonial Angami – and particularly, Khonoman – hegemony in the Naga Hills. While these claims underplay the depth of support for Naga independence, there is more than a grain of truth in the claim that inter-group differences have informed articulations of Naga Nationalism. I will explore in Section 5 how these differences have shaped the ambivalent character of Phizo's legacy.

[517]Indian police files from 1953 describe 'Khonoma' as the 'chief centre of trouble in the Naga Hills' and attribute claims to independence as the 'key-note of the character of the Angami'. 'A SHORT HISTORICAL NOTE ON KHONOMA - THE TOUGHEST VILLAGE (ANGAMI) IN NAGA HILLS DISTRICT', Zapu Phizo-General file of (1955), Nagaland State Archive, Kohima (NSA)/Repository of P&AR Records Cell Secretariat Office (PR)/849.



Figure 2: Semoma Fort, Khonoma Village. Photo: Author's own.



Figure 3: NNC memorial, Khonoma Village. Photo: Author's own.

2.2 Kohima Baptist Church

While Phizo's childhood in Khonoma instilled within him a sense of his place in Angami history, his initiation into the Christian faith as a young adult at Kohima Baptist Church underpinned his broader conception of the Nagas' place in the world.[518] After attending the village school in Khonoma, Phizo moved to Kohima Mission School where he was an unexceptional student.[519] In 1922, Phizo was baptised by the American missionary Dr. Sydney W. Rivenburg.[520] A committed evangelist, Rivenburg established schools, provided medical care, and was involved in translating and printing the Bible.[521] There exists little documentary evidence concerning Phizo's early engagement with Christianity. Nevertheless, a sense of the intellectual milieu inhabited by Rivenberg's Naga congregants can be gleaned from Rivenburg's letters to associates in America and his contributions to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society ('ABFMS') annual reports.[522] These writings situate Rivenberg and his Naga churchgoers – including Phizo – within an emergent internationalist network of evangelical thought and practice.

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[518]It is unclear exactly *where* Phizo was Baptised. Ao suggests that Phizo's Baptism occurred while Phizo was in middle school but notes how Phizo's name was registered both at Khedi Baptist Church, Kohima and at Kohima Baptist Church. Ao, *Phizo to Muivah,* p. 14.

[519]ibid.

[520]Rivenburg, his wife Hattie, and his daughter Narola were based amongst the Angami Naga community between 1885 and 1923. Their experiences are documented in *The Star of Naga Hills: Letters from Rev. Sydney and Hattie Rivenburg, pioneer missionaries in Assam, 1883-1923,* ed. by Narola Rivenburg (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1941).

[521]Jelle Wouters and Vibha Joshi, 'Naga' in *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Religions of the Indigenous People of South Asia Online*, ed. by Marine Carrin (Leiden: Brill), pp. 652-671.

[522]These letters were compiled in Rivenburg, *Star of Naga Hills.*

In 1919, Rivenberg had 'over ninety' pupils, which probably included Phizo.[523] Alongside providing 'teaching throughout the year', Rivenburg placed 'special emphasis on Sunday school as an opportunity for religious instruction'.[524] In that year 'nine' were 'added to the church by baptism' suggesting that, at his own baptism three years later Phizo was still amongst a relatively small (but fast growing) community of religious proselytes in Kohima.[525] Rivenburg saw Naga education not as an intrinsic benefit, but instead as a tool for conversion and a means to fashion an eminently modern Naga Christian subject.[526] John Thomas explains that evangelicalists worked to 'socializ[e] and disciplin[e] the Nagas into "civilised" American notions of time, hygiene and clothing'.[527] To join the Christian faith, Nagas had to eschew their traditional garments and cultural practices in favour of Western dress and habits.[528]

[523]ABFMS, *One-Hundred-Fifth Annual Report: Presented by the Board of Managers at the Annual Meeting held in Denver, Colorado, May 21-27, 1919'* (Boston: Foreign Mission Headquarters, 1919) p. 82. Yale University Digital Collections (YUDC)/NE6 Am2 A,

[524]ibid.

[525]ibid.

[526]ABFMS, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine,* Volume 6: Number 7 (July 1886), YUDC/NE6 Am2 A.

[527]John Thomas, 'Missionaries, Colonialism and the Writing of History among the Nagas', *The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia* 7&8 (2008/2009) 1-16. p.9.

[528]This created tension between American Baptist Missionaries and British Colonial Missionaries. The latter saw themselves as the guardians of Naga traditions and objected to the wearing of Western dress by Christian Nagas. van Den Brul describes how J.P. Mills – the one-time Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills – on 'one occasion came close to throwing the young A. Z. Phizo in gaol for his wearing of Western Dress in Kohima'. Gerard van den Brul, *An Examination of the Modernization Process and Ethnic Mobilization among the Nagas of Northeastern India,* (unpublished MA thesis: McMaster University, 1980). p.127.

Phizo's mission school upbringing left a lasting impression on him**.** As an adult, he refused to be seen unless wearing a lounge suit and tie.[529] Indeed, in audiences with international journalists, he wore Western dress to dispel the idea that the Nagas were uncivilised.[530] As I will show, Phizo would draw upon the Nagas' claim to be modern, Christian subjects, to position an independent Nagaland as part of a broader Christian commonwealth – and as a distinct entity from India and its non-Christian inhabitants. Rivenburg's daughter, Narola, writes how, at the conclusion of the school term, pupils were sent back to their villages to preach.[531] This experience likely shaped Phizo's own approach to political communication. Phizo's speeches were saturated with religious imagery which would not be out of place in a Baptist sermon. Similarly, Phizo's attempts to visit every Naga village to preach his message of independence (described in Section 3.2) is reminiscent of earlier missionary expeditions across the Naga Hills. The work of missionaries like Rivenburg also saw the Nagas' integrated within a Christian internationalist world. Mission educated Nagas attended student conferences across the Northeast.[532] Throughout his life Phizo would correspond with Christians across the world about Naga self-determination.[533]

[529]Interview 20 August 2022. This account is corroborated in newspaper interviews given by Phizo, including in Nagaland: There Will Be No Mercy, The Tapes/Phizo's Version, *India Today,* 1-15 September 1977, BOD/Astor/Astor Papers/MSS.15363/261.

[530]This was only partially successful: Walker details how Indian commentators described Phizo and other Naga leaders in the UK a 'looking like "life insurance salesmen" or "members of the YMCA". Walker, Decolonization, p.245.

[531]Rivenburg, *Star of Naga Hills*, p.116.

[532]Thomas, Writing of History, p.7.

[533]Many of these letters have been reprinted in Zapuvisie Lhousa, *American Influence in Christianity: Bethlehem to Nagaland* (Kohima: Author, 2020).

Indeed, this global Christian network supported Phizo to travel to London to internationalise the Naga cause.[534]

Phizo did not embrace missionary thought uncritically. Evangelical teaching saw Naga Christian conversion as a break with a pre-colonial past.[535] As I will show, however, Phizo sought to reconcile Naga Indigenous and Christian temporalities. Nevertheless, Christianity underpinned Phizo's thought and that of those around him. Indeed, Phizo's election as president heralded a replacement of the NNC's previous leadership, who were principally tribal elders, with a new generation of younger and (most importantly) mission school-educated elite who shared Phizo's evangelical outlook.[536]

2.3 Rangoon

In 1925 ('or nearabouts'[537]) Phizo travelled to Calcutta in search of work, eventually taking on a role with a Canadian life insurance company.[538] Throughout his life Phizo maintained that the Indian independence struggle was 'not important for [him] at all'.[539] Nevertheless, he claimed that his experiences in Calcutta underpinned the emergence of his anticolonial politics. In 1984 he argued that the visit provoked within him an awareness of the 'domination and humiliation' experienced by the 'sons of the soil' across Asia 'conquered or unconquered' at the hands of

[534]Walker, Decolonization.

[535]Thomas, Missionaries, Writing of History, p.9.

[536]Dossier of Shri Angami Zaphu Phizo, Son of Late Knuesieto (sic) of Khonoma, Police Station, Kohima, Dist. of Naga Hills. Nagaland, Kohima, Activities of the Naga National Council (1953), NSA/PR/833.

[537]Sinha, Phizo in Exile, 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[538]Ao, *Phizo to Muivah,* p.15.

[539]Sinha, Phizo in Exile, 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

'foreigners, white or black'.[540] In 1933, Phizo travelled to Rangoon, where he embarked on multiple unsuccessful business ventures.[541] The influence of Phizo's time in Rangoon can be traced in his political thought in two respects.

First, Phizo was exposed to Auung San's nascent Burmese nationalist movement. He would later tell his biographer, Peter Steyn:

> I had seen nationalists at work in Burma. I had witnessed what patriotism could achieve. What I found on my return to Nagaland was nothing – no unity, no ideas. Everybody waited to hear what the District Commissioner wanted.[542]

Though it is unclear whether Phizo sustained these connections in later life, he would claim that the visit inspired a belief within him that nationalism could overcome the Nagas' disunity against the British.[543]

Second, in Burma, Phizo and his brother Kevi Yally volunteered their services to Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army. Bose aided the Japanese invasion of India (via Burma) in 1942. Phizo would later claim that his support for Bose and for the Japanese was contingent upon the latter agreeing to 'recognise Nagaland as an independent sovereign state'.[544] The horrors of

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[540]ibid.

[541]These included cosmetics manufacturing and mushroom cultivation. Visier Sanyü, A brief biography of Dr. A. Z. Phizo – prepared on behalf of the organising committee for the funeral of Dr. A. Z. Phizo, NARC.

[542]Steyn, *Zapuphizo*, p.72.

[543]ibid. An account of Phizo's life in an Indian newsmagazine in 1977 claimed that, as well as Aung San, the NNC president was also in touch with both Thakin Than Tun and Thakin Soe – leaders of the Communist Party of Burma – in the early 1940s. I have not found evidence of these connections elsewhere, though, given his desire to publicly eschew links with communism it is possible that Phizo deliberately avoided speaking about these meetings in later life. M. S. Gokhale, 'The Quest for Phizo', *Illustrated Weekly of India,* 19 June 1977, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[544]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

War and the Nagas vulnerability to global events outside their control cemented Phizo's desire for Independence. As he wrote to Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the final Governor-General of India in 1948:

> …our country became the scene of a terrible battlefield… [and] the war also changed the mind of our people. It does not pay to fight another men's [sic] war …people have seen independence in the darkness of war like the beautiful starry world which can only be seen in the darkness of night. Peace was heard in the thundering sound of bombs and cannons. Meaning of defence can be realised only in the battlefield. The people who… lived in a war-shattered country have seen independence… like a vision that can never be forgotten. Will any sensible man like to leave even a remote chance for his children to live in battlefield again.[545]

When the war ended, Phizo was considered a 'source of danger to security' by the Burmese government and briefly imprisoned alongside other INA members in Rangoon.[546] In 1946, he returned to the NHD and joined the recently established NNC. Phizo's charisma and commitment saw him elected as chairman of the organisation's 'Kohima Central Council' and as a member of the NNC's 'Social Services Association', a body established to fight 'social evils' and achieve Naga 'social advancement'.[547] The latter role provided Phizo opportunities to develop connections across the Naga Hills. In June 1948, Phizo's calls for Naga independence again led to his imprisonment ('without trial or any charge') in Calcutta.[548] Later the same year, Phizo's son was killed and his wife injured in a car accident.[549] Phizo was duly released from prison on

[545]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

[546]Phizo dossier, NSA/PR/833.

[547]NNC, *TNN*, Volume 1: Issue 3 (October 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[548] Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

[549]Phizo dossier, NSA/PR/833.

compassionate grounds, returning to the frontline of Naga politics. By this point, the NNC's position had shifted toward independence. Phizo was a popular choice to lead the organisation, winning the presidency in December 1950.[550]

2.4 Switzerland

Following the Naga independence plebiscite of 1951, Phizo led a programme of civil disobedience across the Naga Hills. A volte-face from his previous commitment to non-violence, Phizo quickly adopted armed resistance in the face of Indian military aggression – a decision which divided the NNC between 'Phizoites' willing to use violence to obtain statehood, and 'moderates' who advocated passive resistance.[551] Fearing arrest, Phizo escaped to Pakistan in November 1952, evading Indian capture by 'growing long hair' a 'long beard and moustache' and disguising himself with 'a turban as his headgear'.[552] After briefly returning to the Naga Hills, Phizo departed again – this time to take the Naga claim to the UN on a trip subsided by donations from Naga households.[553] After several years in Pakistan, Phizo travelled to Switzerland using a forged El Salvadoran passport.[554]

Phizo would claim that his experience in Switzerland reinforced his belief that the Swiss model demonstrated the viability of a small mountainous Naga state.[555] There is evidence that

[550]ibid.

[551]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p.20.

[552]Letter from S. M. Dutt, Shillong, to P.V. Bhaskaran, Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau, Govt. of India, New Delhi concerning A. Z. Phizo, 29 December 1952, NSA/PR/833.

[553]Phizo dossier, NSA/PR/833.

[554]Phizo reportedly purchased the passport in Manilla. Letter from J. M. Ross, Home Office to V. C. Martin, CRO, 7 September 1960, BNA/DO/196/60.

[555]Interview 4 August 2022.

Switzerland inspired other Nagas' geographical imaginaries. In July 1947, Mildred Archer – wife of William Archer, Additional Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills – describes in her diary a conversation with Kevichüsa Angami, an early supporter of Naga independence within the NNC.[556] Archer writes of Kevichüsa's conviction that, in the event of a War in South Asia, an independent Nagaland 'should be neutral like Switzerland'. The Nagas – Kevichüsa argued – could never 'surrender foreign affairs' and 'in no circumstances' would they 'ever fight Burma'.[557] Similarly, British government intelligence reports describe how, by 1968, the idea of Nagaland – 'as a Christian state – rather like Switzerland, surrounded by large countries but independent and internationally recognised' had become commonplace amongst Nagas resisting India.[558]

Nonetheless, there were limits to the extent to which the NNC felt the Nagas could emulate Switzerland. As Wettstein describes, the Nagas rejected a Swiss-style federalist model, in favour of claims to ethnic and territorial homogeneity. Wettstein views this as a colonial legacy with its roots in the idea of tribe.[559] I suggest, however, this also reflected Phizo's desire to reconcile his vision of Naga nationhood with predominant ideas of postcolonial nationalism as they circulated internationally. I now consider how Phizo's experiences in London shaped these visions.

[556]I introduced Kevichüsa Angami in Chapter 4.

[557]Diaries of Mildred Archer, 23 July 1947, Digital Himalaya, University of Cambridge (online).

[558]This observation was made by Major General Naween Rawley – an Indian Army commander who was stationed in the Naga Hills in the 1960s – to CRO officials at a private dinner on 8 August 1968. Brief for Commonwealth Secretary on Nagaland, BNA/Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)/37/264.

[559]Wettstein, Naga Myths, p.233-235.

2.5 London

In Switzerland, Phizo was met by Michael Scott — the Anglican priest and anti-apartheid campaigner.[560] Phizo and Scott travelled together to London, arriving on 12 June 1960.[561] Scott, and a network of Western advocates (including David Astor[562]), aided the NNC leader in his (unsuccessful) attempts to take the Naga case to the UN. In London, Phizo adopted the persona of a leader in exile. Before departing Nagaland in 1956, Phizo had used his 'Gethsemane' message to make several pledges to his supporters, namely to: make the Naga cause known to the world; submit '[the Naga] case to the UN'; achieve recognition for the Naga government'; and establish 'permanent [Naga government] organizations' overseas.[563] Only the first of these promises came close to being fulfilled. In addition to hosting multiple 'International Press Conferences', Phizo conducted extensive diplomacy, gave press interviews, and maintained correspondence with NNC leaders in Nagaland.[564]

Writing about Phizo's experience in London, Walker notes the mutual, yet unequal relations of dependence which existed between Phizo and his Western advocates — including

[560]I introduced Scott in Chapter 1. Scott acted as an international advocate for several nationalist communities throughout the 1960s, including the Herero people in Southwest Africa (now Namibia) and the Nagas. Scott was later a member of the Nagaland Peace Council, a Baptist initiative which, in 1964, brokered a short-lived ceasefire between the FGN/NNC and India. See Walker, *Decolonization.*

[561]The fallout from Phizo and Scott's arrival in the UK is described in detail in a series of correspondence between British Commonwealth Office civil servants. Naga Affairs, India 1957-60, BNA/DO/35/9004. Also see Walker, Decolonization.

[562]I introduced David Astor in Chapter 3 in discussion of his archive held at the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

[563]Zapuvisie Lhousa, *Strange Country,* p. 183.

[564]I describe Phizo's contact with British, Indian, Chinese, and Pakistani diplomats and his correspondence with NNC leaders in Section 4.

Scott and Astor. Although advocacy offered 'pre-independence recognition' for nationalists, this support came with 'strings' which 'constrained' their claims.[565] By 'speaking for nationalists' instead of 'providing opportunities for nationalists to speak for themselves', advocates often 'undermine[d] the causes they sought to empower'.[566] Walker's work – alongside my own reading of Astor's archive – illustrates how Phizo's Western supporters encouraged him to 'modify' his 'attitude for total sovereignty' following growing violence across the Naga Hills.[567] Instead, they increasingly called upon Phizo to campaign for the rights of the Nagas as a minority group within India.[568]

Phizo, however, was resolutely recalcitrant — to the annoyance of surprisingly disparate groups. For example, Phizo refused to compromise by supporting the creation of a federal Indian State of Nagaland in 1963 — much to the frustration of those around him in London who saw the NNC leader as overly idealistic and increasingly removed from the escalating violence facing Naga communities.[569] Conversely, in 1975, Phizo refused to comment on the signing of the Shillong

[565]Walker, Decolonization, p.231.

[566]ibid.

[567]Letter from Scott to Astor, 28 December 1977, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261. Also see Letter from J. P. Narayan to unknown (possibly Narayan Ganesh Gore, Indian High Commissioner to the UK 1977-1979), 18 May 1977, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[568]Walker, Decolonization, p.234.

[569]These tensions are evident in a series of letters between David Astor, on the one hand, and Tim and Ursula Betts, on the other. Ursula Betts (née Graham-Bower) was a British Anthropologist based in the Naga Hills between 1937-1963, and who, along with her husband Tim, worked closely with Phizo and other Nagas in the UK. Tensions arose between Phizo and the Betts' over, inter alia: Phizo's intransigent attitude, his apparent false allegations regarding Ursula Betts, and his rumoured involvement in the removal of General Kaito Sukhai as Commander-in-Chief of the Naga Army in late 1963. Correspondence between Tim and Ursula Betts and David Astor 1-9 November 1963, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

Accord by the Indian government and a group of NNC leaders.[570] (It is widely suspected that Phizo's decision was motivated by the fact that his brother Kevi Yally was one of the agreement's signatories.)[571] Phizo's silence on this issue has continued to overshadow his legacy for many Nagas, who saw the episode as proof of Phizo's increasing detachment from the struggle on the ground.[572] Phizo's exilic period in London thus put him between Scylla and Charybdis, with his Western supporters viewing him as too uncompromising and his Naga compatriots as unprincipled.

One might have expected this period of physical and political isolation to dampen Phizo's conviction for Naga self-determination. Far from weakening his resolve, however, if anything, Phizo's time in the UK strengthened his belief in the need for Naga statehood. Indeed, at the time of his death in 1990, Phizo remained an ardent believer in Naga independence. With the challenges Phizo faced maintaining legitimacy over time, across distance, and with different audiences in mind, I turn to consider how Phizo sought to convince others of the necessity of Naga statehood.

3. Phizo's claims to legitimacy

As outlined in Chapter 2, this thesis draws upon scholarship which has demonstrated the 'situated, constructed' and 'contingent character' of political legitimacy and its 'ambiguous' relationship to the state, sovereignty, and legality.[573] Legitimacy – which consists of both supply and demand side elements – facilitates a focus on the 'processes, practices and discourses through which the

[570]The Shillong Accord saw the Naga Federal Government accept without reservation the Constitution of India and offer a full and unconditional surrender.

[571]Interview 15 August 2023.

[572]Indeed, Phizo's silence on the Shillong Accord is associated with a split within the NNC and the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (the 'NSCN') in 1980. Goswami, T*he Naga Movement,* p.35. This episode was also described in oral history interviews. Interview 25 August 2022.

[573]Jeffrey, McConnell, and Wilson, Understanding legitimacy, p.177.

authority of [non-state] actors is constructed, negotiated and presented', and provides a lens on the nature of political actorness and leadership.[574] Legitimacy should be understood as a 'mode of statecraft rather than an achieved status'.[575] Accordingly, I contend that efforts to claim and construct legitimacy underpinned Phizo's geopolitical thought and praxis and its reception by domestic and international audiences. Echoing calls to hold in tension understandings of 'legitimacy as a normative aspect of government' with 'processual understandings of legitimacy', this section has two parts.[576] First, I consider how Phizo drew on historical, religious, and moral claims to legitimacy. Second, I reflect on the *practices* through which Phizo produced political authority on the ground. Before doing so, it is necessary to describe how I have re-assembled Phizo's geopolitical thought.

Unlike many twentieth-century anticolonial nationalists, Phizo did not write systematic accounts of his political thought. Despite operating in the context of a burgeoning Cold War, he self-consciously rejected any single ideological framework, such as Marxism, arguing in a 1984 interview that 'once you have a philosophy you cannot violate it'.[577] Furthermore, whilst Phizo's outlook has echoes of Christian Socialist and Non-Alignment orthodoxies, he refused such labels, arguing that the Nagas were forging their own geopolitical path. Writing to the Naga Students Federation ('NSF') in December 1983, Phizo argued Naga 'traditional values [were]… superior to

[574]Wilson and McConnell, Constructing legitimacy, p.212.

[575]McConnell, *Rehearsing,* p.114.

[576]Jeffrey, McConnell, and Wilson, Understanding legitimacy, pp.179-180.

[577]Sinha, Phizo in Exile, 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

the modern political ideology of socialism or communism'.[578] Phizo's was a politics rooted in praxis, driven by an unwavering commitment to the realisation of Naga independence.

In lieu of a single exposition of Phizo's ideas, the remaining sections draw on speeches, letters, and interviews, written or given by the NNC leader during his lifetime. These sources are revealing of Phizo's theory of the state, because it was via these means that he sought to generate both domestic and international legitimacy for his vision. As to the former, as NNC President, Phizo toured Naga villages, delivering impassioned speeches in language designed to appeal to the assembled crowds. These speeches were well received, attracting large audiences — much to the ire of British and Indian government officials.[579] Phizo's most famous speech – his 'Plebiscite Message' – delivered on the eve of the Nagas' 1951 vote, reportedly attracted 6000 people, and provides the fullest account of Phizo's geopolitical vision.[580] The speech and subsequent vote represented a pivotal moment in the consolidation of the nationalist movement.[581] As to international legitimacy, Phizo's most detailed writing aimed at non-Naga audiences are his pamphlet *The Fate of the Naga People: An Appeal to the World (1960).* Written in the UK,[582] Phizo sent the pamphlet to the President of the UN General Assembly and distributed it to journalists at his first 'International Press Conference'. In London, Phizo also gave a series of

[578]Letter from A. Z. Phizo, Bromley, Kent to the Naga Students' Federation, Kohima, 1 December 1 1983, NNC online.

[579]Letter from Jacob Abraham to the Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills, 4 October 1953, NSA/PR/833.

[580]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[581]The speech is widely reprinted in contemporary nationalist literature. For instance, FGN, 'Platinum Jubilee of Nagaland Independence Declaration: Souvenir' (Kohima: FGN, 2022).

[582]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

interviews to British and Indian newspapers. Today, both sets of texts are widely circulated via Naga social media and in nationalist literature.[583]

3.1 Normative claims to legitimacy: historical, religious, and moral dimensions

Turning to historical legitimacy, Phizo invoked the timelessness of the Naga way of life as the genesis of Naga nationhood. 'Temporality', Geeta Patel, writes, has 'genealogies of its own' and 'telling time' provides a means of justifying particular territorial and national configurations.[584] Through narrating the Nagas' history, Phizo constructed a national time whereby the Nagas' pre-colonial and colonial past were produced, narrated, and conjoined in the present as the basis of a desired postcolonial future. As Phizo wrote in a 1988 letter to Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi: 'Nagaland is not an ordinary country. It exists in the way it is as it has always been because it is republic from time immemorial'.[585] Nagaland – Phizo argued – was the 'oldest surviving republic in Asia', whose political and social traditions had existed long before those of India and would be preserved in a future Naga state. Rather than a rupture, an independent Nagaland would represent partial continuity with conditions under British rule. The Nagas, Phizo argued, had 'never been subjugated' by the British and had exercised autonomy during the colonial period, evidenced by

[583]For instance, see NNC, *The Naga National Rights and Movement* (Kohima: NNC, 1993); NNC, Golden Jubilee: Federal Republic of Nagaland 1956-2006 (Kohima: NNC, 2006); NNC, *Phizo Souvenir* (Kohima: NNC, 1991).

[584]Geeta Patel, 'Ghostly Appearances: TIME TALES TALLIED UP', *Social Text* 18 (2000) 47–66. p.47. On time and territory, also see Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Saurabh Dube, 'Mirrors of Modernity: Time–Space, the Subaltern, and the Decolonial', *Postcolonial Studies* 19 (2016) 1–21; Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[585]Letter from Angami Zapu Phizo to the Prime Minister of India, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, New Delhi, 6 September 1988, NNC online.

the fact that the two parties lacked a formal treaty. This – Phizo argued in the same letter – was unlike India:

> History reflects the background of a people… we fought the British when they invaded our territory… we did not allow the British to impose a Treaty on us… if you reflect on your own historical background (as an Indian) you will find that as many as 688 Indian Ruling Houses… suffered defeat and… were 'forced' to sign Subordinated Treaties by the English… and thus a handful of the British traders "conquered" India.[586]

Through asserting a distinct Naga temporality, Phizo constructed a 'disconnected history' for the Nagas, in which future political separation between Nagaland and its neighbours was justified through the denial of historical connections across geographical space.[587] He wrote in a letter from prison to C. Rajagopalachari, in 1948:

> The Nagas know the Indians very little and the Indians have never known the Nagas because Indians, as a foreigner, were not allowed to enter into Naga country freely… as a result we are quite stranger to one another'.[588]

Secondly, Phizo's claims to legitimacy were rooted in a 'religious geopolitics', in which 'political-theological vocabularies [and] symbols' underpinned putatively secular discourses of modernity,

[586]Phizo to Rajiv Gandhi, 6 September 1988, NNC online. Phizo's discussion of the Nagas' refusal to sign a 'Treaty' with the British is likely a reference to Pelhu's refusal to engage in peace talks with the British Army in 1880.

[587]In doing so, Phizo drew on a long tradition of strategic territorial state-making in the region. As Chatterjee argues, throughout the early modern period, local historians working with the British state erased the existence of 'cultural continuities between proximate peoples and past' in the space now known as 'Northeast India' to naturalise 'absolutist' sovereignty regimes. Phizo's scripting of the Naga' history can was a continuation of the same project. Chatterjee, Connected Histories, p.85.

[588]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

state and nation.[589] Although the NNC did not adopt a policy of evangelicalism until the 1960s[590] – with Phizo declaring in 1951 that Naga society 'admits no strata of social class or creed, religion or race'[591] – the decades after the transfer of power saw rapid growth in the rate of Naga Christian conversions.[592] As I described in Chapter 4, rather than unidirectionally attributing Naga nationalism to Christian conversions, Christianity should instead be understood as a means through which the Nagas constructed a unified and 'modern national identity' in the face of British and Indian opposition.[593] Religion influenced Phizo' geopolitics in three ways.

First, Phizo scripted the Naga nation as a product of divine construction, a people who necessitated their own territory. Invoking Christian teachings which understand nation-states as pre-ordained,[594] Phizo wrote to C. Rajagopalachari that the differences between Nagas and Indians were the 'design' of 'God'.[595] It was thus impossible for both to co-exist on 'friendly terms'.[596] Thomas documents how Baptist missionaries used the metaphor of a 'city set on a hill' to describe the formation of a new Naga 'religious and cultural self' following conversion.[597] This metaphor invoked the need for socio-spatial segregation between Christians and the unconverted. As

[589]Tristan Sturm, 'The future of religious geopolitics: towards a research and theory agenda', *Area* 45 (2013) 134-140. p.135.

[590]Thomas, *Evangelizing,* p.5.

[591]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[592]The number of Baptists rose from 18% to 46% in the period 1941-1951. Guyot-Réchard, Legions, p.354.

[593]Thomas, *Evangelizing,* p. 126. Also see Arkotong Longkumer, 'Bible, guns, and land: Sovereignty and nationalism amongst the Nagas of India, *Nations and Nationalism* 24 (2018) 1097-1116.

[594]Anthony Smith, 'Biblical beliefs in the shaping of modern nations', *Nations and Nationalism* 23 (2005) 403-422.

[595]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

[596]ibid.

[597]Thomas, *Evangelizing,* p.4.

conversions continued, however, and coincided with the emergence of a nascent nationalist movement, these spaces were expanded to encompass larger territorial claims, culminating in the NNC's adaptation of the slogan 'Nagaland for Christ' in the 1960s.[598] This approach was thus at odds with other 20th century South Asian Christian internationalists, who promoted a deterritorialised understanding of Christianity, in which evangelism could unite communities across the subcontinent.[599]

As violence escalated in the Naga Hills in the 1950s, Phizo began to describe Indian military aggression toward the Nagas as directly motivated by the presence of a Christian majority. In his 1960 pamphlet to British audiences – many of whom would have been Christian – Phizo emphasised the violence toward 'Church leaders' and 'Christian villagers', while those 'massacred' by Indian forces were described as 'martyrs'. He would later claim that:

> The Indians have killed the Naga civilians like animals because the Nagas are Christians. They cannot do that to the Muslims nor the Buddhists. And it is not just the killings, but the Indians were out to humiliate our nation. [600]

[598]Chongpongmeren Jamir, "'Nagaland/lim for Christ": Semiotics in Christianity among the Naga People in Northeast India', *The Journal of World Christianity* 12 (2022) 212-227. p.212.x

[599]For instance, amidst the emergence of Indian nationalism in the early 20th century, the Anglican Bishop and Indian Evangelist V. S. Azariah advanced a 'Pan-Asian Ecumenism' in the belief that Christian evangelism could help transcend national and regional boundaries. Susan Billington Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009).

[600]Ravi Sinha, 'Phizo in Exile', *Illustrated Weekly of India,* 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261. Phizo is likely referring here to Dalits within India. From the 1950s, Dalit leader Ambedkar launched a 'Neo-Buddhist' movement, which saw nearly half a million Dalits convert to Buddhism and reject Hindu caste hierarchies. Ajay Skaria, 'Ambedkar, Marx and the Buddhist Question', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38 (2015) 450-465.

Phizo also used his 1960 pamphlet to highlight violence towards 'women and girls' by Indian forces.[601] South Asian nationalist narratives have long 'conflate[d] women's bodies, the nation, and religious identity'.[602] In the context of his efforts to represent Nagaland as the only Christian state in the region, Phizo's words scripted Indian atrocities against Naga women as an attack both on the collective Naga nation and as an assault against a global Christian community.

Second, Phizo saw Christianity as the basis for a unified national identity. His plebiscite speech rejected claims that Christianity was a foreign imposition:

> We do not take Christianity as foreign religion any more than we consider the light of the sun as foreign origin from outer world. There is a father-creator (Ukepenopfü) as we call it. He is God. The message of the Gospel fulfils our Naga conception of religion – Nanyü – which literally means "anguish of mind" for which we do worship. Once we came to know that there is a personal Saviour to whom one can talk or pray directly, the real light dawned on us… there is no foreignness in relationship between father and child; that is, between God the Father and His children.[603]

Through emphasising the continuities between Christian and Naga Indigenous beliefs, Phizo reconciled Indigenous modes of narrating Naga national history with Christian conceptions of temporality. Christianity inhabits multiple temporalities, including a faith in the timeless truth of the Christian message, coupled with eschatological teaching regarding the end of time. Phizo's speeches drew on both of these modes of telling time to enfold an Indigenous vocabulary of the 'timelessness' of the Naga nation with a Christian conception of 'nation[al]… birthright'.[604]

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[601]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

[602]Sarah Smith, 'Intimate Geopolitics: Religion, Marriage, and Reproductive Bodies in Leh, Ladakh', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*,102 (2012) 1511-1528. p.1515.

[603]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[604]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

Accordingly, Naga statehood was preordained and could not be 'pushed aside by the march of time'.[605]

Third, Christianity also underpinned Phizo's own geopolitical agency and that of a future Naga state. As to the former, Phizo argued that God provided him with the 'courage and wisdom' to pursue independence 'according to [God's will]'.[606] His plebiscite speech described how:

> I always have a feeling that God, our Heavenly Father - our creator - is with us and guiding us... and there is no ground for the Nagas to be worried or to fear the millions of Indians in this struggle to retain our Independence'.[607]

In a 1988 letter to Rajiv Gandhi, Phizo went further, claiming to communicate a message directly from God, who had 'revealed himself' to warn that territorial disintegration would be the 'price India has to pay' for her 'crimes' against 'Nagaland'.[608] In representing himself as God's messenger tasked with leading the Nagas to safety, Phizo's words recall the biblical prophet Joseph, who, following God's instruction, delivered the Israelites to the chosen land.

As to how Christianity shaped the geopolitical agency of the Naga state, Phizo saw an independent Nagaland as a means of enacting Christian values of 'compassion', 'non-violence', 'hard-work', 'love' and 'justice'.[609] Phizo's conception of Christian Nagaland was articulated in direct opposition to his vision of the Nehruvian modernist state. Indians, he argued in his plebiscite speech, 'abandoned the dead' at great 'dishonour to the Creator', while 'millions… roam[ed]... the

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[605]ibid.

[606]Letter from A. Z. Phizo to The President, The Naga Youth Movement, Mokokchung, 14 August 1952, NNC online.

[607]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[608]Phizo to Rajiv Gandhi, 6 September 1988, NNC online.

[609]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

streets… begging and stealing' because they had 'no work, no land, [and] no self-respect'.[610] Emphasising the centrality of Christianity to Naga statehood, Phizo's 1960 pamphlet argued:

> If great Russia and Mainland China are proud to feel that they followed the ideology of the German Karl Marx, tiny Nagaland is happy to be a follower of Jesus Christ, whom we have come to believe in as our Saviour.[611]

Finally, Phizo drew on questions of morality to legitimate his claims, arguing that independence was necessary for the protection of the Naga community. Phizo's critique can be located within an analytical framework of settler colonialism.[612] Settler colonialism is distinguished from colonialism by its concern for control over territory, rather than on the exploitation of people and labour.[613] Phizo recognised this distinction in the qualitatively different experiences of the Nagas during British colonialism – during which time the 'Inner Line' allowed the Nagas to live in relative isolation – with his fears for life under 'alien' Indian rule. As he described to C. Rajagopalachari in 1948:

> India's annexation of Nagaland… has become a more fearful problem than the British Imperialism whose home country was at least several thousand miles away… If India once felt the weight of domination of people who were 4000 miles away, whose people were

[610]ibid.

[611]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

[612]On the geographical and historical specificities of settler colonialism, Veracini, *Settler Colonialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[613]Patrick Wolf, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (2006) 387-409. Some scholars have challenged the distinction between the dispossession and exploitation of 'land' and 'labour' in settler-colonial contexts, arguing that it is impossible to disentangle the two. For instance, see Richard Howitt, 'Unsettling the taken (for granted)', *Progress in Human Geography* 44 (2020) 193-215.

> seven time smaller than India itself, the Nagas will feel the weight of the connections with India like a rat under the foot of an elephant.[614]

Phizo argued that Indian rule would lead to the occupation of Naga territories by Indian settlers and the concomitant exploitation of its natural resources. He noted in his plebiscite speech:

> The Naga case ha[s] no comparison… where a human race newly emancipated like India try usurp its neighbour country of a sovereign state like Nagaland all because of the vast wealth of mineral resources… Leaving aside the distinctiveness of our nation as a race and Nagaland as a country, our native right over our own national territory that had been clearly demarcated 400 years ago cannot be superseded by India. The Indians have no vested interest in our country and there is not a single Indian nationality who own an acre of land in our Nagaland.[615]

Whilst there is 'fluidity of specific [settler colonial] contexts',[616] settler efforts to achieve territorial control principally occur through the eradication of Indigenous people via intersecting logics of elimination and assimilation.[617] Mirroring these arguments, Phizo claimed that Nagaland's inclusion within India would lead to the replacement of the Naga population. In a reconfiguration of what Veracini describes as the principle of 'transfer',[618] Phizo argued that replacement would occur via the Indian government 'dump[ing] her excess population in Nagaland'.[619] This large-

[614]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

[615]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC. At his second 'International Press Conference' in 1962, Phizo declared his 'willingness to discuss Indian and other participation in the development of Naga natural resources' and 'any other matter of interest which India feels is necessary to her future in Naga territory'. A. Z. Phizo Press Statement, 21 January 1962, BNA/DO/196/61.

[616]Mushtaq and Amin, Memorise, p.3024.

[617]Rachel Busbridge, 'Israel-Palestine and the Settler Colonial "Turn": From Interpretation to Decolonization Theory', *Culture & Society 3*5 (2017) 91–115. p.95.

[618]Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, p.33.

[619]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

scale movement of Indian citizens would dispossess the Nagas of their lands, contributing to the destruction of Naga ways of life based on self-sufficiency. Statehood was thus a 'question of life and death for the Nagas' who risked 'annihilation and extinction from the [face] of the earth', should they be incorporated within India:

> Being a small nation (almost a 1000th part of India), we can easily be submerged and get lost: our culture, civilization, our institutions, our nation and all that we had struggled and build [sic] up as we are today will be perished without the least benefit to mankind. And, those we shall lose not happily but in anger and in perpetual sorrow. If such a day were to be forced on us, God forbid it would have been better none of us were ever born.[620]

Phizo's anxieties about the destruction of Naga culture speak to his fears that Indian settler colonialism would not only occur through the elimination of Naga bodies, but also 'memoricide' whereby a Naga sense of belonging and familiarity with the homeland would be erased through the destruction of Indigenous heritage.[621] Furthermore, Phizo claimed, the Indian state would eliminate Naga ontologies of 'sovereignty', 'community organisation' and 'culture', which, he argued, would not be accommodated within the bounds of the Indian state.[622] As I explore below, preserving these elements formed the cornerstones of Phizo's theory of the state. Phizo extended his critique to argue that – alongside elimination and assimilation – the removal of the Nagas from their territory was occurring via Indian military occupation of the Naga Hills since the transfer of power. Situating the Nagas' claims to legitimacy within moral frameworks of international law and justice,[623] Phizo's 1960 pamphlet invoked the language of 'genocide', claiming that the

[620]ibid.

[621]Mushtaq and Amin, Memorise, p. 3016.

[622]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[623]Allen Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-determination: Moral Foundations for International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

'campaign of Indian terrorism' and 'atrocities', in the Naga hills were part of a 'plan of racial extermination in the worst manners of the European fascists'.[624]

Phizo's anxieties must be situated in the context of the widespread feeling amongst minority groups that the formal end of colonial rule in India would not lead to political emancipation, led as it was by an elite and upper-caste Hindu nationalist movement.[625] Nehru had rejected demands for Naga autonomy,[626] while the vague assurances as to the protection of Naga institutions he did offer were based on the assumption that accommodations for the Nagas would quickly prove unnecessary once they had assimilated within India.[627] It is in this environment and 'in the face of India's unwarranted colonialist aggression' that Phizo articulated his claim to Naga statehood.[628] The NNC's actions represented a 'politics of refusal',[629] involving the repudiation of the 'colonial dispossession and violence on indigenous lands and bodies'.[630] The NNC, Phizo outlined, forbade 'participation in any organ of Indian administration' and in doing so refused to legitimise the post-colonial Indian state as holding sovereignty over Naga territories.[631]

In foregrounding Phizo's refusal of the Indian state, it bears reflecting on Phizo's views on the legitimacy of other South Asian nationalist claimants. In his 1960 pamphlet, Phizo dismissed

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[624]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

[625]Prakash, Decolonisation and Tribal Policy.

[626]Pandit Nehru on the Future of the Naga Hills Tribesman, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/76.

[627]Marcus Franke, 'Wars without End: The Case of the Naga Hills', *Diogenes* 53 (2006) 69–84. p.72.

[628]Phizo Press Statement, 21 January 1962, BNA/DO/196/61.

[629]Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NJ: Duke University Press, 2014). p. 12.

[630]Michelle Daigle and Margaret Marietta Ramírez, 'Decolonial Geographies', in *Keywords in Radical Geography: Antipode at 50*, ed. by. Antipode Editorial Collective, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp.78-84 (p.80).

[631]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

claims that 'recognition of Naga independence may lead to other demands for separation from Indian minorities like the Tamils'. [632] 'Nagaland' could not 'be compared to such areas, since it had never been a part of India'.[633] Phizo also eschewed comparisons between the Nagas and Kashmir.[634] When asked in 1984 about the establishment of a Sikh homeland, Phizo argued that the Sikhs should not be confused with the Nagas, since the former had consented to join the Indian Union at the transfer of power. He argued:

> You are talking about international matters mixed with internal affairs… The Naga case is not the internal affairs of India. India invaded my country and that is India's fault. But it is not our fault if we defend our country… internal affairs and external affairs, these cannot be mixed. Take the Mizos. I… asked the Mizo chiefs… in 1947 not to join the Indian Union. But they are joined so they became Indians, legally and historically. Their case is India's internal affairs. It has nothing to do and it should never have been mixed with the Nagas.[635]

Phizo was thus committed to a form of Naga exceptionalism.[636] He understood the Naga political struggle to possess a legitimacy which other nationalist claimants within India lacked, not least because the Nagas had declared independence before the transfer of power and – in his view – possessed their own international legal personality. Indeed, as NNC president, Phizo discursively and materially positioned relations between the Nagas and India as those between two existing sovereign states.[637] He dismissed claims that 'Nagaland [was] a political matter (of Indian

[632]ibid.

[633]ibid.

[634]ibid.

[635]Sinha, Phizo in Exile, 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[636]I discuss Naga exceptionalism further in Chapter 6.

[637]Letter from A. Z. Phizo to Frederick H. Boland, President, UN General Assembly, 8 October 1960, NNC online.

concern)!', instead asserting that Nagaland as a 'national state or a country' was a 'natural fact'.[638] I return to discuss tensions between the Nagas and other nationalist claimants in South Asia in Chapter 6. For now, I note how in distancing the Nagas from other minority groups, Phizo also sought to reassure international audiences that recognising Naga independence would not precipitate broader territorial disintegration in South Asia, whilst his ostensible commitment to treaty obligations and external legal standards provided a means of claiming 'rational-legal' authority.[639]

3.2 Practices of legitimacy

Phizo's claims to legitimacy, however, were also underpinned by a series of situated practices through which the NNC leader demonstrated the validity of his political vision and his personal authority.

First, Phizo produced rational-legal authority through demonstrating the democratic basis of his claims. To dispel Indian arguments that demands for independence were the calls of a 'few educated Nagas', Phizo organised a voluntary 'thumb print' plebiscite across Naga territories on May 15 1951.[640] The plebiscite – Phizo wrote to the Indian President – would provide 'evidential and conclusive proof' via a 'recognised democratic method' of the collective desires of the Naga people for independence.[641] Prior to the vote, Phizo invited the Indian government to send

[638]The Nagas have a puppet government, 20 November 1977, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[639]Max Weber, 'Politics as vocation', in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* ed. by Charles Mills and Hans Gerth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp.77–128.

[640]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[641]Letter from A. Z. Phizo, Kohima, to The President, Republic of India, New Delhi, 1 January 1951 in *The Naga Chronicle*, ed. by Nuh and Lasuh, pp.98-100. While Nuh dates this letter as 1 January 1952, from its content, it was almost certainly written in January 1951 prior to the Naga plebiscite of that year.

observers.[642] His letters were ignored. Undeterred, Phizo spent the months before the plebiscite undertaking a walking tour of the Naga Hills, where he is reported to have visited every single village to garner support for independence.[643] Van Den Brul describes Phizo's two-pronged approach. Phizo would first request an audience with leading members of the village. He would inform them of the NNC's activities and, 'if willing, they were given a post in the NNC organisation'.[644] If that approach failed, Phizo drew upon the support of a '50-member travelling group of NNC members' to 'rall[y] the people to support the organisation'.[645] The group included members of all major tribes to demonstrate the importance of pan-Naga unity and that the NNC was not beholden to any single tribe.

Phizo was a preternaturally gifted speaker and drew on his own charismatic legitimacy to persuade audiences of his message.[646] Nonetheless, documenting such visits, contemporaneous Indian intelligence reports dismissively record how the 'villages were very easily won over by the misguided leaders of the NNC' (presumably written with Phizo in mind) who 'preach[ed] according to his own whims and limited ideas'.[647] These files describe – in a tone of incredulity – how villagers 'blindly believe[d]' so-called NNC propaganda, based upon the idea that, as part of India, Nagas would lose their land and natural wealth, be 'heavily taxed', and be unable to practise

[642]Letter from A. Z. Phizo, Kohima, to The President, Republic of India, New Delhi, 29 March 1951, NNC online.

[643]It is unclear whether Phizo did indeed visit every single Naga village. That he visited a significant number of villages is documented in Indian police records for this period. Phizo dossier, NSA/PR/833.

[644]van den Brul, Naga modernization, p.149.

[645]ibid.

[646]Horam describes Phizo as a 'swayer of men' – an assertion which was corroborated by those who knew Phizo in oral history interviews. Horam, *Insurgency,* p. 27; Interview 15 August 2022.

[647]Letter from Abraham to the Deputy Commissioner, 4 October 1953, NSA/PR/833.

Christianity. [648] The report goes on to dismiss 'Independence as more a shibboleth than a definite goal'.[649] These comments, however, speak to the adaptability of Phizo's message and the NNC leader's ability to communicate in different registers. Moreover, the report despite itself constitutes a tacit recognition of the existence of underlying anxieties amongst Naga villagers at this time. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the NNC declared that 99.9% of Nagas had voted for independence, [650] Indian officials derided the result as 'the articulations of 'illiterate' and 'misguided' masses'.[651]

[648]ibid.

[649]ibid.

[650]There is limited source material to interpret the NNC's claim that 99.9% of Nagas voted for independence. Lintner claims that 7000 Nagas voted in the plebiscite (though this number is not verified elsewhere) and that the plebiscite resembled 'more a tribal oath-taking ceremony than a traditional referendum'. The figure of 99.9% is cited in NNC writings from the 1950s. Ahu Sakhrie, describes how the NNC printed the papers for the plebiscite in Imphal and bought them in a truck' to Khonoma before dispatching them to Naga villages 'rolled in bamboo cylinders' The FGN's account of the plebiscite from 2000 describes how 'Nagas pierced their thumb with a pin and some own blood' to cast their vote. Zapuvisie Lhousa claims that the plebiscite only included Nagas from the Naga Hills Tribal District of Assam, and not the so-called 'Free Nagas' in the North Eastern Frontier Agency. Nevertheless, the plebiscite was widely used NNC members after the vote to buttress claims to Naga independence and today is something of an article of faith amongst Naga communities. Bertil Lintner, *Great Game East: India, China And The Struggle For Asia's Most Volatile Frontier* (London: Yale University Press) p. 64; Ahu Sakhrie, *The Vision of T. Sakhrie for a Naga Nation* (Kohima: Author, 2006). p. 11; FGN, *A Brief Account of Nagaland* (Kohima: FGN Ministry of Rali Wali, 2000), p. 5; Lhousa, *Strange Country***,** p. 106.

[651]Thomas, *Evangelizing,* p. 110. Indian officials continued to dismiss claims of public support for Naga independence throughout the 1950s. The Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills claimed in a 1953 letter that the 'no Naga leader really believes in the practicability of independence. The cry has been raised in the hope that… it will induce Govt. to give them more money than... other hill districts'. The same leaders, he argued, had 'swindled the ignorant masses of large sums of money… by promising to get the moon for them'. Letter from the Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills to the Chief Secretary of the Government of Assam, 14 October 1953, NSA/PR/833.

Meanwhile, in London, Phizo remarked that the plebiscite result meant that 'I have the mandate of my people'.[652]

Second, Phizo instigated a programme of civil disobedience across the Naga Hills. Nagas had refused to engage with the 1947 Indian independence celebrations.[653] In 1952, large numbers of Nagas resigned from government employment, while the NNC orchestrated a complete boycott of the Indian general election.[654] In 1953, Naga villagers organised 'no-tax' campaigns and refused to offer supplies of food to police personnel based in the region.[655] That Naga households embraced such tactics not only provided a means to demonstrate the legitimacy of the NNC's claim to authority, but also the *illegitimacy* of the Indian postcolonial administration.

Third, throughout the 1950s and 60s, the NNC established their own parallel system of administration in the Naga Hills. Phizo established both the Naga Youth Movement ('NYM') and the Naga Women's Society ('NWS').[656] Seeking to offer 'all means to the support the cause of NNC',[657] the former produced a monthly magazine which, inter alia, included articles compariing the Naga independence struggle with other 'nations of the world'.[658] In addition to making arrangements for the collection of tax across the Naga Hills,[659] the NNC adopted other trappings

[652]The Nagas have a puppet government, 20 November 1977, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[653]NNC, *TNN*, Volume 2: Issue (September 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur F236/364.

[654]Thomas, *Evangelizing,* p.111.

[655]Letter to the Chief Minister of Assam from S. K. Datta, 6 November 1953, NSA/PR/833.

[656]Sakhrie, *Vision of T. Sakhrie,* p.11.

[657]Report dated 3/12/52 from the S.I., I.B., Kohima, to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Assam, Shillong on the formation of the Naga Youth Movement, NSA/PR/833.

[658]NYM, *The Naga Herald,* January-February 1953, NSA/PR/833. p.3.

[659]Receipts prepared by NNC, 27 December 1947 BL/Archer/ Mss Eur/F236/76.

of statehood, including printing Naga stamps,[660] and creating the long campaigned for Naga flag and anthem.[661] Phizo also proposed that the Nagas' adopt their own 'coinage and currency' — although this was never realised.[662] In 1956 the NNC detached its governmental and policy-making functions to the newly created Federal Government of Nagaland ('FGN'). Phizo and his colleagues codified their vision for that body and for the unrecognised Naga state by drafting the 'Federal Constitution of Nagaland' that year.[663] I discuss the vision of the Naga state within the constitution below. For now, I argue that the significance of Phizo's decision to write a Naga constitution is twofold. First, in formally inscribing the nature of the relationship between the Naga state and its citizens, the constitution was a legitimacy claiming instrument, which set out the rational-legal nature of the FGN's authority.[664] Second, in systematically outlining the nature of Nagaland's political, economic, and judicial administration, the constitution affirmed Nagaland's state-like character to domestic and international audiences.

Having thus set out how Phizo sought to construct legitimacy for his claim to statehood, I now turn to consider how these multiple claims to legitimacy shaped Phizo's geopolitical vision.

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[660]The stamps were issued on 22 March 1956 and facsimiles are displayed at the NARC. It is unclear whether the stamps were used. There is perhaps a suggestion they were used internationally in a note written by an FCO official, P. W. M. Vereker in 1970, which describes his previous 'acquaintance with the vexed question of Naga postage stamps' but does not elaborate further. Vereker to Chudleigh and Sutherland, 22 April 1970, BNA/FCO 37/740.

[661]I described the NNC's earlier campaign for a Naga flag and anthem in Chapter 4. It is unclear exactly when the NNC formally adopted the Naga flag, possibly as early as 1947 when some the wife of Kevichusa Angami raised a flag on the day of the Transfer of Power. Franke, *Nationalism*, p.87.

[662]Additional notes for the dossier of A. Z. Phizo, NSA/PR/849.

[663]Phizo began working on the 'constitution of free Nagaland' as early as 1951. Phizo dossier, NSA/PR/833.

[664]Rohit De, *A People's Constitution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

4. Phizo's theory of the state

> We are to note carefully that [the Government of India's] present tactics of argument placed Nagaland not as a national state of a people. India is now trying to argue that the existence of Nagaland as a political matter (of Indian concern)! But how can this be? Whether we call a national state or a country, both concerns the same thing; it concerns the territory of a people. Nagaland is the land of the Naga; it is Naga country and nobody else [sic]. We are not refugees or immigrants in this beautiful land. Our own language tells exactly what a country is. We call country "Ura" which literally means 'we are first' (u, we; ra, ria, first). The root meaning of territory also developed from the same word; namely, "theria" meaning 'self first'. And, our Naga language is certainly as old as human tradition and history cannot contradict us. No man can argue with fact and existence of Nagaland (Nagara) is a natural fact.

Naga Voluntary Plebiscite Speech by A. Z. Phizo, 16 May 1951, Kohima[665]

As outlined in Chapter 2, scholars have unsettled histories which see the nation-state as decolonisation's inevitable outcome.[666] Indeed, I argued in Chapter 4 that the Naga calls for statehood emerged only after other territorial proposals had been foreclosed. Naga politicians thus sought to reconcile their demand for independence from India with the shifting norms of the international system. In 1960, Phizo wrote to the President of the UN General Assembly that the 'national state' was a 'basic right of man':

> While the personality of the people counts above everything else, it is the territory and state that form the physical foundations of human society and nation.[667]

[665]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[666]Getachew, *Worldmaking.*

[667]Phizo to Boland, 8 October 1960, NNC online.

Phizo's claim that statehood was a universal model of political organisation is best read as an attempt to articulate the Naga claim in a register he thought would be palatable to international audiences. One can be certain that Phizo's personal view was more complex because he considered the Nagas to have always been politically independent — and certainly before Naga political thought was introduced to Westphalian notions of the state. Phizo nevertheless recognised that the state – with its rigid boundaries between inside and outside, and norms of international recognition – was the only viable means for confronting what he considered the emergent settler colonial tendencies of the Indian state. Crucially, however, he claimed that the Naga state need not 'adopt or imitate foreign institutions'.[668] Instead, Phizo's was a vision based on mimicry, one which simultaneously destabilised and reified hegemonic understandings of the state.[669]

Phizo articulated a 'hybrid' Naga modernity, based on an Indigenous vocabulary of time and nationhood infused with a Naga Baptist theology. The Nagas' future, he argued, would be brought forward from a timeless Naga past. Unsettling the 'idea of modernity [as based] on rupture',[670] Phizo's plebiscite speech argued that Naga Indigenous institutions were entirely suited to the demands of modern statehood:

> Our fathers have laid down all these in their time and we are just restating the fruit of their labour… in the process of development to our nationhood… the best thing is, it fulfils the requirements of the present-day changes: no alteration or adjustment needed. All sound principles stand throughout the ages. Time and situation cannot defy it.[671]

[668]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[669]Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London Routledge, 1994); Sharp, Margins, p.22.

[670]Dube, Introduction: Enhancements of Modernity, p. 729.

[671]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

Underpinning these 'sound principles' was an ontological understanding of sovereignty based not on supreme authority over a bounded territory, but as produced relationally through individual cultivation and stewardship of Naga territories. The 'basic structure of political organisation in Nagaland', Phizo argued, had 'withstood the change of time… because it is based on the democratic principle of sovereignty of the people over land and ownership of private property'.[672] The Naga state would thus be based on this conception of a national past which required 'no substitute'. Phizo argued in a 1948 letter to the Indian Governor General:

> …every Naga family has got their own house and lands for cultivation. No family need worry about land. The land belongs to the people forming mostly an individual property… The feeling of personal ownership with perfect liberty has ingrained in the life of our people. No man possesses so much land depriving others… as a result socially and economically Nagas remain the same today as we were hundreds of years ago. But this is not something to be regretted. Our apparent backwardness is an asset to us.[673]

Through maintaining individual sovereignty over land, no Naga would 'become servile or entirely dependent' on anyone, while everyone would have 'the same equal freedom… to better his position'.[674] Phizo scripted the scalar connections between individual and national sovereignty. Sovereign ownership of land combined with Naga community interdependence (described below) would ensure Nagaland's national self-sufficiency and external non-dependency.[675] Crucially, Phizo's conception of sovereignty was incompatible with the one practised by India, which, Phizo argued, sought to exercise sovereignty over Naga areas through military domination, land

[672]ibid.

[673]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

[674]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[675]ibid.

dispossession, and extraction of the Nagas' 'natural wealth'.[676] As Phizo stated in his plebiscite speech, Indian occupation prevented the Nagas 'develop[ing] their own country… and natural resources for the benefit of the Children of the Soil'. In particular, Phizo accused India of beginning oil exploitation 'against [the Nagas'] strong protest'.[677]

Phizo's emphasis on the importance of land to Naga identity echoes the centrality of agrarian imagery in Christian teachings. Biblical notions of stewardship view humanity as entrusted by God to maintain and cultivate the natural environment. Given that Phizo's plebiscite occurred at a time of mass Christian conversions, it is likely that many of his audience were familiar with this language, even if they were not versed in scripture. Importantly, Phizo's conception of sovereignty as rooted in the stewardship of land was inseparable from his scripting of Naga nationhood and political community as based on the maintenance of mutual relations of reciprocity. As 'every human being is sovereign' – he argued – so 'every individual citizen has a responsibility toward others, not alone to be kindly but give our best possible help to each other'.[678] 'Thino' – the Naga system community organisation – was 'rooted in the humane principle of individual responsibility' and 'sharing collectively the common weal and woe'.[679] Phizo argued in his plebiscite speech:

> …we also know that man cannot live by himself alone… We have learned that every individual citizen has a responsibility toward others… is an honour to recognize the dignity of personal responsibility, and we consider as a privilege to be of service to others which our culture has given the expression we call "mhosho" - to excel (mho, overhead; so,

[676]Steyn, *Zapuphizo,* p. 85.

[677]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[678]ibid.

[679]ibid.

> touch)... To do good to others, to stand by them and be ready to live or die together if need be, is the highest culture any nation could wish to have.[680]

The enactment of these relations, Phizo argued, led to the 'generat[ion] of a spontaneous feeling' of joy and happiness between the Nagas. Such citizenly bonds would ensure that there were no 'suicides', 'social outcasts' or 'paupers' in Nagaland. These relations of goodwill meant that there was no need for 'police force to maintain peace, law and order' as the Nagas were 'ready to defend [themselves] and always ready to defend others'.[681]

Phizo's scripting of the national community was simultaneously inclusive and exclusionary. On the one hand, in emphasising relations of Naga interdependence, Phizo invoked a common Naga identity across village, clan, and tribal lines without subsuming these other identities. This was necessary to foster pan-Naga unity amongst Naga audiences and demonstrate the viability of the Nagas' claim to nationhood on the international stage in the face of claims that the Nagas were too divided to be considered a nation. Phizo emphasised that community obligations extended to all Nagas, such that 'no section of people… be condemned below the social statues [sic] of other fellow citizens'.[682] Phizo's conception of nationhood provides a critique of alternative, modernist ontologies of nationhood and citizenship circulating in India during this period. According to Skaria, the latter drew on liberal theory and the notion of 'transcendence' to argue that the 'overcoming of the local/locality' would lead 'to the generality of the nation'.[683]

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[680]ibid.

[681]ibid. By 1956, however, the first Federal Constitution of Nagaland provided for the establishment of a 'Department of Home Guards headed by a chief to function in the dual capacity of police and soldiers'. Extracts from the Naga Federal Constitution, (undated, probably 1956), in Steyn, *Zapuphizo,* p. 178-179.

[682]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[683]Ajay Skaria, 'Gandhi's Politics: Liberalism and the Question of the Ashram', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101 (2002) 955-986. p.956.

Phizo however, saw this impersonal model as incompatible with the Naga way of life, arguing that '[the Nagas] are not just a bunch of human beings called citizens'.[684] Instead, he articulated a conception of national belongingness based on kinship and ethical relationality.

On the other hand, reflecting Phizo's understanding of Naga nationhood as divinely determined, Phizo restricted these citizenly bonds to those within the imagined Naga nation. This relied on a binary between Naga citizens and their archetypal others: the people of India. To 'live together in peace' and across 'differen[ce]', Phizo argued, people 'must have the same attitude and the same feeling'.[685] Indians lacked the 'tolerance', 'trustworthy[ness]', and 'human-feeling' to maintain these relationships and understand the Naga communitarian way of life.[686] Lacking Christian 'compassion', Indians would exploit the Nagas' generosity.[687]

Naga mutual interdependence, Phizo maintained, would underpin a system of political organisation based on a pre-existing network of village republics. Each family or tribe would have 'full authority over its own affairs, including land, community organisation, social and religious practises, and customs'.[688] The 'cooperation of [those] extended families' within each village republic would enable truly collective decision making, with every member of society empowered to contribute 'like one big family'.[689] Decisions would be made locally via direct participation of all eligible men and women within each village. Village chiefs were to be the first amongst equals:

> They are not feudal Chiefs but only head of the people. All the villages are under Panchayat system of its own and they are all quite independent having nothing to worry for

[684]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[685]ibid.

[686]ibid.

[687]ibid.

[688]Steyn, *Zapuphizo,* p.178.

[689]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

> interference in all the internal matters. Every Naga family has got their own house and lands for cultivation. No family need worry for land. The land belongs to the people forming mostly an individual property.[690]

Where decisions of the NNC were to be taken concerning multiple villages, villages would send representatives to 'Group Councils', existing below 'Tribal' and 'Regional Councils' within a nested system of administration.[691] Tribal Councils would send representatives to the NNC, ensuring that 'the NNC [was] rooted in the people and the community as a national institution for democracy'.[692]

This system, Phizo argued, constituted a 'true' democracy and the 'oldest in Asia', made possible because of Nagas' sovereign ownership of land, self-sufficiency, and 'classless society' where all had equal influence.[693] There was no need for political parties for the 'simple reason that no one can override the sovereignty over the ownership of land'.[694] In advancing this argument in the same year as India's first general election. Phizo critiqued Indian democracy modelled on a

[690]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

[691]This structure is described in the December 1946 issue of *The Naga Nation.* It is notable that even before the official declaration of Naga independence and the establishment of the FGN, the NNC's constitution made provision for administrative governance. This structure is loosely resembled in extracts of the FGN's own constitution (first published in 1956 and formalised in the Yehzabo of Nagaland in 1971), which sought to establish a Naga Tarter Hoho (Parliament) based on a nested system of village and regional administration. NNC, *TNN*, Volume 1: Issue 5 (December 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364; The Yehzabo of Nagaland (1971), in *Naga Chronicle*, ed. by Nuh and Lasuh, pp.81-97.

[692]Phizo to Boland, 8 October 1960, NNC online.

[693]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC. Also see Letter from A. Z. Phizo, Kohima, to the Honourable Prime Minister, Government of India, Aboard S.S. Lushai, 29 December 1951, NNC online.

[694]Phizo to Boland, 8 October 1960, NNC online.

British parliamentary system, questioning how India could talk the language of 'Mahatma Gandhi, Non-violence and Democracy', whilst ignoring Naga self-determination.[695]

Phizo also articulated an approach to Naga foreign affairs. The NNC leader rejected neo-realist models of international relations based on expansionism and inter-state competition, and advocated national self-reliance, non-dependency, and the promotion of regional peace. Phizo dismissed Nehru's claim that Nagaland was 'too small' and 'too backward' to 'stand by itself politically or economically',[696] arguing that the Naga way of life would ensure national self-sufficiency. This, Phizo argued in his plebiscite speech, was enabled by the Nagas' 'overabundance' of natural resources:

> [Nagaland] is surplus country in matters of food and in other daily necessities… We have a vast area of Oil deposit… Yet we need not import even salt in this landlocked State of ours. We have mica, gas, lime, iron ores, nickel and many other essential materials for which India has an eye on our land.[697]

Phizo's foreign policy drew on a conception of the international in which small states could not only thrive, but were vital to protect minorities. Writing to international audiences in 1960, Phizo compared the Nagas to the 'tiny Kingdoms of Bhutan and Sikkim', both of which had been 'recognised internationally'. It was only because the international community had not taken seriously alternative ontologies of statehood including 'tribal democracies without the leadership of a single person like a King or a Prince', that Nagaland's international personality had not yet been 'appreciated by the world'.[698]

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[695]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[696]Pandit Nehru on the Future of the Naga Hills Tribesman, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/76.

[697]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

[698]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

Phizo's approach has much in common with what Larsen terms a 'small-state geopolitics', whereby geopolitical agency is derived not from wealth or territorial extent, but from moral authority derived from being seen as 'essentially peaceful' geopolitical actors.[699] Phizo argued that the Naga state would 'maintain permanent military neutrality'[700], be non-violent,[701] and would not possess a standing army.[702] This approach was central to Phizo's efforts to construct international legitimacy for Naga statehood. He wrote to the Governor General of India in 1948:

> Situated as we are, surrounded by the biggest nations in the world like India… China… and a most determined people like the Burmese… and Pakistan… and then, still further of a people toward North whose future destiny is still in the balance… we have a special responsibility to consider the welfare of our future generations and for maintaining tranquillity for a lasting peace where we have been sandwiched in an inextricable position.[703]

Phizo thus saw a Naga state as possessing considerable geopolitical agency. Through embodying values of peaceful coexistence Nagaland would not only be a force for good within South Asia,

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[699]Henrik Gutzon Larsen, 'Small-state geopolitics', in Sami Moisio, Kristian Stokke, Elin Saether, Henrik Gutzon Larsen, Richard Ek, and Anders Lund Hansen, 'Interventions in Nordic political geographies', *Political Geography* 30 (2011) 241-249, p.244.

[700]Steyn, *Zapuphizo,* p.157.

[701]Phizo to Boland, 8 October 1960, NNC online.

[702]Steyn, Zapuphizo, p.178. This provision was outlined in early draft of the Naga Federal Constitution (undated, possibly 1956). The same document stated that Nagaland shall 'maintain permeant military neutrality'. Both of these provisions were absent from the final Yehzabo (Constitution) of Nagaland, published in 1971, which states that the FGN shall 'maintain a standing National Army'. This latter document also makes provision for the 'disposition of Armed forces… to deal with emergencies like foreign invasion'. Extracts from the (likely 1956) Naga Federal Constitution, in Steyn, *Zapuphizo,* p.178-179; The Yehzabo of Nagaland (1971), in *Naga Chronicle*, ed. by Nuh and Lasuh, pp.81-97

[703]Phizo to Rajagopalachari, 22 November 1948, NNC online.

but, through promoting an alternative world vision of interstate relations, would be an 'example for all others to follow'.[704] Echoing colonial-era geographical imaginaries of the Naga Hills as a regional buffer zone, Phizo argued that a Naga state would be a bulwark against conflict in Asia, preventing military build-up in the India-China hinterland.[705] Phizo's scripting of Nagaland as a peaceful buffer zone is reminiscent of claims by neighbouring Tibetan politicians that a Tibet founded on principles of non-violence is vital for maintaining peaceful Sino-Indian relations.[706] Though there is no archival evidence of Phizo's direct engagement with these ideas, Phizo's transnational linkages and the region's 'connected geographies',[707] make it possible that they informed his vision.[708]

Phizo argued that Nagaland would have 'no quarrel' with its 'friendly neighbours' in Burma, Pakistan, and China who, he argued, were the Nagas 'own blood relatives'.[709] These expressions of pan-Asian solidarity, however, were accompanied by the NNC's commitment –

[704]ibid.

[705]In his Second 'International Press Conference' in January 1962, Phizo claimed he was willing to 'discuss use of military bases in an independent Nagaland, should such bases be considered necessary for India's defence'. Phizo Press Statement, 21 January 1962, BNA/DO/196/61.

[706]Fiona McConnell, 'Contextualising and contesting peace: geographies of Tibetan satyagraha' in *The Geographies of Peace,* ed. by Fiona McConnell, Nick Megoran and Philippa Williams (London: I.B. Tauris), pp.131-150.

[707]Chatterjee, Connected Histories, p.81.

[708]Phizo would directly compare the Nagas and Tibet. In his second 'International Press Conference' in January 1962, Phizo claimed the 'casualty figure in Tibet given by the Dalai Lama' was comparable to that of Nagaland. Yet, while the former had been 'accepted as genocide by International Commission of Jurists… as sufficient to justify a charge of Genocide' the Nagas could not 'even get [their] voice heard. This, Phizo argued, was because 'India is supposed to be a liberal democratic nation, and not communist like China'. Phizo Press Statement, 21 January 1962, BNA/DO/196/61.

[709]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

made in 1960 – to 'remain within the fold of the Christian nations, and of the Common Wealth (sic)'.[710] This Christian sensibility, Phizo reassured international audiences, not only necessitated that a future Naga state maintain close ties with the West, but was incompatible with communism and its rejection of organised religion.[711] Moreover, although he never professed public support to the non-aligned movement, he contested geopolitical rhetoric which disclaimed Naga statehood on the ground that the region was a Cold War battleground. He told Naga audiences in 1951:

> The Indians insolently told us that China and Communism may take possession of Nagaland sooner or later, therefore, India must occupy it first! This line of argument is grossly vulgar… Simply because India is afraid that China may take possession of Nagaland or may come to wield influence over the Nagas, as they say, will it be the right thing for India to deny us our birthright and deprive us our independence?[712]

Given each grouping's distinct ideological approach, Phizo's efforts simultaneously to situate Nagaland within the Commonwealth, pan-Asian, and non-aligned communities appears contradictory, and speaks to a sense of opportunism in Phizo's approach to international affairs. Nevertheless, balancing these various international commitments became increasingly difficult over time. Before leaving Nagaland, Phizo had abandoned his commitment to non-violence, arguing for the necessity of violent resistance in the face of Indian military aggression. By the 1980s, Phizo was couching this claim within a religious register. He told an Indian journalist in 1984:

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[710]Phizo, *Fate of the Naga,* BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/230.

[711]Phizo's approach is reminiscent of Joseph Nyerere's call for an 'African Socialism' (or 'Ujamaa) which sought to blend traditional values with Christian ideals to chart a path through a Cold War geopolitical landscape. Innocent Simon and Ron, 'Julius Nyerere's Understanding of African Socialism, Human Rights and Equality', *The Journal of Social Encounter* 4 (2020) 15-33.

[712]Phizo Plebiscite, 16 May 1951, NARC.

> If the Indians were Christian non-violence could work. But since you are not Christians, non-violence cannot work. However, whether non-violence or violence, the Nagas have not killed a single Indian civilian in our fight against the Indian Army.[713]

Phizo's justification for the Nagas' turn to violence echoes Christian teachings around the legitimacy of jus ad bellum or 'Just War'.[714] Further, Phizo's developing language reflects Christianity's increasing significance to Phizo's geopolitics while he was in the UK, culminating in the 'message from God' Phizo delivered to Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 (described in Section 3.1).[715] It is unclear whether this shift was motivated by an awareness of the growing Christian conversion amongst the Nagas (and thus a desire to increase his authority in their eyes), increasing desperation to appeal to international audiences in the face of perceived indifference and the recognition that Christianity offered Phizo a strategic advantage in a post-Second World War international political landscape, a deepening of Phizo's own faith, or some combination of all three.

In London, Phizo also abandoned his commitment not to seek support from Pakistan and China amidst growing tensions between his public and private positions on these matters.[716] As to the former, in September 1965, Phizo used a radio message to urge his 'countryman' to break the Indo-Naga ceasefire of 1964 and 'capitalize the opportunity' generated by the Indo-Pakistani war

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[713]Sinha, Phizo in Exile, 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261.

[714]Nick Megoran, 'Militarism, realism, just war or nonviolence. Critical geopolitics and the problem of normativity', *Geopolitics* 13 (2008) 437-497.

[715]Phizo to Rajiv Gandhi, 6 September 1988, NNC online.

[716]Phizo was in contact with Pakistani officials in London in the 1960s and likely received support from Pakistan on his journey to London. Phizo himself briefly travelled to Karachi in 1962 to meet Naga leaders and to escort them to London. Phizo's visit led British newspapers to report that the Nagas were planning to set up a government-in-exile in Pakistan which the country's then-president, Mohammed Ayab Khan, was forced to deny. Joint Research Department Memorandum, The Naga Problem, February 1968 BNA/PREM/11/3017.

of 1965 to strike against India.[717] This broadcast, however, prompted the release of a counter-message from tribal leaders in Kohima, who urged the Naga people to support the action taken by India in 'dealing with the situation on account of the Pakistani aggression'.[718] As to China, Phizo continued to publicly claim that the Nagas would not accept support from China as late as 1979.[719] Indeed, during the Sino-Indian War of 1962, Phizo twice wrote to Nehru offering support to 'expel' the Chinese from India in exchange for India recognising the Naga claim.[720] Nevertheless, throughout the 1960s Phizo met Chinese government representatives while in London,[721] and leveraged fears that the Nagas would seek Chinese assistance to garner British support.[722] Ultimately, the FGN *did* seek support from China, at least as early as 1966.[723] This decision led to a drop in Naga support for the NNC, possibly motivated by concerns over religious freedom.[724]

The significance of Phizo's shifts in political positioning is threefold. First, they speak to how Phizo's thought was shaped – at least in part – by his audience and the political resources at his disposal. While Phizo mobilised the Indo-China war and the Indo-Pakistan war to Nagas' advantage, his public pronouncements about both of these countries were often in tension with his behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Second, they illustrate how Phizo's diplomatic efforts to negotiate

[717]Radio Message of President NNC, in Lhousa, *Strange Country,* p.351.

[718]Public leaders counter Phizo's Radio Message, in Lhousa, *Strange Country,* p.352.

[719]Let's not fight any more, *Blitz,* 30 June 1979 BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/259.

[720]Telegram from Phizo to Nehru, (undated, probably November 1962), BNA/DO/196/62; Telegram from A. Z. Phizo to Nehru, 9 November 1962, BNA/DO/196/62.

[721]Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question No. 2459 to be answered on the 11 March 1970, BNA/FCO/37/740.

[722]Phizo Press Statement, 21 January 1962, BNA/DO/196/61.

[723]Reisang Vashum, *Nagas' Right to Self-Determination: An Anthropological-Historical Perspective* (New Delhi: Mittal, 2005). pp.92-95.

[724]Extract from tour report of Northeast India, 10 March 1970 by W.E. Slatcher, Esq, British High Commission, New Delhi, BNA/FCO 37/740.

the Nagas' international position from London were far from universally welcomed on the ground, and often existed in direct tension with the Nagas' local and regional realities. As with Phizo's silence regarding the Shillong Accord, this speaks to the spatialities and temporalities of legitimacy, specifically the challenges Phizo faced in constructing and maintaining legitimacy over time (particularly amidst ongoing stasis), across geographical distance, and at varying geographical scales. As I show in Chapter 6, such scalar tensions between the Nagas' local, national, regional, and international relationships have undergirded Naga engagement with global Indigeneity. Finally, however, each volte face speaks to how Phizo was a pragmatist with a commitment above all to expediency. It is a discussion of the opposition to Phizo's approach and what this reveals about the ambivalence of Phizo's geopolitical agency, actorness, and subjectivity to which I now turn.

5. When visions collide: reception, contestation, and the ambivalence of Phizo's geopolitics

A lack of 'significant opponents or contenders for authority' – suggest Wilson and McConnell – is a useful indicator of the effectiveness of aspirant polities in constructing legitimacy.[725] Following his election as president in 1950, Phizo enjoyed unrivalled control of the NNC. That his geopolitical vision was initially well-received is clear from the result of the 1951 plebiscite and the large numbers who engaged in his programme of civil disobedience. By the mid-1950s, however, Phizo's position was under threat. In this section, I explore the challenges to Phizo's authority from T. Sakhrie – a Phizo supporter turned rival – to understand the contemporaneous reception and long-term legacies of Phizo's geopolitics. [726]

[725]Wilson and McConnell

[726]Sakhrie, *Vision of T. Sakhrie,* p.2. I briefly introduced Sakhrie in Chapter 4.

A founding member of the NNC and Phizo's maternal nephew, Theyichutie Sakhrie was born into a Baptist Angami family from Khonoma.[727] Whilst Phizo's politics were rooted in praxis, Sakhrie was a skilled theoretician, an 'ideologue'[728] and a 'voracious reader', with an interest in philosophy and classical European texts.[729] Furthermore, whereas Phizo was renowned for his charismatic oratory, Sakhrie was an accomplished written advocate, who authored many of the Nagas' most important political tracts[730] – his memorandums have the distinction of being described as 'most objectionable' by officials in the Government of Assam.[731] While Phizo spent the early 1940s in Burma, Sakhrie spent this period travelling across the Indo-Burma borderlands seeking to unite all the hill people under a single national identity as part of the Indo-Burma movement described in Chapter 4.

When this project failed to materialise – not least because of the parallel development of a wider Burmese nationalist movement – Sakhrie joined the NNC. As the organisation's general secretary, Sakhrie took particular interest in increasing Naga access to education.[732] Initially in favour of both the Crown Colony Proposals and a 'guardianship' arrangement for the Naga Hills

[727]G. Kanato Chophy, 'Gandhi and the Nagas', *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India*, 68 (2019) 158-174.

[728]Sakhrie, *Vision of T. Sakhrie,* p.2.

[729]Chophy, Gandhi and the Nagas, p.166.

[730]For instance, see 'Memorandum to the Cabinet Mission' and 'Letter from T. Sakhrie, to the Rev. J. J. M. Nichols Roy, elected member of the Constituent Assembly for Assam, 10 July 1946', in *TOK,* Volume 1: Issue 1, BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364; 'Letter from T. Sakhrie, to Sir Winston Churchill Esquire, 28 March 1947' and 'Letter from T. Sakhrie to The Right Hon'ble Clement Attlee, Prime Minister of England, 29 March 1947' in *The Naga Chronicle,* ed. by Nuh and Lasuh, p.119 and p.120.

[731]Letter from the President, S. A. C. HQ. Jakhama to the Governor, Assam, Shillong concerning T. Sakhrie. 9 April 1953, NSA/PR/833.

[732]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 3 (October 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

by either India or Britain, Sakhrie would go on (like Phizo) to oppose the Hydari agreement, arguing that, *without* a modified Clause 9, the Nagas' would lack the 'safeguards' necessary to 'maintain their independent national life'.[733] Sakhrie quickly became Phizo's 'trusted lieutenant'[734] and was instrumental in organising the Naga plebiscite.[735]

Despite their shared commitment to the NNC, there were important differences in Phizo and Sakhrie's ideologies. Phizo rarely made comparisons between the Nagas and other nations – preferring instead to promote a form of Naga exceptionalism. Sakhrie, however, drew links between the Nagas and the Philippines, Mexico, Turkey, and Japan to argue for a Naga 'national government'.[736] Crucially, Phizo and Sakhrie differed in the means they were willing to adopt to achieve independence. Whilst Phizo abandoned his commitment to non-violence, Sakhrie drew on his links with Gandhian activists within the 'Quit India' movement to implore the NNC to practise *satyagraha*.[737] The Nagas – Sakhrie argued – had little chance against the Indian Army, and should instead use passive resistance to 'plac[e] their opponent in a position where he feels morally wrong to oppose you'.[738] Mirroring Phizo's own earlier tours of the Naga Hills, Sakhrie spent 1955-56 touring Naga villages spreading his message. However, according to Thomas – with the exception of 'church leaders and sections of the middle class' – most Nagas, who 'faced the brunt of state violence' had little time for such arguments and shared Phizo's commitment to armed resistance. Appalled by the increasing bloodshed across the Naga Hills in the early 1950s, Sakhrie called for

[733]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 12 (July 1947), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[734]Joshi, Micropolitics, p.167.

[735]Sakhrie, *Vision of T. Sakhrie,* p.11.

[736]NNC, *TNN,* Volume 1: Issue 3 (October 1946), BL/Archer/Mss Eur/F236/364.

[737]Chophy, Gandhi and the Nagas, p.166.

[738]Sakhrie, *Vision of T. Sakhrie,* pp.13-14.

a return to the NNC's earlier commitment for a 'time-bound guardianship', advocating for greater 'cooperation' with India, until such time as Nagas had achieved sufficient unity, educational attainment, and economic stability for independence.[739]

Phizo, however, accused Sakhrie of betraying the Naga movement. In April 1955 he issued a decree accusing 'any persons who… undermine the integrity and well being of Nagaland…or oppose the political, administrative and traditional institutions of the Nation… shall be deemed to have committed TREASON'.[740] Sakhrie was undeterred. His influence in the NNC continued to grow, fragmenting the organisation – and Khonoma Village – into two opposing camps. Tensions reached their zenith in January 1956, when Sakhrie was rumoured to be planning a vote of no-confidence in Phizo's presidency.[741] Before the meeting, Sakhrie was taken into the jungle, tortured, and killed. [742] Phizo denied authorising the killing. Nevertheless, a police warrant was issued for the NNC leaders' arrest.[743] Phizo and his supporters went into hiding from where they began a series of violent attacks against 'moderates' within the NNC.[744] Sakhrie's supporters sought their own revenge, whilst India used the split within the NNC to increase military aggression and deploy divide-and-rule tactics within the nationalist community. So began decades of mutual suspicion, distrust, and interfactional violence within Naga society.

My intention in tracing the Sakhrie's engagement with the NNC is twofold. First, I highlight Sakrhie's legacy as a theoretician to illustrate alternative strands of geopolitical thought

[739]Kepelhusie Terhüja and Atsolie Liegise, 'Clarification on T Sakhrie', *The Morung Express* (online), 2 September 2020.

[740]Zinyü, *Phizo and the Naga Problem,* p.120.

[741]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p. 20.

[742]Joshi, Micropolitics, p.182.

[743]Wouters, Difficult Decolonization, p. 20.

[744]Joshi, Micropolitics, p.182.

circulating in the years after the Transfer of Power. Whilst members of Sakhrie's clan have emphasised that, at 'no point' did he support a 'Naga solution under… the constitution of India',[745] his belief in the futility of armed resistance ultimately inspired his supporters to enter negotiations regarding the formation of an Indian State of Nagaland. Phizo and Sakhrie's split prefigures later contests within Naga communities around the meaning of Naga nationhood and relations with India. They thus provide an important touchpoint in tracing the genealogies of Naga political thought. Indeed, more recently, some Naga leaders have re-appraised Sakhrie's legacy, arguing that his philosophy of non-violence can aid contemporary inter-tribal reconciliation.[746]

Second, however, I have also foregrounded the tensions between Sakhrie and Phizo to highlight the latter's ambivalence as a geopolitical theorist and leader. As McConnell argues, 'ambivalence is an under-rated but vital quality in critical scholarship'.[747] Feminist geographers have called upon scholars to foreground the 'tensions, contradictions and paradoxes' which underpin efforts to negotiate political subjectivities.[748] As I have illustrated, Phizo's was a geopolitical vision replete with contradictions. At times, these were strategic. Through inhibiting seemingly incoherent (and sometimes mutually exclusive) geopolitical positions across time and space, and rejecting the labels imposed on him by others, Phizo sought to appeal to diverse audiences, whilst forging a uniquely Naga international path.

However, ambivalence, with its sense of unsettledness, also speaks to the complexities of Phizo's legacy, both during his life and after death. Sakhrie's assassination by Phizo's supporters

[745]Terhüja and Liegise, Clarification on T Sakhrie.

[746]ibid; Sakhrie, *Vision of T. Sakhrie.*

[747]McConnell, Liminal geopolitics, p.149.

[748]Liz Bondi, '10th anniversary address for a feminist geography of ambivalence', *Gender, Place & Culture* 11 (2004) 3-15. p.5.

illustrates the contradictions between Phizo's aims – for a peaceful and united Naga sovereign state – and the violent means he used to pursue these. The episode alienated many early supporters of Naga independence and created long-standing tensions within Phizo and Sakhrie's ancestral village of Khonoma.[749]

6. Conclusion

> The footprints of the then President of NNC, A. Z. Phizo in the Free Nagaland region still remain fresh and clear. The accounts of the leaders who worked hand in hand with A. Z. Phizo are still fresh and vivid... What must we do today? The responsibility of today's generations is to hand over a good legacy to the future generation by taking care of yesterday's generation's contributions.

Zapuvisie Lhousa, NNC Executive Council, in *The Morung Express,* 25 January 2011[750]

This chapter has made four empirical arguments. First, adopting a spatial approach to biography, I have illustrated how Phizo's political thought was relationally constituted, informed by the NNC leader's interactions across multiple sites and scales. Second, I have shown how Phizo drew upon moral, historical, and religious registers to demonstrate the normative legitimacy of Naga statehood, while the NNC produced legitimacy on the ground via democratic mechanisms, civil disobedience, and practices of stateness. Third, I have explored how efforts to construct legitimacy also underpinned Phizo's theory of the state. Calls for statehood represented an attempt by Phizo to articulate the Naga claim in a register he hoped would be palatable to international audiences.

[749]A reconciliation between Phizo's Dolie clan and Sakhrie's Lievüse clan was held in 2006, in which members of Phizo's clan issued a formal apology for the incident. Joshi, Micropolitics, p.189. Also see, Visier Sanyü, *A Naga Odyssey: My Long Way Home* (New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2018). pp. 245-246.

[750]Zapuvisie Lhousa A Z Phizo and our Free Nagas, *The Morung Express* (online), 25 January 2011.

In doing so, Phizo articulated a hybrid Naga modernity, rooted in an Indigenous vocabulary of time and community and a distinct Naga Christian theology. Finally, I have emphasised Phizo's ambivalence and the challenges he faced sustaining domestic legitimacy over time while navigating national, regional, and international relationships. I thus echo calls for scholars to embrace ambivalence – and the 'hesitancy and disquiet' it provokes[751] – as a productive tool in engaging the contested legacies of those subaltern geopolitical actors. Indeed, despite his relative marginality in the diplomatic sphere, Phizo's story is that of an elite (in the relational sense) egotistical male leader. The narratives of those who assisted him – including women – remain absent. In recognising these archival silences and the complex entanglements of power which make politicians like Phizo *neither* fully dominant *nor* resistant, ambivalence provides a generative lens to study the nature of subaltern geopolitical actorness and subjectivity.[752]

Phizo's vision of the Naga state was ultimately unrealized. Why then do Phizo and his geopolitical vision remain so compelling amongst Naga communities? As I will show in subsequent chapters, Naga activists continue to refer to Phizo's vision of a self-sufficient Naga society – whilst in the same breath eschewing calls for statehood. Part of the answer to this question, I believe, can be found by visiting the A.Z. Phizo memorial in Kohima (figure 4).[753] Today, Phizo's body is interred in this monumental cruciform tomb situated atop one of Kohima's many hills. On the tomb's upper face can be found an enormous stone monolith carved with the

[751]McConnell, Liminal geopolitics, p.149. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Routledge: London), p.256.

[752]Sharp, Margins.

[753]This memorial was erected following the repatriation of Phizo's body from London to Nagaland in 1990.

words ‘A. Z. PHIZO/ FATHER OF THE NATION/ HERE RESTS THE MAN WHO GAVE HIS ALL FOR HIS PEOPLE’. Below is a plaque inscribed with the following words:

> OUR LAND IS OUR HERITAGE,
> TO NONE SHALL IT BE SURRENDERED,
> AS WHETSTONE OUR OPPONENTS SHARPEN US.
>
> \- A. Z. Phizo

By subsuming Phizo’s biography into a testament to the indomitability of the Naga struggle for self-determination, Phizo’s epitaph illustrates pithily how his greatest legacy today is his unique status as a source of charismatic authority for Naga communities. For Weber, legitimate authority



Figure 4: The A. Z. Phizo Memorial, Kohima. Photo: Author's own.

consists of traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic elements.[754] Phizo's historical and religious claims to statehood drew upon the first of these. His claim to moral authority and attempts to materialise a hybrid Naga state speak to the second. Nevertheless, Phizo is also seen by contemporary Naga communities as possessing what Weber has described as a 'certain quality of… personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and… endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or quality'.[755] As the first engraving on Phizo's grave illustrates, this 'exceptional' quality is derived from his unwavering commitment to Naga sovereignty and his apparent prescience in anticipating Indian coloniality.[756] In this way, Phizo embodies within his person the shifting contours of the Naga struggle and continues to provide both symbolic, ideological, and practical inspiration to the generations of Naga nationalists that have succeeded him.

As Naga author and NNC leader Zapuvisie Lhousa argues in the quotation at the start of this section, Phizo's 'footprints' remain 'fresh and clear' within Naga geopolitical thought and practice (whilst the man himself - from his political ideas to biography - can be hazy). In some ways, Phizo can thus be harder to understand than his legacy. In the next chapter, I explore how 'future generations' have both preserved and reworked Phizo's 'contributions' as part of the Nagas' involvement with the global Indigenous Peoples' movement.[757]

[754]Weber, Politics as vocation.

[755]Max Weber, *Economy and Society: Volume 1* (New York: Bedminster, 1978). p.95

[756]On Phizo's legacy within the NNC, also see L. Kaiso, 'On the 21st Death Anniversary of A Z Phizo', *The Morung Express* (online), 30 April 2011.

[757]Lhousa, Our Free Nagas.

Chapter 6 | Imagining futures outside the state: The geopolitics of Naga Indigeneity

1. Introduction

James Pochury's speech to the 21st session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues ('UNPFII') in Spring 2022 began with an apology.[758] Speaking haltingly at first, Pochury – the GNF General Secretary – mumbled to the chair that he hadn't realised it was his turn to speak. However, he quickly found his footing. Pochury declared to the assembled audience of Indigenous delegates that the right to self-determination – the right upon 'which all other rights depend' – had 'been denied the Naga people' since India and Myanmar became independent.[759] Without self-determination, he argued, 'pursuing [Naga] economic, social, and cultural development' was impossible. It was thus essential that India urgently repeal AFSPA, resolve the Indo-Naga issue, and 'uphold…the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ('UNDRIP)' in the Naga homeland.[760] Pochury also urged the representatives to read the GNF's accompanying written statement. That submission described the recent killing of Naga civilians by Indian military forces, situating this within an 'unrelenting campaign' against Naga self-determination, consisting of the militarisation of Naga society, the use of divide-and-rule tactics by Indian intelligence, and efforts forcibly to align Naga society with Hindutva ideology. [761] By separating the Nagas across

[758]This session was held in the UN headquarters, New York between April 25 and May 2022.

[759]A video of Pochury's speech can be found on the Facebook page of the GNF. GNF, *GNF's General secretary Mr James Pochury speech at the Permanent Forum on the Indigenous Issues, UNPFII Twenty-First Session,* Facebook*,* 27 April 2022. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=696320298358129&ref=sharing last accessed 24 January 2022.

[760]ibid.

[761]Written Statement of the GNF to the 21st session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issue (UNPFII), 25 April - 6 May 2022. DOCIP online.

'four states in India and a province in Myanmar', and thereby contributing to the destruction of Naga Indigenous governance, languages, and cultures, these measures, the GNF claimed, were in flagrant violation of the UNDRIP.[762]

The speech was greeted by applause from the room, whilst Pochury, dressed in a traditional Naga waistcoat, paused and lowered his head. Within hours, a recording of the speech had been circulated on social media, where, as of July 2023, it had received twenty-eight thousand views. Naga users commenting on Facebook praised the GNF general secretary for his elegant exposition of the Naga struggle. One Naga opined how, in a debate such as this, the Indian government didn't stand a chance. Many, however, were more sceptical. Some questioned Pochury's assertion that the Naga struggle was merely for economic, social, and cultural development. Others accused him of abandoning the fight for Naga sovereignty. These varied comments illustrate how Pochury's speech was as significant for its silences as in what was made explicit. Indeed, as well as neglecting the issue of Naga sovereignty, the speech made no mention of the Nagas' long held demand for statehood. Moreover, half a century after the NNC leader's unsuccessful attempt to address the UN General Assembly and the failed spectacle of his 'International Press Conference', references to Phizo were conspicuous in their absence.

How are we to understand this expression of geopolitical subjectivity? This chapter addresses this question by examining how, why, and to what effect Naga civil society groups have recast the Naga political struggle as part of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement. In tracing these shifts, I contribute to scholarship which has interrogated Indigeneity as both a conceptual

[762]ibid.

and substantive research focus.[763] As Tania Li asserts, a group's self-identification as Indigenous 'is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed'.[764] Instead, Indigeneity represents 'a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle'.[765] Indigeneity is thus both co-constructed and relationally produced with reference to broader dynamics of power and difference. According to Sarah Radcliffe, there is thus a need for a 'critical geography of indigeneity' which 'account[s] for indigeneity's production through processual, multi-actor, multi-scalar networks and within specific grounded contexts'.[766] This chapter thus explores how, when and where a politicised form of Indigeneity has been articulated amongst Naga actors embedded within transnational networks of Naga and non-Naga individuals.

As part of the spatial and scalar lens employed throughout this thesis, I bring these relational framings of Indigeneity into dialogue with geographical scholarship on relational space. I rely on Massey's contention (introduced in Chapter 2) that space be understood 'as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all

[763]Sarah Radcliffe, 'Geography and indigeneity I: Indigeneity, coloniality and knowledge', *Progress in Human Geography* 41 (2017) 220-229. Also see Ian Baird, 'Thinking about Indigeneity with Respect to Time and Space: Reflections from Southeast Asia', *Space, Populations, Societies* 1-2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.4000/eps.9628; Michelle Daigle, 'Awawanenitakik: The spatial politics of recognition and relational geographies of Indigenous self-determination', *The Canadian Geographer* 60 (2016) 259-269; Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

[764]Tania Li, 'Articulating indigenous identity in Indonesia: resource politics and the tribal slot', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000) 149-179. p.151.

[765]ibid.

[766]Radcliffe, Geography and indigeneity, p.221.

spatial scales'.[767] I interrogate how engagement with the global Indigenous Peoples' movement internationally and on the ground, has been a fulcrum underpinning activists' efforts to reshape nationalist imaginaries and produce Naga space at multiple scales. In foregrounding a relational conception of space, I extend scholarship on Naga Indigeneity (and Indigeneity within India more broadly) which has focused *either* on articulations of the term by claimant groups within international fora *or* on the interface between expressions of Indigeneity and Indian state politics.[768] Instead, I explore how articulations of Indigeneity and the concomitant spatial imaginaries which accompany them are forged and reconciled between these and other spatial scales. In attending to the relational geographies of Naga Indigeneity, I argue that the political work of making a Naga Indigenous identity is tied to a strategic project of spatially and temporally rescaling Naga subjectivity.

This chapter draws on interviews with GNF, FNR and NPMHR members, in addition to analysis of these organisations' digital and print outputs and submissions to the UN's Indigenous Peoples' mechanisms accessed through the DOCIP archives.[769] All three organisations are 'nationalist' in so far as they advocate for Naga collective self-determination. However, reflecting the emergence of a 'middle space' within the Indo-Naga negotiations, these organisations are dominated by members of an emergent middle class, who, located outside tribal structures of authority, are based principally in urban areas or the diaspora, have received a university education,

[767]Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). p.264.

[768]On articulations of Indigeneity by those from India at the United Nations, see Karlsson, Anthropology and the Indigenous; On the relationship between Indigeneity and Indian national politics, see Virginius Xaxa and Roluah Puia, 'Indigenous peoples and nation interface in India', in *Indigeneity and Nation,* ed. by G. N. Devy and Geoffrey Davis (London: Routledge, 2020). p.85-100.

[769]As described in Chapter 3, these archives are held in Geneva but are digitized at https://www.docip.org/en/our-services-solutions/documentation-center/ last accessed 26 August 2023.

and are embedded within transnational activist communities.[770] All three bodies have an ambivalent relationship to the NPGs and, I suggest, act as 'critical friends' who, whilst supportive of the Indo-Naga negotiations, are non-factional, seeking to promote a broader vision of Naga unity. This chapter thus constitutes a geography of intellectual thought of those who are neither political elites, nor fully embedded with Naga communities on the ground, but instead possess an in-between political subjectivity.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I examine how Indigeneity has been mobilised by Naga activist communities as the basis for an emergent form of internationalism. Second, I interrogate the geographical imaginaries underpinning these expressions of Naga Indigeneity. Finally, I illustrate how a relational approach *both* to Indigeneity *and* the production of space brings to the fore a series of spatial tensions underpinning Naga Indigenous geopolitical imaginaries.[771]

2. Becoming Indigenous in Nagaland[772]

This section considers the networked practices and multi-scalar geographies through which a Naga Indigenous identity has been forged and circulated. In highlighting the internal and external reference points shaping Naga Indigeneity, it is neither my intention to imply that a Naga Indigenous identity is inauthentic, nor to deny activists' agency.[773] Instead, I illustrate how Naga

[770]Machanda and Bose, Middle Space.

[771]Here, I draw (non-prescriptively) from McConnell and Woon's use of relational geographies to foreground the spatial tensions underpinning Chinese diplomacy. Fiona McConnell and Chih Yuan Woon, 'Mapping Chinese Diplomacy: Relational Contradictions and Spatial Tensions', *Geopolitics* 28 (2021) 593-618.

[772]By 'Nagaland', I am referring here to all Naga inhabited areas.

[773]On navigating this scholarly tension see Morton and Baird, From Hill tribes to Indigenous Peoples.

Indigeneity has been hybridised at the intersection between putatively 'local' and 'global' forces.[774] Although articulations of Naga Indigeneity have their 'roots' in the nationalist movement, they have been (re)shaped through activists' 'routes' through the UN, regional and global movements for the rights of Indigenous people, and engagement with print and digital media.[775]

2.1 Engagement with the UN system

Engagement with the UN has been indubitably significant in producing a Naga Indigenous identity. The formal incorporation of Indigenous communities within the UN's institutional architecture began in 1982 with the formation of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations ('WGIP').[776] The UN embraced a 'flexible' approach to participation within this forum, prioritising the self-identification of Indigenous communities over a 'criterial' or 'relational' definition.[777] This inclusive approach has encouraged a range of marginalised communities to access UN space. One such community is the Nagas, who, in 1993 – three decades after Phizo's attempt to speak at the UN – took advantage of these developments finally to make their case to a

[774]Francesca Merlan, 'Indigeneity Global and Local', *Current Anthropology* 50 (2009) 303-333.

[775]James Clifford, 'Indigenous articulations', *The Contemporary Pacific* 13 (2001) 468-490.

[776]On the history of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement and the UN, see Alice Feldman, 'Making Space at the Nations' Table: Mapping the transformative geographies of the international indigenous peoples' movement', *Social Movement Studies* 1 (2002) 31-46.

[777]'Criterial' approaches to Indigeneity rely on definitions that propose a set of conditions that enable identification of 'the indigenous' as a global 'kind'. Relational definition 'emphasise grounding in relations between the "indigenous" and their "others" rather than in properties inherent only to those we call "indigenous"'. Merlan, Indigeneity Global and Local, p.305.

UN audience.[778] Speaking to the WGIP's 11th session, the NSCN-IM's then chairman, Isak Chishi Swu, argued:

> This is the first time for the Nagas to be privileged with such exalted platform of freedom. I am exceedingly delighted to seize this occasion to introduce ourselves as a distinct people and nation to this august congregation of different nations and peoples of the world.[779]

Swu addressed the WGIP on six further occasions, his attendance enabled in no small part by networks of Christian internationalist supporters.[780] Swu's interventions called upon the international community to safeguard the Nagas' right to self-determination and to end the 'occupation of [the Naga] homeland by Indian and Burmese armed forces'.[781] Interviewees saw the NSCN-IM's UN participation during this period as critical in advancing the 1997 Indo-Naga ceasefire negotiations.[782] Abacho (a Naga elder and human rights activist) reflected:

> This new way of thinking of Indigeneity, this direction has come in through the NSCN-IM. They are a very organised group… their experience of going out to the wider world and getting our issues linked with a wider world… they realise that the issue of the Indigenous people has international understanding and has a special position, the world has

[778]Reflecting the discomfort that Naga nationalists have with the label 'minority', Nagas have largely refused to engage with the UN's Forum on Minority Issues. Thus, prior to the NSCN's participation in the WGIP, the Nagas did not have a means to engage with the UN.

[779]Speech of Mr Isak Chishi Swu, NSCN to the UNWGIP, 27 July 1993, DOCIP Online.

[780]Naga participation at the UN was facilitated by the World Council of Churches and by the Quaker and Baptist peace movement. DOCIP, *Update 48/49: September/December 2002*, DOCIP Online.

[781]Speech of Isak Chishi Swu to UN WGIP, 27 July 1993, DOCIP Online.

[782]Swu used his 1997 speech to the WGIP – delivered just days after the signing of the Indo-Naga ceasefire – to call upon the 'International Community to help [the Nagas] out' with ensuring that the terms of the peace process were respected by the Indian leadership. Swu also credited the NSCN-IM's engagement with the UNPO in realising the Indo-Naga ceasefire. Speech of Mr Isak Chishi Swu, NSCN, to the UNWGIP, 28 July 1997, DOCIP Online.

> a special consideration for that. I think that's why that has… more and more… come to our thinking.[783]

Abacho's comments speak to two significant elements in Naga activists' adoption of an Indigenous identity.

First, in highlighting the world's 'special consideration' for an 'international understanding' of Indigeneity, Abacho illustrates how Indigeneity provides a legitimating device to make the Nagas' demands legible to international audiences. Indeed, Naga WGIP participation was a response to a shifting international political space in which the politics of recognition has moved from supporting claims to nationhood through the creation of secessionist states, to a language of Indigeneity, which emphasises a marginalised social group seeking greater inclusion within the wider polity.[784] Though, as I will discuss below, while articulating Indigeneity at the UN, Naga groups continue to vehemently reject the idea that they are seeking rights from India. As detailed in Chapter 5, Naga groups have long maintained that the 'Naga issue' is an international concern. Phizo thus understood Indo-Naga relations as those between two sovereign nation-states. Efforts to claim Naga Indigeneity, however, harness the protections afforded to Indigenous people under international law, specifically the recognition that they have a collective legal personality existing apart from that of states.

Second, in articulating how ideas of Indigeneity have 'come to our thinking', Abacho speaks to a perception of Indigeneity as an external discourse, one introduced to the Nagas by outsiders. Indeed, according to Karlsson, in their early WGIP engagement, the NSCN-IM used an

[783]Interview 13 September 2021.

[784]Joseph Massad, 'Against Self-Determination', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 9 (2018) 161-191.

Indigenous label instrumentally as a means of accessing UN space.[785] Once inside the WGIP, however, Swu avoided referring to the Nagas as Indigenous, and explicitly distanced the Nagas from other participating communities. He asserted in his 1993 speech:

> Allow me first of all, to express on behalf of my people, the immense urge we have for the cause of the world's indigenous peoples, though our case may be different. The helpless indigenous millions are now driven to the point that borders total extinction… Rectification is a… sacred obligation of the world… and to this end our Naga people shall remain committed.[786]

Despite the NSCN-IM's initial reluctance to publicly adopt an Indigenous moniker, however, the language of Indigeneity quickly spread into more 'local' spaces of Naga activism. The NSCN-IM's WGIP participation coincided with the UN's first 'International Decade' (1994-2004) and 'International Year' (1993) of the 'World's Indigenous People'. Both events increased international media coverage of the Naga struggle and led to the growth of civil society activity around the banner of Indigeneity. As Paul (an NPMHR member) explained:

> When the UN declared 1993 as the year of the World Indigenous people… we invited important people in Naga society… for a meeting to decide whether the Nagas were Indigenous or not. In that year the UN circulated a draft statement, we studied the UN perspective on Indigenous people and we came to understand that the Nagas were Indigenous people of the world… We are keepers of our land, nobody earlier came to our land… from that perspective I signed a statement on behalf of Nagas saying Nagas are Indigenous.[787]

[785]Karlsson, Anthropology and the Indigenous.

[786]Speech of Mr Isak Chishi Swu, NSCN, to the UNWGIP, 27 July 1993, DOCIP Online.

[787]Interview 22 August 2022.

Paul described how the NPMHR's consultation involved Nagas from India and Myanmar, church leaders, state politicians, and NPG representatives.[788] Alongside submitting their statement to the UN, the NPMHR and the Naga Students Federation (the 'NSF') organised 'Naga Week' to celebrate the UN Year of the World's Indigenous People. Jamir (an FNR and GNF member who had spoken at the UN) described how, alongside seminars about international definitions of Indigeneity, 'Naga Week' included celebrations of Naga culture, organised by tribe.[789] Both groups also marked the occasion by establishing a consultation process for the drafting of the UNDRIP. Lily (a NPMHR member who had participated in the UN's Indigenous fellowship programme) noted how such events provided a forum in which Nagas could 'feel' Indigenous:

> We have had the first decade of Indigenous population in the early 1990s… followed by the second decade. And then from then on… we also see that the international community, specifically the UN, has due recognition to the identity of Indigenous people as a whole, and we belong to… the Indigenous Peoples from around the world. So that made us feel part of the Indigenous people of the world and that we as people, as tribals, as Naga people, we qualify you know… That way, we began to… proudly identify ourselves as Naga Indigenous people.[790]

Lily's comments reflect how Indigeneity has become an embodied identification amongst activists. Whilst it was the Nagas 'tribal' status that Lily believed 'qualif[ied]' them as Indigenous, Lily's embrace of Naga Indigeneity reflects activists' efforts to go beyond postcolonial categories of state recognition to embrace alternative terms of self-reference. To my knowledge, there is no word for

[788]Interview 22 August 2022.

[789]'Naga Week' took place between December 1-5, 1993, in Kohima with the theme 'Indigenous Peoples - A New Partnership.' On Naga Week's history, see Arkotong Longkumer, 'Who sings for the Hornbill?: the performance and politics of culture in Nagaland, Northeast India', *The South Asianist,* 2 (2013) 87-96.

[790]Interview 4 August 2021.

'Indigenous' in Nagamese. Instead, the use of the English term likely reflects the utility of an internationally cognisable identification. Moreover, whilst Phizo asserted the Nagas' national and Christian identity to eschew a tribal moniker – associated as it is with ideas of primitivism and a specific locale – contemporary activists see Indigeneity as an alternative means of emphasising their identity as putatively global subjects.[791] I will discuss further the relationship between Indigeneity, tribe, and Naga nationhood in Chapter 7. For now I note how, although the WGIP was disbanded in 2008, the NPMHR and the GNF continue to participate in UNPFII and the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ('EMRIP').[792] Unlike the NSCN-IM's early interventions, recent submissions to these forums actively embrace a Naga Indigenous identity, emphasising the Nagas' common struggle with other Indigenous communities.[793] It is to these efforts to strategically (re)position the Naga as part of regional and global movements for the rights of Indigenous people to which I now turn.

[791]On how colonial era representations of primitivism shape Naga engagement with discourses of global Indigeneity, see Arkotong Longkumer, '"As our ancestors once lived": Representation, Performance, and Constructing a National Culture Among the Nagas of India', *Himalaya* 35 (2015) 51-64.

[792]The GNF and the NPMHR's participation involves making formal statements and contributing to reports to UN bodies. Since the signing of the 1997 ceasefire and the beginning of the ongoing Indo-Naga peace negotiations, the NSCN-IM has stopped participating in the UN's Indigenous Peoples' forums. Nevertheless, the organisation has become gradually more comfortable with an explicitly Indigenous label in recent years. In 2007, for example, it declared the UNDRIP to be a 'vindication' of the Naga' case as 'indigenous people' who have 'a political history of subjugation and suppression'. See UN declaration a 'standard' for political solution: NSCN (I-M), Newmai News Network, 15 September 2007, *Nagalim.NL News* (online).

[793]For instance, see Statement by Niengulo Krome, NPMHR, to the 11th Session of the UNPFII, 15 May 2021, DOCIP Online.

2.2 Engagement with regional and global Indigenous movements

As Merlan argues, as a form of self-identification, Indigeneity 'presuppose[s] a sphere of commonality among those who form a world collectivity of "Indigenous Peoples" in contrast to their various others'.[794] Indeed, according to Castree, as part of a 'global social movement', Indigenous struggles are at once 'territorially rooted' and 'yet a prime instance of translocal solidarity'.[795] These networks of solidarity provided a vital mode through which Naga activists articulate their identity.

The NSCN-IM initially distanced the Nagas from other Indigenous communities. The NPMHR, however, has used membership of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact ('AIPP') and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs ('IWGIA') to forge solidarities with other Indigenous groups, derived from a common cultural distinctiveness, relationship to land, and experience of subjugation by neighbouring communities.[796] Lily[797] and Narola[798] (an NPMHR

[794]Merlan, Indigeneity Global and Local, p.303.

[795]Noel Castree, 'Differential geographies: place, indigenous rights and local resources', *Political Geography* 23 (2004) 133-167, p.136.

[796]Both the IWGIA and the AIPP are international membership organisations aimed at furthering the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including through aiding their representation in international fora. Naga groups are members of both organisations. The IWGIA facilitated the participation of Naga politicians and activists at the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva in the 1980s. In 1986, the IWGIA published *Nagaland File,* a 277-page book documenting human rights abuses occurring across Naga areas. The book was unusual in also including documentation published by the NSCN and petitions from Naga civil society groups to the Indian government. Luingam Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1984). For more information on the IWGIA's contemporary activities, see IWGIA, *The Indigenous World 2020* (Copenhagen: IWGIA, 2020). On the AIPP, see AIPP, *AIPP Annual Report 2020* (Chiang Mai: AIPP, 2020)

[797]Interview 4 August 2021.

[798]Interview 7 September 2021.

member from Manipur) described the significant role of Naga activist Luingam Luithui – a founding NPMHR member and the first AIPP Secretary General – in forging these linkages. Drawing on his experiences in the Americas,[799] Luithui argued that the Indigenous label should be extended beyond 'salt water' colonial contexts to also include instances of neo- or internal colonialism in Asia.[800] Today, the AIPP is led by Luithui's nephew, Gam Shimray. Lily and Narola described how the NPMHR's AIPP membership allowed them to collaborate with other Indigenous communities to deliver collective UN statements and exchange advocacy advice.

I observed the materialisation of these Indigenous solidarities when, on the 75th Naga Independence Day in August 2021, the GNF broadcast video solidarity messages from marginalised and Indigenous communities from across the world.[801] These included messages from the AIPP, the UNPO, and the Global Indigenous Youth Forum Caucus, but also the Zo Indigenous Forum Mizoram, the Borok People Human Rights Organisation Tripura India, and the State Nation of Hawaii. Prefiguring the language used in James Pochury's 2022 UNPFII speech, messages drew on human rights discourses to describe how – despite differences in political, economic, and social circumstances – these communities had all been denied the right to self-determination prescribed by the UNDRIP.

The importance of these public expressions of solidarity to interviewees was threefold. First, Chingmei (a scholar-activist who worked with the NPMHR to broker the 1997 ceasefire),

[799]Morton and Baird, From Hill tribes to Indigenous Peoples, p.17.

[800]Luingam Luithui, 'Defining 'Indigenous Peoples' - Some Comments', in *"...Vines that won't bind" Indigenous Peoples in Asia, Proceedings of a Conference Held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1995,* ed. by Christian Erni (Copenhagen: IWGIA, 1995), pp.51-52. Luithui was also credited by interviews with first encouraging the NSCN-IM to engage with the UN's Indigenous forums. Interview 4 August 2022.

[801]GNF, YouTube uploads: https://www.youtube.com/c/GlobalNagaForum/videos last accessed 17 July 2022.

argued: in 'fight[ing] for… fellow Indigenous People who are struggling elsewhere' and by foregrounding the shared nature of Indigenous struggle, the Nagas were able to 'strengthen [their] own support'.[802] Second, Vikheli (a Naga scholar-activist from Manipur) explained that through 'connecting with other Indigenous players the Nagas can amplify [their] stories to a wider audience outside India'.[803] Lily expressed similar sentiments:

> To… have organisations supporting us. It really helps… to also let others know that look, they're watching us. So even if we cannot do much, we are watching you. We are watching the human rights record. We are watching what you are doing to be the Naga people.[804]

Lily's comments speak to activists' understanding of their participation within a global Indigenous community as enabling a form of 'witnessing', through which other Indigenous actors were able to report the abuses suffered by Naga communities on the Nagas' behalf.[805] According to Lily, this was necessary because of the Nagas' political and geographical isolation:

> The Naga people are so isolated, not because we want to be isolated, but the government of India had this policy on restricted area permit… and we were… closed up from the rest of the world… hardly any newspaper, any international media agency they cannot cover, they don't know what's happening… this is part of the gift, being part of and raising awareness with this international community.[806]

For Lily and her colleagues, India's framing of the Naga struggle as a domestic issue and their restriction of access to Naga territories had necessitated this parallel international network of

[802]Interview 9 August 2021.

[803]Interview 23 August 2021.

[804]Interview 4 August 2021.

[805]Arabella Lyon and Lester Olson, 'Special Issue on Human Rights Rhetoric: Traditions of Testifying and Witnessing', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 41 (2011) 203-212. p.209.

[806]Interview 4 August 2021.

Indigenous observation. Nevertheless, these nascent solidarities have their limits. Vikheli described how UNPFII and EMRIP could only 'recommend' a course of action, rather than acting as an 'implementing agency'.[807] Moreover, Narola noted how, although such support helped to pressure the Indian Government to act, a solution to the 'Naga issue' must ultimately be forged 'at home' by the Nagas.[808]

Finally, those who had engaged with the UN argued that Indigenous solidarities offered an important platform for knowledge exchange and a shared vocabulary for international claims making, particularly amongst other communities spread across intra/interstate borders, including Aboriginal and Sámi communities.[809] Nevertheless, interlocutors disagreed as to whether this was helpful. While Rano (a GNF member)[810] believed that the Sámi Parliament offered inspiration for the Nagas, Paul[811] and Chingmei[812] were sceptical whether such a model would offer the Nagas genuine autonomy.[813] In a similar vein, Akai argued that the geopolitics of knowledge production meant that the NPGs would reject the Sámi model because it had been developed by outsiders rather than the Nagas themselves.[814] Nevertheless, activists have continued to forge linkages with other Indigenous groups. Since 2022, for example, the FNR have worked with Hawaiian and

[807]Interview 23 August 2021.

[808]Interview 7 September 2021.

[809]Interview 20 August 2022.

[810]Interview 25 August 2022

[811]Interview 22 August 2022.

[812]Interview 25 August 2022.

[813]The debate as to the utility of the Sámi style parliament – one which would offer Naga communities a non-territorial form of autonomy based on social, cultural, and linguistic rights – is a live one amongst Naga nationalists. See N. K. Das, 'Naga Peace Parleys: Sociological Reflections and a Plea for Pragmatism', *EPW* 46 (2011) 70-77.

[814]Interview 12 August 2022.

Aboriginal communities to develop a framework for repatriating Naga ancestral human remains from the UK.[815]

2.3 Engagement with print and digital media

Activists use print and digital media to translate internationally legible expressions of Indigeneity locally. *The Morung Express* newspaper has been significant in this regard. As described in Chapter 3, the paper was established by Naga scholar-activist, Akum Longchari, who self-describes as Indigenous. Through 'open public dialogue', the newspaper seeks to 'develop a critical consciousness' among Naga communities to 'mobilise public support' into materialising 'transformational' futures.[816] Indeed, in recent years, the newspaper has published editorials calling for Nagas to imagine futures outside of the Westphalian state based on non-Western Indigenous forms of 'sovereignty and statehood'.[817] I discuss these, and other calls for Naga futures outside the state in Section 3. For now, I note that the paper scripts a Naga Indigenous identity in two ways. First, through publishing statements from Naga NGOs and scholar-activists describing the Nagas as Indigenous, the newspaper interpellates Naga readers as Indigenous subjects.[818] Copies from 2006 held in the UNPO archive show how the masthead formerly described the publication as a 'newspaper for Indigenous affairs'.[819] Second, by publishing stories concerning other Indigenous groups, the newspaper invokes a sense of commonality between the

[815]Recover, Restore and Decolonise, Nagaland. https://rradnagaland.org/ last accessed 9 January 2023.

[816]The Morung Express, 'About Us' https://morungexpress.com/about-us last accessed 18 May 2022.

[817]For instance, Can Nagas transcend the Westphalian state?, *The Morung Express* (online), 5 June 2022.

[818]For instance, Indigenous peoples and the need for a new social contract, 14 August 2021, *The Morung Express* (online).

[819]This phrasing is absent from recent editions; I am unaware of the reason for this omission. *The Morung Express,* 14 May 2006, Press articles of the UNPO 2006-2010, ADVN/UNPO/D17994(2/1).

Nagas and other Indigenous Peoples, situating the Nagas within a global Indigenous community.[820] Asangla (an associate of the FNR) argued:

> Institutions that are today, globalising forces, NPMHR before but also FNR and now *The Morung Express*… they are very good at… creating relationality… by globalising and localising the Naga struggle.[821]

As Johnson and Kraft assert, digital technologies also provide an important means 'by which people embrace an Indigenous identity and find partners and collaborators free from geographical limitations'.[822] Indeed, Naga activists circulate material describing the Nagas as Indigenous – including articles from *The Morung Express* – via WhatsApp and Facebook, engaging international audiences both inside and outside the diaspora and connecting the Nagas to Indigenous communities globally. These posts stimulate vibrant discussion surrounding a Naga Indigenous identity, resonating with geographical scholarship which has highlighted the centrality of digital spaces to the formation of de- and re-territorialised identities.[823] Moreover, as the GNF's global solidarity videos and the live broadcast of Naga nationalist events (described in Chapter 7) illustrate, video media is also important in materialising the transnational connections between Nagas and other global Indigenous actors. Together, these engagements with print and digital media are the most recent manifestation of the longer genealogy of print culture described in Chapters 4 and 5. The written word thus assumes importance as a site where the Nagas'

[820]For instance, see Revisiting Indigenous Peoples' resilience, *The Morung Express* (online), 8 August 2020.

[821]Interview 10 October 2021.

[822]Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Kraft, 'Introduction', in *Handbook of indigenous religion(s),* ed. by Greg Johnson and Siv Ellen Kraft (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp.1-24. (p.10).

[823]Bernal, Digital media and diaspora; Harris, Nativist-populism.

(inter)nationalist subjectivity is constituted and debates about the Nagas' geopolitical future play out.

Indigeneity is thus the basis of an emergent form of internationalism amongst Naga activists. In using an Indigenous identity as a nominalist tool to discursively position themselves as members of a putatively global community, political actors script the Naga issue as one of international (rather than domestic Indian) concern – one which necessitates an international solution.

3. Towards a Naga Indigenous geopolitics

Having outlined the spaces in which Naga Indigeneity is produced, I now consider how articulations of Indigeneity are associated with efforts to reconfigure nationalist geopolitical imaginaries. Indigeneity – like all forms of subjectivity – is forged relationality.[824] Drawing on Massey's understanding of relational space, I illustrate how activists' efforts to produce Naga space are shaped by this relationality and by Naga actors' interactions across multiple sites and scales – including with the UN, India, and other Northeastern Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In positioning themselves as Indigenous, activists re-articulate a Phizoite belief in the timeless relationship between Naga communities and the spaces they inhabit. Articulated as a 'historical fact', Indigeneity is an expression of the Nagas' claim to be the 'first' or 'original'

[824]Radcliffe, Geography and indigeneity, p.221.

inhabitants of their territories, and is used to naturalise an inalienable connection between people and place, now, in the past, and into the future.[825] Rose (an NPMHR activist) noted:

> Getting back into history… we knew that yes, the land we live, the space that we occupy is our ancestral land. We inherited from our forefathers, we have protected the land. You have toiled on the land… it was a simple concept [but] when we started going out interacting with people, reading and connecting with people, we realised we are part of the world Indigenous People.[826]

Despite its apparent 'simplicity', interviewees highlighted two elements which they believed made a Naga Indigenous identity distinct. First, in advancing an understanding of Indigeneity as synonymous with autochthony, activists self-consciously distanced the Nagas from alternative conceptions of the term circulating amongst some Asian communities where Indigeneity has been 'uncouple[d] from time and space' to refer to 'colonised', 'oppressed' or 'dominated' peoples, regardless of whether they are the 'original' inhabitants of their current homeland.[827] Rose emphasised the difference between these groups and the Nagas:

> [Our] principles, values and ideas will be familiar with the other Indigenous communities across Asia. But… what sets us apart would be our history… when we talk about the unique history of the Nagas, like our elders keep repeating, we were never conquered and… we never agreed to be a part of a union… we were always on our own. And we want to continue to be that. To be able to chart our own destiny. How we govern ourselves would be on us. And yeah, so basically what we, human rights activists also discuss, what we anchor on is this.[828]

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[825]Amal Jamal, *Arab Minority Nationalism in Israel: The Politics of Indigeneity* (New York: Routledge, 2011). p.6.

[826]Interview 19 August 2021.

[827]Baird, Thinking about Indigeneity.

[828]Interview 19 August 2021.

Second, Naga groups dismiss understandings of Indigeneity as a tool for marginalised groups to seek inclusion *within* multinational states.[829] In foregrounding the Nagas' 'unique history' as the basis for their geopolitical 'destiny', activists such as Rose use Indigeneity to position the Nagas as members of a political community which *preceded* the establishment of the Indian Union. The adoption of this identity is thus tied to broader efforts to forge a future *outside* rather than *within* India, one in which the Nagas are recognised as a collective, historically constituted entity and not an Indian minority. Echoing the NSCN-IM's early speeches to the UNWGIP, the NPMHR's 1993 statement on Naga indigeneity (described by Paul above) claimed that, in these terms, unlike other Indigenous groups, the Nagas' claim to Indigeneity qualified them for statehood:

> We, the Nagas, an indigenous people of Asia would like to point out that our situation… is different and distinct in itself while the problems of most other indigenous peoples relate to recognition of their rights within certain nation states… our case is an indigenous people under forced occupation and seeking recognition of their right of place as a sovereign state.[830]

[829]This understanding is often advanced by scholars. Zenker argues for 'distinguishing between "indigeneity" and "nationalism" as alternative modes for targeting the state: whereas indigeneity refers to cases of autochthony that demand special entitlements from the state, nationalism denotes such cases that aim for the very entitlement of the state itself'. Similarly, Dunford suggests that Indigenous rights are synonymous with minority rights. As the Naga case shows, however, these semantic distinctions between nationalism and Indigeneity quickly fall apart on the ground, where the terms nation and Indigenous are used in tandem and Naga groups fiercely reject the label 'minority'. Olaf Zenker, 'Autochthony, ethnicity, indigeneity and nationalism: Time-honouring and state-oriented modes of rooting individual-territory-group triads in a globalizing world', *Critique of Anthropology* 31 (2011) 63-81. p.63; Michael Dunford, Indigeneity, ethnopolitics, and *taingyinthar*: Myanmar and the global Indigenous Peoples' movement, 50 (2019) 51-67. p.58.

[830]NPMHR, *The Nagas in the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 1993: A Prerogative* (Kohima: NPMHR, 1993).

Three decades on, however, activists are more equivocal about the Nagas' future relationship with India. Ali (a GNF member) described how activists have resigned themselves to the impossibility of independence:

> We have come to realise, in today's global context, that every country and nation has to depend on each other. So, if India is not willing to recognize the Naga people as a sovereign country, still… there should be a separate flag. There should be a separate constitution… we don't want to be subjugated under any authority. Naga people should be able to live freely as per our wishes. Indigenous customs, traditions, should be recognised… there should be a new relationship between the two entities.[831]

Ali's comments speak to a shift amongst Naga activists and the NPGs, most prominently the NSCN-IM, towards a more agnostic approach to engaging Indian coloniality since the 1997 ceasefire. In part, this reflects increased scepticism regarding the viability of small-states within an interdependent interstate system.[832] Ali's words also illustrate how activists continue to view the Indian constitution and the protections it affords under Article 371A[833] as inadequate in safeguarding Naga collective rights.[834] These concerns have been heightened within Naga communities following the unilateral revocation of Article 370 (the provision which granted limited autonomy to Indian administered Kashmir) in August 2019 by the BJP government in

[831]Interview 25 August 2021.

[832]While Phizo embraced a small-state geopolitics, today the NSCN argues that the Nagas 'cannot merge with India but cannot live apart from Indians due to the necessity of interdependent relationship among peoples and nations'. See No merger with India but Nagas cannot live apart: NSCN (I-M), *The Hindu* (online), 4 August 2022

[833]I describe the provisions of Article 371A further below.

[834]The NSCN-IM also demands a separate Naga constitution. This, and the organisation's call for a separate Naga flag, remains a key stumbling block in the Indo-Naga negotiations.

Delhi.[835]

Underpinning activists' turn away from the vocabulary of sovereign statehood has been a shift toward the language of Indigenous self-determination to articulate Naga demands. Interviewees described how this was, in part, a self-conscious response to shifting international norms. Whilst self-determination has become a 'multivalent term – laden with implications, strategies and political purposes',[836] it has an international legal basis, enshrined in Article 1 of the UN Charter, which states that the UN's purpose is (inter alia) to 'to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples'.[837] Throughout the 1960s this right was mobilised both by anti-colonial nationalists seeking to forge an egalitarian post-imperial world[838] and also by departing colonisers, who despite Article 1's reference to 'peoples', used the principles of territorial integrity and *uti possidetis juris* to uphold an international order based on sovereign states and fixed territorial boundaries.[839] Interlocutors described, however, how the ratification of the UNDRIP in 2007 had inspired Naga advocates to return to this language to reframe their aspirations. Multiple interlocutors pointed to the significance of Article 3 of the declaration:

[835]Nagaland apprehensive after repeal of Article 370, *The Sangai Express* (online), 5 August 2019.

[836]Chris Gibson, 'Indigenous geopolitics', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Critical Geopolitics*, ed. by Klaus Dodds, Merje Kuus, and Jo Sharp (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp.421-437 (p. 423).

[837]UN, Charter of the United Nations (1945), https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text last accessed 18 May 2022. The right to Self-Determination is also included in Article 1 of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. For more information see Loong, Manby, and McConnell, Geographies of Self-Determination.

[838]Getachew, *Worldmaking.*

[839]Burke Hendrix, 'International law as a moral theory of state territory?' *Geopolitics* 6 (2001) 141-162.

> Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.[840]

As Asangla noted, civil society groups have been at the forefront of these efforts to re-cast the Naga movement in this register:

> It was the NPMHR who introduced… this whole notion of internationalisation of the issue apart from, Phizo and… previous er, parts of the movement, which was more sovereignty based. But the language of self-determination, the UN's Indigenous Peoples language, I think was very uniquely brought about and joined with the Naga discourse by institutions like NPMHR, NSCN-IM, and various other networks they forged on a global scale, globalising the issue in a new format, of Indigenous Peoples' format and linking it to self-determination.[841]

Asangla's reflections are supported by an analysis of Naga speeches to the UN since 1993, held in the DOCIP archives.[842] In these speeches, there is a discursive shift in the Nagas' demands, from the NSCN-IM's initial speeches at the WGIP calling for the restoration of Naga sovereignty in the early 1990s,[843] towards interventions focused on the maintenance of the Indo-Naga peace negotiations,[844] and calls for the repeal of AFSPA and complaints regarding specific human rights

[840]UNGA, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, A/RES/61/295, (2007) https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wpcontent/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf last accessed 18 May 2022.

[841]Interview 10 October 2021.

[842]To identify relevant speeches, I used the DOCIP database search tool with the search terms, 'Naga', 'Nagaland', 'Northeast India', in addition to the names of different Naga political and civil society groups and their supporters. To the best of my knowledge, I have read every speech concerning the Nagas made to the UN since 1993.

[843]Speech of Isak Chishi Swu to the UN WGIP, 27 July 1993, DOCIP Online.

[844]Speech of Isak Chishi Swu to the UN WGIP, 28 July 1997, DOCIP Online.

violations in the early 1990s and 2000s.[845] Recent submissions, however, frame the Naga nationalist struggle in terms of the denial of Naga self-determination. Take, for instance, the opening of the written statement of the GNF to the 2022 meeting of the UNPFII, described in the introduction to this chapter:

> The Global Naga Forum respectfully and urgently submits that the pivotal right of self determination on which all other rights depend has been denied the Naga people living in northeast India and northwest Myanmar, as a result of which the question of Nagas freely pursuing their economic, social and cultural development has been rendered moot.[846]

Like James Pochury's accompanying speech (also described at the start of this chapter), the written statement ends by calling the Indian government to 'uphold the international standards enshrined in the UNDRIP'. To be sure, the content of such speeches also reflects the thematic focus of individual UN meetings and shifting domestic circumstances – not least the signing of the 1997 Indo-Naga ceasefire and the 2015 Framework Agreement. Nevertheless, Rano[847] and Jamir[848] described how, in crafting their UN interventions, the GNF's 'International Advocacy Group' (comprised of members in the Naga homeland, the USA, and Europe) sought to 'cite back' specific UN 'resolutions' and 'recommendations', such that their demands were legible and attractive to the assembled international audience.

[845]Intervention made by Mr Nepuni Piku, NPMHR during the 19th Session of the WGIP, held in Geneva 23-27 July 2001, DOCIP Online.

[846]Written Statement of The Global Naga Forum (GNF) to the 21st session of the UNPFII, 25 April – 6 May 2022 DOCIP Online.

[847]Interview 25 August 2022.

[848]Interview 20 August 2022.

Yet, to see this rhetorical shift merely as a unidirectional response to changing UN architecture is not only to ignore the role of Naga (including the NSCN-IM)[849] and other Asian Indigenous groups in the UNDRIP drafting process,[850] but also to erase the agency of Naga actors in reconciling both the UNDRIP and hegemonic understandings of Indigeneity to local circumstances. Indeed, Naga civil society groups have instigated a broader conversation around the utility of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination amongst Naga communities. This has involved online discussion forums, lectures, and the circulation of opinion pieces via print and digital media.[851] It is worth emphasising here that while several scholars have productively focused on more vernacular articulations of self-determination,[852] Naga groups largely draw on a rights-based understanding of self-determination as enshrined within international law, the realisation of which, they argue, offers a pragmatic solution to the Indo-Naga conflict. Interlocutors argued that invoking the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination provided a more productive framing for the Nagas' demands than earlier calls for sovereignty. Akai, (an FNR and NPMHR member) noted:

> Growing up… the word self-determination is something that we are not really familiar with. Words such as sovereignty, freedom, independence, are much more commonly used

[849]The NSCN-IM spoke in favour of the declaration at the UNWGIP and contributed to debates about its drafting. The NPMHR also submitted its own suggestions for the UNDRIP to the UN, including around the definition of Indigenous People. See Speech Delivered by Mr Isak Chishi Swu, NSCN-IM at the UN WGIP 14th Session, Geneva, 29 July- 2 August 1996, DOCIP Online; NPMHR, *Nagas in the Year of Indigenous Peoples;* UNPO monitors of the United Nations (UN) Working Group on a Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations, 1996-1998, ADVN/UNPO/ D18083(3/1)

[850]Jens Dahl, *The Indigenous Space and Marginalized Peoples in the United* Nations (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[851]Self -determination is a right of all peoples, *The Morung Express* (online), 3 September 2020.

[852]Daigle, Awawanenitakik.

> and more easily understood. Self-determination… for me, personally, I got to know over the years with my involvement in human rights… is a much more broader concept and which I think is not just about an aspiration, but something which you live with every day in life and that you are able to determine the decisions you make… self-determination, I think is a praxis. It is not something that is a one time off. And in that sense… the word self-determination is a much richer, fuller concept than independence and sovereignty.[853]

Akai's discussion of self-determination as 'praxis' illustrates how, whilst Phizo associated self-determination with an outcome – independence – contemporary Naga political actors recognise self-determination as a process through which the Nagas' geopolitical future will be decided. Self-determination was understood to have a distinct temporality, in which the future is left open to be decided and prefigured by the Naga 'people'.[854] Thus, whilst Phizo believed that Westphalian statehood was the only vehicle for the realisation of the Nagas' geopolitical aspirations, interviewees argued that there was a need to return to an earlier stage of the Naga struggle before the Nagas' future had been foreclosed by calls for independence. In calling for the realisation of UNDRIP Article 3, interviewees claimed that the FNR, the GNF and the NPMHR were simply re-articulating the Naga Club's demands in the Simon Commission Memorandum. Narola described how:

> One major influence... is the UNDRIP where for the first time in our journey clearly laid down… values that are key to Indigenous people. But… if you look at all the old writings, you will notice that… what is now being put in the international charter is just a different… form of what we have been expressing much before… [in the] letter to the Simon Commission… to me, those are the same values that we want, we want respect, we want dignity, we want our destiny to be, we want to control our future… So… it's just a different

[853]Interview 22 September 2021.

[854]On broader efforts to re-imagine meanings of self-determination in situations of protracted conflict across Asia see Loong, Manby, and McConnell, Geographies of Self-Determination.

> way of putting it, that's how I understand it, but the Nagas increasingly use the word Indigenous Peoples… but the language it's more or less the same story. Maybe in a finer language.[855]

Activists' efforts to recenter the Memorandum at the heart of their political demands point to how they see a direct continuity between early 20th century British colonialism and the postcolonial Indian state. The Nagas' return to the right to self-determination can thus be seen as further means of unsettling colonial power – both locally and internationally – and a challenge to the legitimacy of Indian rule.

In Chapter 7, I explore the on the ground spatialities associated with Naga activists' renewed claims to self-determination, including engagement by contemporary Naga civil society with the Simon Commission Memorandum. For now, I note how activists embrace the open temporality of self-determination to advocate for futures *outside* of the Westphalian nation-state system. As early as 1993, the NPMHR's declaration on Naga indigeneity asserted that the Nagas had adopted a 'modern form of government' only as a 'necessity to make the rest of the world understand our nationhood'.[856] Akai argued, however, that contemporary international political conditions necessitated 'decenter[ing] the state in discussions of [Naga] self-determination' and recognising the qualitative difference between the Nagas' historic 'political struggle' for independence, and more recent activity as part of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement. He argued:

> Within the spectrum of struggles, there seems to be a mainstream and there seems to be struggles in the margins, and the struggles in the margins are mostly about Indigenous people. And I think it is because Indigenous struggles are questioning the legitimacy of the

[855]Interview 17 September 2021.

[856]NPMHR, *Nagas in the Year of Indigenous Peoples.*

> state system, whereas mainstream political struggles are looking to replace either the government, or, you know, or create a new state in that sense, along the same lines. So there seems to be a fundamental difference between the two.[857]

Thus, whilst many interviewees saw the Nagas' abandonment of calls for statehood as an unfortunate necessity, for Akai, this was a welcome corollary of the embrace of Naga Indigeneity as referring to a people who preceded the establishment of the postcolonial state. Other activists make similar arguments. Speaking as part of an FNR social media video, Nepuni Piku – an FNR and NPMHR member and Naga UN representative – argued that the fundamental tension between the Nagas and India/Myanmar was between a 'eurocentric worldview' and an 'Indigenous cosmovision'.[858] The former, Piku claimed, is 'heavily influenced by legalism and excludes collective identities like Indigenous communities from the national life'.[859] The latter recognises 'the interconnectedness of the natural world' and sees 'land and people as one'.[860] Although activists like Piku were often opaque about what exactly these efforts to 'transcend the Westphalian state' might involve,[861] in my view, three important principles can be discerned from interviews with activists, their UN statements, and their print and digital media.

First, Ali (a GNF member) and other interviewees argued that an Indigenous political settlement between the Nagas and India must be forged relationally, based on horizontal

[857]Interview 17 September 2021.

[858] FNR, *FNR presents MANY VOICES: ONE SHARED FUTURE. Episode IX,* online video recording, YouTube, 21 November 21 2020 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9h1yDcQMiA last accessed 27 August 2023.

[859]ibid.

[860]ibid.

[861]Can Nagas transcend the Westphalian state?

interdependence rather than vertical subjugation.[862] Echoing arguments about the need for a separate Naga constitution, activists maintained that this relationship should be between two autonomous units with their own internationally legible geopolitical subjectivity. Paul[863] and Akai[864] were both resolute, however, that they did not aspire to a form of federalism, arguing that such an arrangement implied an asymmetrical distribution of sovereign power in India's favour. Instead, activists used the language of 'shared sovereignty' to describe their aspirations. Although this echoes the terms used in the Indo-Naga Framework Agreement, interlocutors were sceptical that the agreement's implementation would lead to a genuine redistribution of power to Naga communities.[865] Instead, they argued that the establishment and maintenance of these new horizontal relationships, in which the Nagas could 'live freely', was dependent on a multiscalar process of Indigenous reconciliation, both within Naga communities and between the Nagas and India.[866]

In September 2020, AIPP Secretary General Gam Shimray used an online dialogue to argue that a 'reconciliatory approach' based on 'peace, justice, bonding, and love' was at the core of the Nagas' Indigenous belief system.[867] The Nagas' ancestors, Shimray argued, 'did not believe in power struggle' and sought to maintain a 'supreme order' in which the 'natural…and the human

[862]Interview 25 June 2021.

[863]Interview 22 August 2022.

[864]Interview 12 August 2022.

[865]Interview 12 August 2022; Interview 22 August 2022.

[866]ibid; Interview 25 June 2021. James Pochury (introduced in Section 1) makes similar arguments in James Pochury, 'Activism – A tool of Critical Engagement', in *Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp.57-61.

[867]NPMHR, *The 17th Morung Dialogue, NPMHR Delhi: The Naga Story in the Indigenous Peoples movement*, online video recording, YouTube, September 10 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dq3ySDk56jc last accessed 12 July 2020.

order [were] in harmony'.[868] This approach underpinned the founding of the Nagas' 'free institutions', such as the village republic, based on 'consent' and 'equal reciprocal rights and duties' where 'every individual is counted as a free'.[869] Moreover, Shimray argued, reconciliation had shaped the Nagas' engagement with the 'outside world' during the 'time of the British', when the Nagas were 'left alone' in exchange for their 'allegiance and loyalty'.[870] For Shimray, however, a reconciliatory approach continued to be stymied by the 'moral order' of the Indian constitution which framed state sovereignty as a 'superstructure', based on 'homogenisation, occupation… and dictatorial power', and refused to recognise the Nagas as 'free' and 'sovereign individuals'.[871] Shimray asked:

> Can we reconcile?… Nagas must ask ourselves… whether we, as a people, can strive for free institutions as our ancestors did. If so, then the sovereign individuals must be the architect of the [Naga] constitution… it cannot be devoid of the people. And I believe that is the… Naga story in the Indigenous movement and [it] should be the story of the Indigenous movement in the global order for the future… so that we are contributing with a vision and we are approaching in a way that we want to reconcile and build this reconciliation throughout the world… that is our message globally speaking.[872]

For Shimray, reconciliation, and the recognition of Nagas' 'free institutions' is thus not merely a means to achieve an Indo-Naga solution, but an end itself. In articulating his belief that the Naga approach to reconciliation provides a model for other Indigenous communities to follow, Shimray speaks to an understanding of the Nagas not simply as passive recipients of discourses of global

[868]ibid.

[869]ibid.

[870]ibid.

[871]ibid.

[872]ibid.

Indigeneity, but as possessing agency in the wider Indigenous movement. This belief may be derived from the legacy of Naga actors' early involvement in global and regional Indigenous movements. Gam's world vision, however, in which reconciliation must occur 'global[ly]' and 'locall[y]' to 'reduce violence, conflict, and bloodshed',[873] also has echoes of Phizo's assertion that mutual relations of Naga interdependence provide a model for interstate relations.

Second, activists rejected top-down models of sovereign power and argued that the Nagas' geopolitical future should be decentralised. Interlocutors promoted Naga geopolitical ontologies, including village republics, customary justice, and community environmental stewardship. Lily argued that these institutions had 'deteriorat[ed]' and 'degenerated' under British and Indian administration.[874] Chingmei claimed that Indian rule had led to the corruption of Naga village councils.[875] Although such bodies still exist, he argued that their institutionalisation within the centralised legal structures of Nagaland State has diminished their autonomy, reducing them 'to an auxiliary body of the state government':

> The foundation of the village has been legalised and… put into entirely different new systems. So even if… the traditional village seems to be still there… now it has new acts and laws that have been introduced by the state… And now the development is not for the people's planning… within the village, but the development funding is coming from Delhi… routed through the state government. So the so-called development that we see today is not as per the plans of the village… But the development is coming imported from

[873]ibid.

[874]Interview 4 August 2021.

[875]Interview 9 August 2021

> outside… These political changes have impacted the once very revered and very authoritative village council.[876]

For Akai, a decentralised approach to Naga political life would overcome the preponderance of regional territorial aspirations *within* the Naga movement, typified in calls for the creation of a state of 'Eastern' or 'Frontier' Nagaland within India:[877]

> In the course of the cease fire, the strategy of the Indian state has shifted. Before it was more divide and rule and now it's more define and rule… So now you see a lot of regional aspirations emerging. Which is okay. For instance, if we had to imagine that Nagas are free tomorrow… the question of Frontier Nagaland would emerge… It may not be called Frontier Nagaland, but along the same concept because by nature Nagas are not centralised. We're more confederation where everyone is sovereign, so to speak. So, if Nagas were free tomorrow, there would suddenly emerge a lot of confederations within that.[878]

Finally, activists advance a geographical imaginary of a Naga future 'without borders'. This can be understood in two ways. [879]

First, civil society bodies call for an end to the divisive effects of intra-/interstate borders which divide Naga communities.[880] Of course, Naga politicians since Phizo have called for the territorial integration of Naga areas, both *across* the Indo-Myanmar border and *within* India.[881]

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[876]ibid. On the village republic within Naga Society, see Jelle Wouters, Who is a Naga village? The Naga 'village republic' through the ages, *The South Asianist,* 5 (2017) 99-120.

[877]I described the emergence of calls for 'Frontier' or 'Eastern Nagaland' in Chapter 4.

[878]Interview 12 August 2022.

[879] 'Nagas without borders' is a popular rallying call by Naga civil society groups, and was also the slogan for the Naga Day celebrations (described in Chapter 7) in January 2018.

[880] I describe these efforts in Chapter 7 with reference to the GNF's 'Naga Solidarity Walk' in 2022.

[881]As Agarawal and Kumar argue, 'the open-ended description of territory has been a hallmark of the Naga quest for self-determination'. The NNC and later the NSCN-IM have claimed sovereignty over all areas inhabited by the Naga people, while the' definition of who is a Naga has expanded' during the twentieth

Indeed, while the NSCN-IM have effectively abandoned their call for the former, the latter demand continues to underpin their negotiations with India.[882] In recent years, however, Nagas at the UN have begun to (re)articulate this aspiration in terms of UNDRIP Article 36. This provides 'Indigenous peoples… divided by international borders… the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation… with their own members.'[883] The provision was invoked by the GNF in their 2021 statement to EMRIP calling for the 'Naga people… scattered in four Indian states and Myanmar [to] be allowed to live together as one people with one destiny'.[884] However, reflecting the fact that the UNDRIP explicitly safeguards the 'political unity' of existing states,[885] appeals for the 'reunification of [Naga] ancestral contiguous land' are self-consciously couched in the language of collective self-determination of all Naga peoples rather than explicit demands for territorial reorganisation.[886] This nuanced approach was, broadly speaking, adopted by

and twenty first centuries, such that the 'extent of territories claimed by Naga insurgent groups has grown' and Nagas of Manipur and Myanmar have become increasingly prominent voices in articulating Naga nationalist claims. On the different national *and* sub-national territorial claims made by Naga nationalists, see Ankush Agrawal and Vikas Kumar, 'Cartographic conflicts within a union: Finding land for Nagaland with India', *Political Geography* 61 (2017) 123-147.

[882]Wouters, Sovereignty, integration, bifurcation, p. 99. In particular, NSCN-IM members have long called for the territorial integration of Naga inhabited areas across the Nagaland-Manipur border.

[883]UNGA, UNDRIP.

[884]Statement by Paul Pimomo, GNF, to the 13th Session of EMRIP, 13 July 2021, DOCIP Online.

[885]Article 46 of the UNDRIP states that 'Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity… which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States'. UNGA, UNDRIP.

[886]Statement by Paul Pimomo to EMRIP 13 July 2021, DOCIP Online.

interviewees such as Rano, who associated calls for Naga reunification with the establishment of a pan-Naga supra-state or cultural body, rather than with any change to existing borders.[887]

As to the second way in which Nagas seek to advance a future 'without borders' — some activists have used this lexicon to call for a broader reconceptualisation of the region's spatiality, away from one divided by fixed and rigid borders, toward a more fluid and overlapping understanding of political, territorial and social life. Writing in a pamphlet in advance of the 2018 Naga Day celebrations (discussed in Chapter 7), FNR convener Wati Aier called for the 'colonial term "borders" [to] be removed from the vocabulary of the Naga people'.[888] This was echoed by FNR members such as Akai,[889] and Yanthungo (an NPMHR member).[890] Both described their desire to overcome the manufactured divisions within Naga society along tribal and geographical lines, as well as the ongoing tensions between the Nagas and their putatively Indigenous neighbours. Akai argued that this approach was inspired by an understanding of the region's precolonial territoriality:

> [The Indigenous people of the Northeast] have lived as neighbours for many, many years, even prior to the Indian state. Those relationships changed when the boundaries were imposed… [by] the state… suddenly now the boundaries were a rigid line. They were drawn on the maps. They defined who was in and who was out… But in the past the boundaries were not a straight line, they were based on relationships. The state understanding of boundaries is very much defined by this Westphalian border… Whereas people's boundaries are not so rigid and are overlapping because they are shared.[891]

[887]Interview 25 August 2022.

[888]Wati Aier, 'Introducing Naga Day – Nagas Without Borders' in *Naga Day*, ed. by FNR, p.5.

[889]Interview 22 August 2022.

[890]Interview 17 September 2021.

[891]ibid.

Along with activists' broader efforts to rethink the region's boundaries, Akai's ideas represent a challenge to the 'disconnected histories' espoused by Naga nationalist politicians such as Phizo in demarcating Naga space.[892] In doing so, activists promote a more fluid conception of the relationship between territory and identity, one which recognises the cultural and historical continuities between the Nagas and their nearest neighbours, and which uses this shared history to imagine new relations of co-existence. Of course, similar arguments which recognise the constructedness and fluidness of identity could be (and indeed have been) used to challenge the Nagas' claim to distinctiveness vis-à-vis the people of India.[893] I explore these and other more prefigurative efforts to re-imagine the meanings of Naga nationhood in Chapter 7. In Section 4, however, I consider a series of other spatial tensions which underlie Naga activists' Indigenous positioning.

4. Spatial and relational tensions of Naga Indigeneity

I have illustrated how Naga articulations of Indigeneity are underpinned by fundamentally spatial imaginaries, forged through activists' local, regional, and international interactions. Nevertheless, in so far as these relationships underpin efforts to produce Naga space, they also bring forth a series of spatial tensions which hinder attempts to build alternative Naga geopolitical futures. I consider three such tensions below.

[892]Chatterjee, Connected Histories, p.70.

[893]Baruah, Constructionism.

4.1 Territories of Indigeneity: a 'meaningful and inclusive' Indigenous homeland versus nativist territorial tensions[894]

The ambivalent relationship between articulations of Indigeneity and nativism is well-attested.[895] Both rely on the reification of histories of prior occupation to advance claims to territorial, cultural, and economic rights. Yet, whereas the former is historically associated with 'progressive' ideologies of self-determination, emancipation, and decolonisation amongst marginalised communities, the latter is a 'reactionary' tool employed by majoritarian groups to maintain their hegemony against perceived outsider threats.[896]

The distinction between Indigeneity and nativism is blurred in Northeast India, however, where there is an extremely high density of groups claiming to be Indigenous and/or making overlapping claims to exclusive ethnic homelands.[897] Neighbouring communities are positioned in an antagonistic relationship both with the postcolonial state and with one another. For this reason, interviewees such as Narola described how the Naga 'issue' was as much a 'people to people conflict' as one between 'the people and the state'.[898] These conflicts are both a legacy of the colonial practices of territoriality outlined in Chapter 4, but also of India's use of divide-and-rule

[894]Pamyo Chamrui, 'Nagas Without Borders: Imagining the Future For a Meaningful and Inclusive Naga Homeland' in *Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp.48-51 (p.48).

[895]Harris, Nativist-populism.

[896]ibid.

[897]As of August 2023, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura are all home to long-running nationalist movements. In addition to the Nagas, Bodo, Kabari, Meitei, and Zo groups have all engaged with the UN's Indigenous Peoples' mechanisms. On the multiplicity of claims to Indigeneity in Northeast India, see Willem van Schendel, 'The dangers of belonging: Tribes, indigenous peoples and homelands in South Asia', in *The Politics of Belonging in India,* ed. by Daniel Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta (London: Routledge, 2011).

[898]Interview 7 September 2021.

politics to resolve competing claims to territory.[899] As such, there is a long history of inter-ethnic violence in the region, not least between Naga and neighbouring Meitei and Kuki communities incited by calls from Naga nationalists for the integration of Naga inhabited areas across the Nagaland-Manipur border.[900]

Indeed, the 2001 decision by the Indian Government to declare the Indo-Naga ceasefire as 'without territorial limits' triggered widespread protest across the Imphal Valley, culminating in significant loss of life.[901] Those Meitis who were killed are now commemorated by the 'Memorial to the Martyrs' in Imphal. In 2001, the NPMHR made the unusual move of using a speech to the WGIP to appeal not only to the 'International Community', but also directly to the Meiteis to 'restore lasting peace in… Nagalim.'[902] Reproducing a Phizoite framing, which sees Naga communities as primordially unable to live with Hindu others, the speech argued that the Meiteis had rejected the Nagas' attempts to 'bring an understanding… through dialogue and community' as a result of the 'the tradition of Hindu social segregation'.[903] NPG leaders, meanwhile, continue to also stress Naga ethnic homogeneity based both on shared history and culture and claims to common blood and to territory. As the NSCN-IM General Secretary, Th. Muivah argued in a

[899]van Schendel, Dangers of belonging.

[900]Baruah, Constructionism.

[901]ibid, p. 333-334.

[902]Intervention made by Nepuni Piku, NPMHR, to the WGIP 23-27 July 2001, DOCIP Online

[903]ibid. Though not recognised as a Scheduled Tribe ('ST') by the state government, the Meitei people from Manipur often position themselves as Indigenous within international forums. UNPO membership applications 1998-2004 ADVN/UNPO/D17928 (4/1).

speech to celebrate the 76th Naga Independence Day in August 2022: 'We are Nagas by blood, by culture and by history, who profess the same faith and political concept'.[904]

I have outlined above how Naga civil society groups have challenged these exclusivist and exclusionary discourses of belonging, partly by moving away from territorialised understandings of nationhood. Nevertheless, even amidst calls to reconfigure relations between Nagas and their putatively Indigenous neighbours, some Naga civil society actors continue to use the language of Indigeneity to deploy potentially nativist rhetoric against other, putatively *non*-Indigenous Northeastern inhabitants. Writing in the wake of the 2018 'Naga Day' Celebrations, the FNR published a 'Treatise to the Public' in the *Eastern Mirror*.[905] The document emphasised the 'distinctiveness of the Naga nation – its politics of identity and history'.[906] This 'assertion of Naga identity', it was argued: 'should never be at the be at the expense of others' such as the Nagas' 'neighbours, whose identities are equally unique'.[907] However, the treatise, continued:

> While Nagas and our neighbours are caged in fear and suspicion within our boxed-in boundaries, we are neglecting more important issues, such as the illegal flow of people groups crossing our borders. This issue is of greater magnitude which will eventually eclipse the fear and suspicion over political boundaries held by our neighbours.[908]

Thus, on the one hand, the treatise called for the transcendence of the 'colonial mindset' of political and social borders which continue to 'confine and suffocate' the Nagas, both from each other, and

[904]All Nagas united with one decision, one faith and one politics, *The Morung Express* (online), 14 August 2022.

[905]FNR: A Treatise to the Public, *Eastern Mirror* (online), 18 April 2018.

[906]ibid.

[907]ibid.

[908]ibid.

from neighbouring Indigenous communities.[909] On the other hand, however, it sought to re-establish those same borders as a tool to exclude more recent migrants from building a collective Indigenous future, characterised, the authors argued, by a 'transformative and alternative government of co-existence'.[910] The stigmatisation of migrant communities and the paradoxical spatialities and temporalities of nativism and indigeneity are cast into sharper relief when one considers that many of the non-Naga communities living in Naga areas are descendants of tea plantation workers brought to Assam as indentured labourers in the mid 19th century. As Baruah argues, these groups, who live close to the NSCN-IM's headquarters near the Nagaland-Assam border, are from communities in central India who today identify as Adivasi.[911] Whilst these same groups are given ST status in India's central 'tribal belt', in the Northeast they lack occupancy rights and are thus largely excluded from the Indo-Naga negotiations.

These tensions speak to how, whilst framing Indigeneity as an expression of a subordinate relationship between marginalised groups and the state has purchase for the Nagas in international fora, these same understandings are less effective on the ground, where multiple Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups are also marginalised by the state – and indeed often by the Nagas themselves.

4.2 Networks of Indigeneity: transnational solidarities versus Indigenous exceptionalism

There is also a spatial tension between activists' efforts to forge solidarities with other Indigenous groups and their promulgation of discourses of Naga Indigenous exceptionalism. I have elucidated how activists' use Indigeneity to articulate regional and global solidarities. For instance, in recent

[909]ibid.

[910]ibid.

[911]Baruah, *Name of the Nation,* p.199.

decades, the NPMHR has forged connections with Dalit, Adivasi, and other marginalised communities *within* India.[912] On the face of it, this is a departure from the lukewarm support Phizo offered to other South Asian minority and nationalist movements which, he claimed, were 'internal affairs of India while the Nagas' were state actors.[913] Contemporary activists, however, reject Phizo's beliefs that states are the only legitimate international actors and that solidarities are a matter of scale. Lily described her experiences working with Bodo groups in Assam and Mizo groups in Tripura.[914] The former have called for the establishment of a state *within* the Indian Union. Since the 1980s, the latter have worked with the Indian government to implement a peace accord. Echoing the discussion above, Narola argued that these solidarities were made possible by a refashioning of the Nagas' demands away from a 'political movement', seeking independence, towards a focus on 'human rights' and self-determination.[915] Narola described how it is the shared denial of this right which underpins connections between the Nagas and other Indigenous groups:

> Irrespective… of the context… across the world, one thing that binds all of us is human rights. So, if there is human rights violation in any part of the world… wherever there is a… call for support, all of us, we come together… even if the issue might be different, even if we understand or practise self-determination differently, human rights binds us everywhere.[916]

[912]Interview 22 August 2023; Interview 15 August 22.

[913]Sinha, Phizo in Exile, 29 July 1984, BOD/Astor/MSS.15363/261. More broadly, Nagas have also long rejected the term 'Adivasi' and distanced themselves from the struggles of Adivasi communities in India due to the term's association with so-called 'mainland' communities and the Hindu caste hierarchy. van Schendel, The politics of belonging, p.39. *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR

[914]Interview 4 August 2021.

[915]Interview 17 September 2021.

[916]ibid.

Nevertheless, despite expressing these solidarities publicly, in interviews many activists were at pains to assert the uniqueness of the Nagas vis-à-vis other South Asian Indigenous groups. Underpinning these claims were two complementary assertions.

First, echoing Phizo's scalar distinction between 'internal' and 'external' affairs of states, interviewees such as Rose (quoted above) drew a distinction between those Indigenous communities who had been 'conquered' by an occupying power, and the Nagas who, they argued, had never been formally subjugated by India.[917] This contention formed the basis of Lily's suggestion that, unlike other more 'mellow' or 'sober' claims to self-determination, the Nagas are neither seeking rights within India, nor are they secessionist.[918] Thus, activists simultaneously emphasised the open and plural nature of self-determination, while, in making such statements, delimiting the imagined outcomes of self-determination for other groups according to the historical operation of imperial power. Moreover, they appeared to legitimise colonial practices amongst communities who are seen either to have failed to offer adequate resistance against, or even consented to, occupation.

Second, activists maintained that the Nagas were unique amongst Indigenous communities globally in that they still possessed their ancestral lands. Since 1963, Article 371A of the Indian Constitution has restricted land ownership within the State of Nagaland to 17 recognized STs. Similar protections are offered to Nagas in neighbouring states. As Paul argued:

> In our case… Nagas are the *only* Indigenous people in the world who have complete control of our own land and our own resources. We say that we have no foreign domination, although we are under Indian rule, but we say that India has no legitimacy over us… we are the only Indigenous people in the world who are still in control of our own situation. If

[917]Interview 19 August 2021.

[918]Interview 4 August 2021.

> you look at all the Indigenous people in the world, every one of them is a minority, a very small minority within their respective countries, but we Nagas in Nagaland, are still occupied by Naga Indigenous people, so that is a distinction that we make.[919]

Not only does the Nagas' majoritarian status within the region risk inflaming the ethno-territorial tensions outlined in the section above, but, as Jamir asserted, it also means that many activists see those parts of the UNDRIP focused on linguistic, cultural, and land rights as having little applicability to Naga aspirations for territorial self-governance:

> UN rights… when discussing land they talk about tribes in the Amazon… this we already have, our language is not lost, our cultural is not lost, the right to this or that, it is not lost, even legal documents on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, half of it is not relevant, based on the Māori, the American Indians**,** and they are so pathetic, a company can come and wipe out a while tribe because they want to dig tractors… that is what they are fighting for, saying they don't want to be pushed by an oil company, but for us we already have these rights.[920]

This promulgation of notions of Naga exceptionalism is also at odds with the claims that the Nagas' Indigenous future is instructive for the global.

How are we to understand Naga activists' simultaneous claims to both Indigenous commonality and distinction? All claims to Indigeneity are, by definition, an assertion of a place-based particularity.[921] Scholars have long noted how Indigeneity is a distinctly 'translocal' phenomenon, developed according to Anglo-European settler-colonial contexts and reconfigured according to geographic circumstance.[922] Not all Indigenous movements, however, self-

[919]Interview 22 August 2022.

[920]Interview 20 August 2022.

[921]Castree, Differential geographies.

[922]Merlan, Indigeneity Global and Local.

consciously adhere to such an exceptionalist narrative, in which – inadvertently or otherwise – they disclaim their association with or minimise the struggles of others. Attending to these relational tensions reveals how, although the language of Indigeneity offers useful tools, activists are aware of the potential limits it poses on Naga advocacy. On the one hand, Indigenous solidarities afford Nagas international recognition. On the other hand, activists fear these solidarities will dilute Naga claims to self-determination on the ground by collapsing Indigenous claimants into one according to a prevailing international trend towards realising cultural, economic, and linguistic rights. The efforts of interviewees to navigate these tensions across spaces of local, regional, and international advocacy speak to the spatial and scalar contingency of Naga Indigeneity. It is to a closer analysis of the challenge of translating global ideas of Indigeneity across scale to which I now turn.

4.3 Scales of Indigeneity: global rights versus local struggles

Scholars have long noted the tensions involved in translating discourses associated with global Indigeneity within specific locales.[923] Jamir,[924] Chingmei,[925] and Paul[926] expressed similar concerns. They argued that the liberal-democratic conditions under which hegemonic understandings of global Indigeneity developed means that international instruments such as the UNDRIP were of limited applicability to the Nagas because the Nagas were still in possession of

[923]Nasir Uddin, 'The local translation of global indigeneity: A case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 50 (2019) 68-85 p.69. See also Emma Nyhan, 'Translating global indigeneity into the Bedouin vernacular', *Transnational Legal Theory* 12 (2021) 415-441.

[924]Interview 20 August 2022.

[925]Interview 23 August 2022.

[926]Interview 22 August 2022.

their ancestral lands and were not seeking rights from the state.[927] Moreover, despite hosting 'Naga Week' and similar celebrations for the UN's 'International Day of the World's Indigenous People', activists described difficulties communicating an abstract notion of Indigeneity to Naga publics. Reflecting scholarship which emphasises the disjunctures of scale between international legal instruments and the socio-political realities they seek to regulate,[928] Chingmei described how the UNDRIP remained confined to the 'activist or the researcher domain' and had not yet fully 'percolated' to speak to communities' day-to-day concerns.[929] Rovi (a scholar-activist working with the FNR) argued:

> A person living in the village has no idea about global Indigeneity… for them, it will be elite actors like NGOs or people who have had access to an… Indigenous food festival, or… been taken to the UN for a training… but not all people use the language of Indigeneity, because it doesn't make sense… It makes sense to use the language of the Indian Constitution, which is the Scheduled Tribes and how much more autonomy you have under Article 371a. It makes a lot more sense for hyper locals to use that language and labels to understand their rights in relation to… the book of law because you can only access your rights through something that exists. Whereas global Indigeneity is an abstract thing, you have to force it, because people don't come across it themselves… because [people] have to live as part of being an Indian entity, they have to negotiate their rights through being scheduled tribes and not global Indigenous peoples.[930]

Rovi's comments point to how global Indigeneity risks being cast as an elite or 'top-down' discourse, one introduced to Naga communities by privileged urban activists who are seen to be

[927]Interview 20 August 2022; Interview 22 August 2022; Interview 23 August 2022.

[928]Jean Carmalt, 'For critical geographies of human rights', *Progress in Human Geography* 42 (2018) 847-861.

[929]Interview 23 August 2022.

[930]Interview 1 October 2021.

more embedded within transnational or diasporic networks than with Naga village life.[931] As Rovi's reflections illustrate, these difficulties of translation are made more acute in the Naga context by the circulation of alternative understandings of Indigeneity via the language of Scheduled Tribes. As Vikheli argued, ST status remains an important claims making tool for Naga groups:

> The imposition of the state system on [the Nagas] as Indigenous people, means Nagas have no choice but to embrace the language of Scheduled Tribes.[932]

The frictions between state and international categories of recognition have been exacerbated following recent attempts by the GON to implement a 'Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland' ('RIIN').[933] Ostensibly introduced to prevent the movement of migrants from neighbouring states into Nagaland, the RIIN claims to 'clarify' those eligible for state reservations.[934] Significantly, however, rather than conceptualising Indigenous inhabitants as the 'first peoples' of Naga territories, the RIIN temporally and spatially rescales meanings of

[931]Uddin makes similar concerning the Chittagong HIll Tracts. Uddin, Local translation of global indigeneity

[932]Interview 23 September 2021.

[933]This recent engagement with the language of Indigeneity by the GON comes against the backdrop of longstanding claims made by the Government of India that there are no Indigenous people living within its borders, since – they argue – all of India's population to be Indigenous to the subcontinent. Despite voting in favour of the ratification of the UNDRIP in 2007, it is according to this reasoning that the Government of India has long maintained that the UNDRIP does not apply to those living within its borders and instead is only applicable to those parts of the world subject to European settler colonisation. On India's engagement with Indigenous rights at the UN see Dahl, *The Indigenous Space and Marginalized Peoples in the United* Nations, pp.193-207.

[934]Alice Yhoshü, 'Nagaland: Commission on register of indigenous inhabitants submits recommendations', *Hindustan Times* (online), 12 August 2021.

Indigeneity to describe those people or their ancestors who were living in Nagaland State at its creation in December 1963. In Chapter 7, I will describe how Naga groups have sought to engage in counter efforts to rescale Naga territorial imaginaries and identities temporally and spatially. For now, I note that the proposed RIIN legislation positions members of 14 Naga tribes, along with members of Kuki, Kachari, Garo and Mikir communities, as distinct from 'non-indigenous' inhabitants of Nagaland, including Bengali and other migrants.[935] Thus, while the conception of Indigeneity promoted by Naga nationalist activists naturalises a conception of a timeless Naga past, present, and future *outside* of India, this (re)framing of Indigeneity works to legitimise the existence of Nagaland State *within* the Indian Union.

Speaking about the policy at the 2019 launch of the 'Nagaland Indigenous People's Forum' in Dimapur, former Nagaland Chief Minister S. C. Jamir caused controversy by asserting that 'being a Naga by blood' does not make a person Indigenous to Nagaland State.[936] Elaborating, S. C. Jamir argued that, whilst Nagas living in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Assam could be called Indigenous in their own state, they could not claim to be Indigenous to the State of Nagaland.[937] S. C. Jamir's comments were criticised by the NSCN-IM, who argued that, in defining Indigeneity in this way, the former Chief Minister sought to sow division between Naga communities living across state and international borders.[938] Akai noted:

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[935]ibid.

[936]Being Naga by Blood Does Not Mean that a Person is Indigenous to Nagaland: Former CM SC Jamir, *InsideNE* (online), 28 October 2019.

[937] ibid.

[938]'Politically motivated' says NSCN (IM) on RIIN exercise, *The Morung Express* (online), 12 July 2019. Some smaller NPGs, led by Nagas from the state Nagaland, however, have welcomed the RIIN as a means of protecting the rights of Nagas living in that state. NNPGs slam NSCN (IM), *The Sangai Express* (online), 31 August 2023.

> The government uses the word Indigenous based on territory whereas Naga people use the word Indigenous… based on your aspirations and in terms of the affinity and culture. So, these are two completely different concepts of Indigenous that are being used. So, one is not based on identity, but based on territory. The other one is based on cultural identity. So right now, you see the tension between the two.[939]

Though the implementation of the RIIN has been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, this episode speaks to the ambivalence of Indigeneity as a mode of recognition amongst Naga communities and the challenges Naga activists face producing an internationally legible Indigenous identity in a context of a competing state-based politics of recognition. As Wouters argues, the long-term territorial division of Naga communities has ossified national and subnational socio-spatial imaginaries.[940] Indeed, in interviews, even as they articulated their aspiration for a future without borders, activists continued to verbalise a distinction between so-called 'Indian Nagas' and 'Myanmar Nagas', and amongst the Nagas of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. Reflecting the often-ambivalent relationship between activists' short- and long-term aspirations, Lily[941], Rano,[942] and Narola[943] supported efforts by the GON to recast regional politics through the register of Indigeneity to safeguard their short-term r*i*ghts within the postcolonial state.[944] Nevertheless, they continued to simultaneously advocate for collective Naga self-determination amongst *all* Nagas. Thus, not only do Naga political actors inhabit multiple identities which

[939]Interview 23 September 2021.

[940]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.39.

[941]Interview 4 August 2021.

[942]Interview 25 August 2022.

[943]Interview 7 September 2021.

[944]Reflecting the territorial tensions described above, some Naga civil society groups have called for the RIIN's immediately implementation to forestall the migration of non-Naga groups into Nagaland. Implement ILP, RIIN immediately says Nagaland senior citizens, *The Eastern Mirror* (online), 6 June 2023.

differentially position them with regard to state, national, and international audiences, but they must balance efforts to materialise alternative geopolitical futures with the demands of everyday politics.

Translating global Indigeneity locally is made more challenging by the fact that some NPGs, including the NNC and the NSCN-K, deliberately eschew an Indigenous label as part of their continued campaign for full statehood. Speaking on the 67th Anniversary of the Naga Plebiscite, the NNC President Adinno Phizo (the daughter of A.Z.) publicly rejected the English language word 'Indigenous' arguing that the term implied that the Nagas 'are not a nation, but under foreign rule'.[945] In 2021, the NNC Joint Secretary Acüyi Vadeo echoed Adinno Phizo's comments:

> Because Nagas are not Indian and Nagaland does not belong to India. We Nagas are a Nation in our own birthright and tradition. Therefore the Naga Nation will never accept such a thing [as being called Indigenous] that was and is non-existent.[946]

I will discuss in more detail the tensions associated with the NNC's refusal of an Indigenous label and their international claims making efforts in Chapter 7.

5. Conclusion

I have outlined in this chapter, *how*, *why,* and *to what effect* Naga civil society actors are seeking to recast the Naga political struggle as part of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement. In addressing these questions, I have made three arguments.

[945]Speech given by Adinno Phizo, NNC President, on 67th Anniversary of Naga Plebiscite, *Burma Link* (online)*,* 17 May 2018.

[946]Nagas are not a minority, *The Morung Express,* 10 August 2021.

First, drawing on geographers' recognition that 'scales are the effect of networked practices' I contend that through engaging in diverse forms of Indigenous activism, Naga groups have rhetorically and materially positioned themselves as members of a putatively international community and, in doing so, have scripted the so-called Naga issue as an international concern.[947] I have thus shown how a Naga indigenous identity has been forged relationally, with reference to a multi-scalar network of Naga and non-Naga actors and spaces. However, as well as a means of articulating internationality, I argue that the political work of making an Indigenous identity is tied to a broader and more substantive rescaling of Naga subjectivity. This occurs temporally – through tying Naga identity to pre-colonial histories of occupation – and spatiality – through situating the Nagas as members of a global community of Indigenous people and as a people whose future lies outside of India.[948] This project co-exists with competing efforts to rescale Indigeneity within Indian territorial bounds and according to constitutional histories of Indian federalism. (The latter are often overlaid by, and brush up against, Hindu Nationalist historiographies which place the Nagas along with the rest of India's Hindu population as Indigenous to a 'territorial and civilisational space of Hindutva'.[949]) I return to discuss *both* the co-constitutive project of strategically temporally and spatially rescaling Naga identities, *and* the coexistence of competing temporal regimes of Naga nationhood in Chapter 7. Specifically, in that Chapter, I explore both

[947]Legg, Of scales, p.324

[948]We might compare these efforts to spatially and temporally rescale the Nagas as global subjects (rather than 'backward', 'local' and 'primitive') with those of the Baptist Missionaries described in Chapter 4. For Sydney Rivenburg and the members of the ABFMS however, the Nagas needed a break from their colonial past to become global (read: both modern and western) subjects. Located somewhere between the two are Phizo's efforts to reconcile Naga Indigenous and Christian temporalities as the basis for an international subjectivity.

[949]Longkumer, Power of persuasion, p.203.

sets of themes through a discussion of archives and Naga anti-colonial world-making. In Chapter 8, meanwhile, I theorise the relationship between power, temporal conflict, and spatial scale in the Naga context with reference to Edelstein and colleagues' work on chronocenosis.

Second, I have illustrated how the adoption of an internationally legible Indigenous identity has been accompanied by a broader reconfiguration of Naga (inter)nationalist geopolitical imaginaries. I have shown how, despite an initial hesitancy, activists have creatively reworked dominant conceptions of Indigeneity circulating *both* within settler-colonial contexts *and* within Asia according to the Nagas' historical circumstances, by repudiating any association between Indigeneity and minority status and by emphasising the Nagas' continued occupation of their ancestral lands. In doing so, activists position the Nagas as members of a political community which preceded the establishment of the Indian Union – and use this as the basis for envisioning a political solution outside of the Westphalian state paradigm. Drawing on relational geographies scholarship, I have illustrated how these spatial imaginaries have been articulated with reference both to conditions on the ground and to prevailing international norms, including the provisions of the UNDRIP. In making these claims, however, I do not intend to dismiss Naga geopolitical agency. Instead, echoing arguments advanced elsewhere in this thesis, I demonstrate how expressions of Naga nationalism have been continually forged in dialogue with their *inter*national articulations. Thus, despite rejecting his model of the state, in adapting their demands according to a shifting international political space (whilst also seeking to reshape that political space according to their own needs), contemporary Naga Indigenous activism has much in common with Phizo's geopolitical project.

Third, I have illustrated how bringing literature on relational space into dialogue with relational framings of Indigeneity emphasises a series of spatial tensions underpinning Naga

expressions of Indigeneity. These concern the relationship between articulations of Naga Indigeneity and claims to territory, the limits of networks of Naga Indigenous solidarities, and the challenges of communicating an Indigenous identity which is legible to both domestic and international audiences. These tensions not only reveal the entangled and asymmetrical power relations that enable and constrain expressions of Naga Indigeneity, but also point to the ambivalence of Indigeneity as a mode of Naga geopolitical subjectivity, one which is neither fully dominant nor resistant. Instead, Indigeneity has different affordances and meanings across different spaces and scales, reflecting the uneasy and shifting relationship between Naga communities, activists, the international community, and the (post)colonial Indian state. In attending to these relational and spatial tensions of Naga Indigeneity, I have foregrounded how activists' efforts to build putatively decolonial Naga futures 'outside the state' continue to be delimited by state imaginaries – those of borders, of the nation, and of ethno-territorial claims – and by efforts to restrict the outcomes of self-determination for other Indigenous groups according to histories of prior colonisation. With this tension in mind, I now consider the competing efforts of Naga political and civil society actors to use embodied performance to materialise *both* a Phizoite model of the state and Indigenous non-state futures on the ground.

Chapter 7 | Performing Naga (inter)nationalism: Naga embodied claims to reconciliation, territory, and independence

1. Introduction

The previous chapters charted an apparent shift in the nature of Naga (inter)nationalism, from a postcolonial politics of modernity, recognition, and statehood, toward a decolonial politics of Indigeneity. I have explored how these different strands of geopolitical thought have been variously articulated by Naga nationalists at the UN and circulated via print and digital media. This chapter broadens the analytical and scalar gaze beyond the discursive and the theoretical, to account for the embodied, material, and situated ways in which Naga groups bring their geopolitical imaginaries and nationalist subjectivities into being.

In doing so, I contribute to literature on the material and performative aspects of Naga identity. Existing work has focussed principally on the 'Hornbill Festival' (held annually in Kohima by the GON since 2000). This event brings together Naga and non-Naga tribes from across the state for a celebration of 'traditional' Naga culture.[950] Scholars have analysed the festival through the lens of cultural authenticity, imperial nostalgia, Baptist Christianity, and Indigeneity to consider how Naga identity is negotiated in dialogue with varied audiences.[951] Nevertheless, there has been little attention to the *geo*political dimensions of such events. Moreover, whilst

[950]The Hornbill Festival's roots are in the NPMHR's 'Naga Week' celebrations (described in Chapter 6). NPMHR members described their frustrations that the spirit of 'Naga Week' had been appropriated and depoliticised by the GON. Interview 22 August 2022.

[951]Longkumer, Ancestors; Marion Wettstein, 'How ethnic identity becomes real: the enactment of identity roles and the material manifestations of shifting identities among the Nagas', *Asian Ethnicity* 17 (2016) 384-399.

scholars have demonstrated that the GON uses the Hornbill Festival to naturalise the territorial configuration of Nagaland State,[952] there has been less attention to how these same practices are employed by Naga nationalists to achieve *their* political aims.

To address this lacuna, I analyse three recent performances of Naga (inter)nationalism: Naga Day, which was organised by the FNR in January 2018; the Naga Solidarity Walk ('NSW'), which was led by the GNF in July 2022; and the 75th Anniversary of the Nagaland Independence Declaration (also referred as the '75th Naga Independence Day', hereafter 'NID') which was coordinated by the NNC/FGN in August 2022. Naga Day was the first event of its kind to bring together Naga tribes in the spirit of self-determination and reconciliation. While echoing this approach, the GNF pursued a more participatory strategy through the NSW, where attendees drew on a regional tradition of walking as advocacy to perform Naga territory.[953] Naga Day and the NSW were one-time events, unparalleled in their scale. In contrast, the NID celebrations occur annually and speak to a history of deliberative Naga performances of stateness. Although I do not take a comparative approach, I foreground these events for two reasons. First, they each represent attempts by different groups to revive the faltering Indo-Naga negotiations. Second, they are paradigmatic examples of different types of Naga performative politics.

To examine how these groups use these performative events to articulate their political claims and further Naga (inter)nationalism, I draw upon political geography scholarship considering performance/performativity, work within performance studies on the relationship between the embodied and the archival, and writing on the relationship between performance,

[952]Longkumer, Ancestors.

[953]Vanya Lochan, 'Embodied forms of politics and identity in South Asian protest movements: Pinjra Tod and Delhi', *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 25 (2019) 132-147.

history, and memory. I illustrate how these events are legitimating strategies through which Naga groups make their demands – to collective political rights (Naga Day), to territory (NSW), and to independence (NID) – legible to multiple audiences. My analysis draws upon three methodological approaches. First, in-person observation of the 75th NID celebrations and online observation of Naga Day[954] and the NSW.[955] Whilst I recognise the limitations of the latter approach – not least the inability to experience the affective atmospheres engendered by the celebrations – many (if not most) of the other people who observed these events did so remotely.[956] Videos of NID were also uploaded online, enabling me to conduct additional analysis remotely.[957] Second, analysis of documentary evidence related to all three celebrations, including pamphlets, speech transcripts, and digital media coverage. Finally, interviews with event attendees and – in the case of Naga Day and the NSW – speakers at, and organisers of, the event.[958] I begin with a conceptual framework for understanding embodied and performative politics, before considering each case in turn.

[954]Naga Day was broadcast live and uploaded to YouTube. Highland Dawn Media, *Naga Day 2018,* online video recording, YouTube, 10 January 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8884SKsEJgg last accessed 27 August 2023.

[955]Video clips of the NSW speeches and parts of the walk were uploaded online. For instance, Eastern Mirror, *Naga Solidarity Walk 2022 from Kohima to Senapati concludes,* online video recording, YouTube, 30 July 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53Q3RKOP0w8 last accessed 27 August 2023.

[956]As of June 2023, the Naga Day video has over 34,000 views on *YouTube.* NSW videos typically have more than 10,000 views.

[957]Nagaland Today, *75th Nagaland Independence Declaration celebration by NNC/FGN @ United States of North-east India,* online video recording, YouTube, 15 August 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipiliXceSh0&t=3312s last accessed 27 August 2023.

[958]Political sensitivities made it impossible to interview the organisers of the NID. Nevertheless, I was able to converse with members of the NNC/FGN at a celebratory 'feast' held after the formal celebrations.

2. Embodied and performative politics of Naga (inter)nationalism

Geographers engage notions of 'performance' and 'performativity' to analyse how, far from ontological pre-givens, territory, sovereignty, and statehood are normalised through reiterative and citational practices.[959] Whilst recognising this scholarship's potential to unsettle hitherto fixed ideas of subjectivity, in analysing embodied expressions of Naga nationhood, this chapter departs from this discursive treatment also to foreground dramaturgical understandings of performance. As McConnell argues, an exclusive focus on performativity risks side-lining the 'theatrical' and the 'deliberative' nature of much (geo)political practice.[960] McConnell instead draws theatrical understandings of performance into dialogue with Butler's understanding of performativity – an approach exemplified in Jeffrey Alexander's theory of 'cultural pragmatics'.[961] Alexander deconstructs social performances in terms of their 'background representations, scripts, actors, means of symbolic production, mise-en-scène, social and interpretive power, and audiences'.[962] This framing recognises the semantic codes influencing the meaning of a performance, whilst acknowledging the contingency created by the conjuncture of actors and audience(s) in a particular moment.

[959]Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). On performativity, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge: New York, 1990).

[960]McConnell, *Rehearsing,* p.36.

[961]ibid.

[962]Jeffrey Alexander, *Performance and Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011). p.108.

This chapter takes inspiration from this scholarship, particularly how recognised[963] and aspirant states[964] use performance to produce legitimacy. However, I also bring this work into dialogue with performance studies and public history scholarship which understands performance as a form of 'embodied memory', and a means of re- constructing the past within the present.[965] Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire,* unsettles the distinction between the archive – the domain of 'supposedly enduring materials' such as 'texts, documents, buildings, bones' – and the repertoire of 'embodied practice and corporeal knowledge', consisting of 'performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing'.[966] Taylor argues that performances function as 'acts of transfer' transmitting social knowledge, memory, and identity through reiterated behaviours. The author calls scholars to take performance – as 'a process', 'a praxis', 'a mode of transmission', 'an accomplishment', and 'a means of intervening in the world' – seriously as a means of generating historical meaning and making political claims.[967]

Crucially, in treating performance as an 'episteme', as both an 'object of analysis' and a 'way of knowing', I see Taylor's work as an invitation to analyse a broader range of Naga nationalist events *as* performance (or forms of embodied memory) even if they do not necessarily contain an artistic component.[968] Through the movement of bodies across 'space and time', all

[963]Alex Jeffrey, *The Improvised State: Sovereignty, Performance and Agency in Dayton Bosnia,* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013).

[964]Jeffrey, McConnell, and Wilson, Understanding legitimacy.

[965]Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). p.20. Also see Greg Dening, 'Performing on the Beaches of the Mind: An Essay', *History and Theory* 41 (2003) 1-24; Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[966]Taylor, *Archive,* pp.2-19.

[967]ibid*,* p.15.

[968]ibid, p.xvi.

three of the events described below 'enact and re-enact the past'.[969] In analysing these events as performance, I bring Taylor's work into conversation with geographical scholarship on nationalism. While geographers have considered the 'banal' means through which the nation is (re)produced, Taylor's analysis chimes with calls for a more 'eventful' analysis of nationalism, which recognises how 'far from being…continuous', nationhood is 'an intermittent and contingent phenomena'.[970] Moreover, in taking seriously 'history… in and as performance' and 'performance as an alternate (or complementary) form of archive', this chapter is an intervention into expanding the Naga nationalist archive beyond the imperial sources in Chapter 4.[971]

In what follows, I draw upon Taylor's understanding of performance as embodied memory to elucidate how archival practices inform Naga nationalist performances. I consider three areas of enquiry that Taylor's work – read alongside complementary scholarship by performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider – suggests are fruitful topics for examination. First is the capacity of the archive to *shape* embodied practice. The archive and the repertoire, Taylor argues, 'exist in a constant state of interaction'. Both 'excee[d] the limitations of the other', such that while archival materials shape embodied practice(s) they 'never truly dictate embodiment'.[972] How then does the archive of documentary sources introduced in Chapters Four and Five inform the repertoire of contemporary performances of Naga nationalism? Second, is the ability of the repertoire to

[969]Dean, Meerzon, and Prince, Introduction, p.6.

[970]Marco Antonsich, 'Nations and Nationalism' in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Geography*, ed. by John Agnew, Virginie Mamadouh, and Anna Secor (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), pp.297-310 (p.301).

[971]Katherine Johnson, 'Performing Pasts for Present Purposes: Reenactment as Embodied, Performative History', in Dean, Meerzon, and Prince, *History, Memory, Performance,* pp.36-52. (p.37).

[972]Taylor, *Archive,* p.21.

'*challenge*, even if it sometimes works alongside the archive.'[973] How do Naga actors use historical reenactment (or what Schneider describes as the act of 'performing again'[974]) to represent history according to contemporary concerns? Third is the potential of performances to transcend the binary between the archive and the repertoire. How do Naga nationalist efforts to embody the past trouble the distinction between the archive as the domain of permanence and stability and the repertoire as 'that which disappears'?[975] How does this shape efforts to figure alternative geopolitical futures?

In what follows, I examine each of these areas of enquiry in turn with reference to Naga Day, the NSW, and NID respectively. First, I consider how Naga Day (re)negotiated the historical distance between the 1929 Simon Commission Memorandum and the present. I then consider how the NSW refashioned the past as the basis for an alternative future. Finally, I explore how the NNC/FGN employed choreographed theatricality to return to the present the Nagas' historic claim to independence.

3. Performing reconciliation: Naga Day, 10 January 2018

On 10 January 2018, thousands of Nagas from India and Myanmar gathered in Kohima for the inaugural 'Naga Day'. Envisaged by the FNR as a means of fostering Naga unity, the event saw performances of songs, dances, speeches, prayers and poems, to emphasise a 'shared humanity of belonging' amongst Naga tribes.[976] For five hours, the participants shared food, warm words and,

[973]Dean, Meerzon, and Prince, *Introduction,* p.21; Taylor, *Archive,* pp.15-16.

[974]Schneider, *Performing Remains,* p.32

[975] Taylor, *Archive* p.xvii.

[976]Aheli Moitra, 'Foreword', in *Walking the Naga Day: Collection of Prayers, Songs & Speeches made on Naga Day,* ed. by FNR (Heritage Publishing House: Dimapur, 2018), pp.9-18 (p.9).

in coming together, sought to claim and prefigure the Nagas' 'inherent right'[977] to live together as 'ONE PEOPLE, without borders'.[978] For those unable to attend in person, Naga Day was live-streamed on YouTube, reflecting the organisers' desire to forge solidarities between Naga communities globally.[979] Two years later, it was via these means that I first watched a recording of the event from Oxford when, unable to travel due to Covid-19, I sought to engage with Naga political and social life from afar.

Amidst the celebrations, attendees publicly endorsed the Naga Day Declaration, a vision statement setting out participants' desire for a 'shared future' as 'a peoples and a nation without borders'.[980] The declaration pledged to 'affirm and uphold the Naga Hills Memorandum to the Simon Commission', issued 89 years earlier to the day.[981] Whilst the former document called for the Nagas to be left 'alone to determine [them]selves as in ancient times',[982] the Naga Day Declaration represented the 'twenty-first century version' of this early claim to self-determination.[983] In this section, I illustrate how the event's significance is located in this dialectic interaction between the *archive* – as represented by the Simon Commission Memorandum – and

[977]Extract from a speech given by FNR member L. Athiko Liriite on Naga Day, 10 January 2018. All of the Naga Day speeches were reproduced by in full by the FNR after the event in a pamphlet. Unless indicated otherwise, I cite from the printed version of the Naga Day speeches rather than the YouTube recording. L. Athiko Liriite, 'Outside the Box', in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp.78-79.

[978]Moitra, Foreword, p.11.

[979]Highland Dawn Media, *Naga Day 2018.*

[980]FNR, 'The Naga Day Declaration', in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR*,* pp.20-23 (p.20).

[981]ibid.

[982]Simon Commission Memorandum, 29 January 1929, BL/IOR/Q/13/1/1.

[983]Paul Pimomo, 'Naga Day 2018: A Crossroads for Nagas as a People', in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR*,* pp. 94-96 (p. 94).

the embodied *repertoire* of the Naga Day performance.[984] I briefly discuss the event's genesis before outlining how I have approached the analysis of Naga Day in this chapter.

As described in Chapter 3, the FNR was founded to reduce tensions between the NPGs. These activities saw the signing of three reconciliation agreements by NPG leaders.[985] Although instrumental in realising the FNR's primary aim – the cessation of interfactional violence – these agreements failed to achieve the organisation's secondary aim – the establishment of a single political organisation representing all Nagas. The FNR has since re-orientated their efforts toward reconciliation *within* Naga communities. They wrote in a pamphlet prior to Naga Day:

> Reconciliation of the Naga people has become essential for bringing unity among the Naga National Groups. Only when Nagas reconcile as a people can we become a moral and political force that will restore health and authority of the Naga National Groups to evolve together and take the Nagas forward.[986]

The importance of these comments is twofold. First, they reflect the organisation's conviction that Naga societal cohesion will nudge the NPGs towards their own reconciliation. Second, references to the 'authority of the Naga National Groups' illustrate the FNR's belief that outward-facing performances of Naga unity lend internal and external legitimacy to political leaders' claims that any Indo-Naga agreement must recognise the Nagas' right to live as 'ONE PEOPLE'.[987] Naga Day was one such performance, organised to revitalise the Indo-Naga negotiations. These talks have reached an impasse as a consequence of India's assertion that the territorial integration of Naga areas is impossible, and their decision to host parallel negotiations with different NPGs. For the

[984]Taylor, *Archive.*

[985]I introduced these agreements in Chapter 3.

[986]FNR, 'Public Statement', p. 31.

[987]Moitra, Foreword, p. 11.

FNR, reconciliation is constitutive of self-determination, such that through publicly overcoming internal differences Nagas can demonstrate their eligibility for this right and build a collective future.

In analysing Naga Day as performance, I do not suggest that the FNR's reconciliation efforts are insincere. As Breed writes with reference to Rwanda, 'the performance of reconciliation [has] the potential to heal communities and the potential for reconciliation [can] be found within the reiteration of performances'.[988] Echoing Cole's analysis of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I instead explore how the FNR's 'performative conventions, modes of address, and expressive embodiment' shaped Naga Day's political potency.[989] I elucidate these dynamics through three empirical snapshots which are paradigmatic of Naga Day's different elements, namely the opening ceremony, the Naga Day Declaration commitment ritual, and the event's speeches. I then reflect on Naga Day's legacy.

3.1 The 'Gathering of People'

> Naga Day begins with a bang. Konyak Naga, wearing tribal dress, offer an eight shot muzzle gun salute, followed by the repeated striking of two colossal brass gongs. As the gongs reverberate across the hitherto silent stadium, Prof. Rosemary Dzüvichu addresses the audience: *'As a sign of peace and reconciliation, can we request all of you to shake hands with your neighbour?*' After a pause, in which the audience greet one another, Dzüvichu offers further words of welcome, before calling forward Nagas from the 'east',

[988]Amanda Breed, *Performing the Nation: Theatre in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (London: Seagull, 2014). p. 98.

[989]Catherine Cole, 'Performance, Transitional Justice, and the Law: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007) 167-187. p. 168.

‘south’, ‘north’, and the ‘centr[e]’. As she speaks, the Naga Choir sing in honeyed tones – with each compass direction, two youths set forward adorned in traditional clothing from their region. With Dzüvichu concluded, the choir increases in volume and tempo, accompanied by an electric guitar and a drum, while a troupe of dancers leap, spin, and sway in time together. As the choir fervently sing their coda – ‘*Nagas without borders’* - – the dancers link hands and raise their fists. Even via video it is impossible not to be caught up in the energy of the proceedings.

Author’s field notes from online observations of Naga Day, held 10 January 2018 (Field notes compiled in June 2023).

The Naga Day opening ceremony – or the ‘Gathering of People’[990] – represented the first of numerous artistic performances during Naga Day. Unlike the NID celebrations which emphasised ‘timeless’ Naga culture, these performances showcased material commissioned for the event which drew on heterogeneous influences.

In addition to the Naga Choir’s rendition of ‘Nagas Without Borders’*,* Naga Day featured assorted poetry, rock, pop, and folk performances. These performances took as their subject societal healing and the Nagas’ geopolitical destiny. These performances' transmission of a message of unity was derived not merely from their content but also displays of synchronised embodied practices, including dance, chanting and harmonised singing. These, in addition to the hand-shaking ritual and the dancers’ linking of hands, provided a somatic representation of the FNR’s desire to collapse the physical and psychological boundaries between Naga communities.

[990]This is how this element of the proceedings was described in the Naga Day programme.

Moreover, many performances involved representatives from multiple tribal and/or church communities – a fact remarked upon by the compères. For Rovi, one of the event organisers, these collective performances transmitted a sense of commonality which superseded tribal identities:

> Naga Day is [saying]... you're not just an Angami, a Konyak…to be Naga, you're… upscaling your identity… but how does one become Naga?…you come together… [with] music and these material objects that create a sense of the nation. It's a very nationalistic thing… that's why they talk about shared humanity, there has to be something that brings the Nagas together. Because there isn't the linguistic sense. There is a national sense… but it's abstract. You have to convert it into something real …these give you that... the taste, you know, the food wrapped in leaves, the music. These things they feel like the Konyak [for instance] are not from different backgrounds. They are also Naga. We are also Naga.[991]

As Alexander writes, a performance's potency lies in its ability to 'fuse' or integrate societies, such that members – or audiences – psychologically identify with one another and with those on stage.[992] In this vein, the FNR distributed a pamphlet to Naga communities after the event which argued that the 'words and sounds' of Naga Day were a means of 'weav[ing] the speaker and listener' into 'building common action, into building community'.[993] Indeed, in his Naga Day address, FNR convener Rev. Wati Aier, claimed that the event aimed to 'consolidat[e] a culture of belonging' which will 'continue to spread influences that Nagas are without borders'.[994] Five years later, the extent to which Naga society continues to engage with these songs and dances is unclear. Some groups continue to perform their Naga Day songs, whilst the FNR has used *Nagas Without*

[991]Interview 8 October 2021.

[992]Alexander, *Performance and Power,* p. 27.

[993]Moitra, Foreword, p.12.

[994]Wati Aier, 'Calling Home: Naga Day, January 10 2018, in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp. 90-91. (p. 90).

Borders in subsequent advocacy.[995] More significant, perhaps, is the widespread circulation of the Naga Day performances on YouTube.[996]

For Rovi, however, the collective experience of watching these performances, communal prayer, and sharing food had intrinsic value, even if the attendees did not engage with the narrative content of the speeches and songs:

> The person who's just coming from the neighbourhood to have some good food, they may have nothing to do with any of [the Naga Day speeches or performances]. Some of the people have some good food… some people come for… a nice carnival… a chance for their children to play together, it's all as important.[997]

These sentiments were also echoed in media coverage of Naga Day. A 23-year-old interviewed by *The Morung Express* claimed the event built a 'sense of togetherness'.[998] Another young musician described how it was 'important to catch the spirit of this occasion – the spirit of hope,

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[995]For instance, the FNR used the composition to produce a Naga 'unity song' video in August 2020. KUKNALIM, *Nagas Without Borders: Naga Unity Song: FNR,* online video recording, YouTube, 13 August 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWxJXvb7CAc last accessed 27 August 2023.

[996] A sketch by *Dreamz Unlimited* highlighting hypocrisy and disunity in Naga society has received 254, 000 views; a compilation of Naga Day poems has received 16,000 views; and a video of the Nagaland Chamber Choir's performance has received 6,000 videos. The live stream of the full event has over 34,000 views. Highland Dawn Media, *Dreams Unlimited "This is zero point - This is our story"' on Naga Day,* online video recording, YouTube, 13 March 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNdsWqzqlhs; Highland Dawn Media, Naga Poems on Naga Day 2018, online video recording, YouTube, 3 July 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ck9xCVBITbw last accessed 27 August 2023; Naga Manu Production, *Nagaland Chamber Choir at Naga Day,* online video recording, YouTube, 10 January 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVKhSOfGZnM last accessed 27 August 2023.

[997]Interview 8 October 2021.

[998]NAGA DAY reignites aspiration to live as ONE PEOPLE, *The Morung Express* (online)*,* 11 January 2018.

reconciliation and triumph'.[999] Drawing upon the 'contact hypothesis', scholars acknowledge the transformative effects of personal encounters *in place* to facilitate reconciliation.[1000] This was significant in the Naga context, where distance and borders are barriers to intergroup contact.

However, Rovi's comments also point to the role of *affective atmospheres* in generating unity in a context where there is no shared Naga language, and many attendees could not follow the English language programme. Here I find resonance with Angharad Closs Stephens' work on affective atmospheres of nationalism and 'the role of "moody force fields" in the making and shaping of collective publics'.[1001] Closs Stephens argues how, far from being located in a 'single sovereign source', nationalism emanates from multiple 'constituencies'.[1002] At Naga Day, these shared affinities ('or the spirit of the occasion')[1003] were generated through being together in situ*;* the emotional and affective registers of the performances; children's laughter; the blasting of muzzle-guns; and the resonant echo of the opening gong. To paraphrase the musician quoted in *The Morung Express,* these feelings were 'caught' by attendees through 'affective transmission',[1004] and continue to resonate in new spatio-temporal settings via online circulations of Naga Day. Nevertheless, these affective elements made up just one component of Naga Day.

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[999]ibid.

[1000]Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp, 'A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (2016) 751-783.

[1001]Angharad Closs Stephens, 'The affective atmospheres of nationalism', *Cultural Geographies* 23 (2015) 181-198. p.182.

[1002]ibid.

[1003]NAGA DAY reignites aspiration.

[1004]Closs Stephens, Affective atmospheres, p.182.

3.2 ‘Committing’ the Naga Day Declaration

‘Naga Day belongs to ALL Nagas, not to ANY organisations. Kuknalim’. Slamming his hand on the podium, Visier Sanyü’s voice reaches a crescendo as he concludes his impassioned rendition of the Naga Day Declaration. Moments later, Rev. Wati Aier calls ‘*elders*’, ‘*student leaders*’, and ‘*women leaders*’ from all Naga regions to the front, and invites the audience to stand and ‘*give a big hand*’ to endorse the declaration. Next, the Naga Choir, dressed in resplendent yellow and black smocks, sing their anthem: '*Kuknalim*' (‘Victory to the Land’). Aier implores the audience to take heed of song’s message: ‘Nagaland*, the land of my birth and my right/ Kuknalim, the land of my birth and my right/ Let us walk in a circle of unbroken chain of love/ We are one — forever Kuknalim’.* [1005] As the song reaches its soaring apex, an enormous Naga flag is unfurled behind the choir, who sway in time with the music. The music finished, Aier calls attendees to engage in ‘*mass prayer*’ to ‘*commit the declaration*’ to God. The audience – their heads bowed – pray together led by a local preacher. In a persistent mellifluous voice he repeatedly calls for divine imprimatur to the day’s proceedings – ‘*we pray the lord place upon on declaration, place upon our leaders, place our people who are gathered together here’.*

Author’s field notes from online observations of Naga Day, held 10 January 2018.

(field notes compiled in June 2023)

[1005]Here the Nagaland Chamber choir use ‘Nagaland’ to refer to the broader Naga homeland across India and Myanmar.

The archive and the repertoire, Taylor argues, work 'in tandem', such that 'innumerable practices in most literate societies require both an archival and an embodied dimension'.[1006] This was evident from the FNR's ritualistic endorsement of the Naga Day Declaration. This four-page document sets out (in English) the FNR's vision for the Nagas' political future and the steps to achieve it under four subheadings: 'Naga Reconciliation', 'Political Struggle', 'Nation Building' and 'Naga Day'. [1007] It calls upon the governments of India and Myanmar to apologise for historic human right's violations, end the militarisation of Naga lands, and respect Naga self-determination without borders. Naga publics are urged to reconcile, engage in nation building according to 'common values' and 'Indigenous wisdom', and 'strive toward rapprochement' with regional neighbours.[1008] The document was distributed on Naga Day and circulated in local media and online.

As Amal Jamal argues with regards to the 'future vision documents' of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel, the transformational power of such 'vision documents' in exerting moral, legal, and political influence is enhanced when the text is authored by a 'collective with moral and symbolic power, even if the collective is not elected' or formally representative.[1009] This analysis resonates with the FNR, who derive their legitimacy within Naga society from religious and moral leadership, rather than electoral politics. Nevertheless, the political potency of the Naga Day Declaration was amplified *both* by the performative utterances and ceremony underpinning its endorsement, *and* by the historical relationship between Naga Day and the Simon Commission Memorandum.[1010] I consider each in turn.

[1006]Taylor, *Archive,* p.21.

[1007]FNR, 'The Naga Day Declaration', in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp.20-23.

[1008]ibid, pp.22-23.

[1009]Jamal, *Arab Minority Nationalism,* p.167.

[1010]Taylor, *Archive,* p.21.

First, the snapshot from my online observation above illustrates how the FNR framed Naga Day as a multi-scalar appeal to authority, one which inextricably blended the national, the political, and the sacred. The choreographed theatricality of the declaration's 'commit[ment]' ritual – involving a preacher, a community, and a promise, sealed or executed through prayer and witnessed by God – is redolent of the Mosaic Covenant of the Old Testament in which God (mediated by Moses) pledged the Israelites the promised land subject to their adherence to the Ten Commandments.[1011] It is likely that the echoes between the Naga Day Declaration and this Biblical covenant legitimised the former in attendees' eyes, making the promises *feel* more sacrosanct. Calls for God to 'place' his blessing upon the Nagas and their land further speak to nationalists' belief in the divine providence of their claim.

Second, however, the embodied significance of this element of Naga Day and the event as a whole was derived from its historical resonances with the Naga Club's submission of the Simon Commission Memorandum, or – in Taylor's terms – from the relationship between the repertoire and the archive.[1012] The use of the Simon Commission Memorandum to provide historical legitimacy to the Naga Day Declaration speaks to activists' efforts to return to an earlier stage of the Naga struggle, before their future was foreclosed by calls for statehood. In foregrounding the 'first written document to articulate the Naga dream', the FNR eschewed the 1951 plebiscite as the basis for their aspirations.[1013] Explaining this decision, Akai described how the latter document – associated as it is with Naga statehood – was 'more at the political level', whilst Naga Day was

[1011]Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Crossway: Illinois, 2018).

[1012]Taylor, *Archive.*

[1013]Moitra, Foreword, p.11.

about reaffirming the Nagas' collective desire to be together.[1014] Importantly, whilst Naga Day speakers discursively invoked the Memorandum throughout their speeches, by gathering together Nagas from different tribes to demand self-determination, the declaration's 'commit[ment]' ritual was redolent of how the Naga Club gathered together, for the first time, representatives of different Naga tribes in Kohima to demand collective political rights. This was what Taylor terms an 'act of transfer': an embodied means of closing the distance between 1929 and the present and demonstrate the endurance of the Nagas' claim to self-determination.[1015] Through Naga Day, the FNR transmitted the archival 'memory', 'social-knowledge', and 'collective identity' derived from the Simon Commission Memorandum to contemporary audiences.[1016] The embodied memory of the Naga Day Declaration, however, was also transmitted to attendees through a series of religious speeches.

[1014]Interview 22 September 2021.

[1015]Taylor, *Archive,* p.32.

[1016]ibid. p.2.

3.3 The Naga Day Speeches

> 'Niketu Iralu is a prominent intellectual and a preacher of peace', proclaims the compère, as the renowned peace activist and FNR member steps up to the podium. After thanking the chair, Iralu acknowledges the people of Kohima Village, '*on whose ancestral land we are on*.' Speaking slowly from a script, Iralu begins his speech entitled: 'Why Naga Day?' by reflecting on the spirited discussion Naga Day has generated. Iralu speaks for nine minutes. His address discusses the Simon Commission, African folk tales, and societal corruption. At its core: a message for Nagas to heal '*wounded relationships*' within society according to God's teaching. The camera pans across the audience, seated in rows of plastic chairs in front of the stage. Most are facing Iralu, but some are looking down into their laps, struggling to concentrate against the morning sun.
>
> **Author's field notes from online observations of Naga Day, 10 January 2018.**[1017]

Niketu Iralu's was the first of many speeches made on Naga Day. This highly stage-managed element of the proceedings was characteristic of nationalist celebrations across South Asia. The speakers' use of moral and religious registers was, however, atypical. As this snapshot illustrates, the speakers' cadence, intonation, gestures, and embodied expression more closely resembled a theological oration than a political rally. Speakers suffused their language with biblical references to implore attendees to work towards a collective future.

These addresses were extremely *affective*. In a compelling appeal to emotion, Dr. Sipong Chingmak Chang described his experiences as a social worker in the Naga areas of Burma; while L. Athikho Liriite described his dream of building a nation 'where every Naga can spread one's

[1017]These field notes were compiled in June 2023.

wings freely to reach out to the whole world'.[1018] Others used storytelling to enliven their accounts. Sensing a drop in energy after lunch, Dr Kethoser Kevichusa embraced the innate theatricality of the stage by prefacing his speech with an apocryphal tale. Following a sleepless night, a pastor had begged his congregation for permission to preach seated. The congregation had acquiesced on the basis that they, also exhausted, be permitted to listen to the pastor lying down. 'So you too can lie down and listen', Kevichusa told the audience, to widespread laughter.[1019] Having attracted their attention, Kevichusa delivered a lively address, which took as its structure the tripartite form of a declarative church sermon, characterised first by elucidating a particular teaching (namely Ancient Greek citizenship models); second by a distilling the teaching's core message; and finally, by demonstrating the teaching's present utility. [1020]

As to the speeches' substantive content, like Iralu, speakers adopted both expository and exhortative modes of address to articulate a script of Naga nationhood. This script, however, departed from the singular conception of nationhood typically proffered by Naga nationalists. First, speakers brought hitherto 'demotic' articulations of Naga identity, which 'differentiate strongly between tribes, clans, and villages' into the open.[1021] The FNR eschewed primordialist readings of Naga nationhood to acknowledge publicly how the ossification of tribal identities had forestalled twentieth-century nation-building efforts.[1022] Second, however, speakers dismissed claims that the

[1018]Accounts of both these speeches are based on the Naga Day YouTube video. Highland Dawn Media, *Naga Day 2018.*

[1019]This account of Kevichusa's speech is based on the Naga Day YouTube video. Highland Dawn Media, *Naga Day 2018.*

[1020]Kenton Anderson, *Choosing to Preach: A Comprehensive Introduction to Sermon Options and Structures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006)

[1021]Wouters, *Shadows,* p.57.

[1022]Aier, Introducing Naga Day, p.3

constructed nature of a pan-Naga identity was evidence of its fragility. The FNR instead embraced the constructedness of the Naga nation as testament to its indomitable spirit. Beyond anything else the Naga nation was defined by its member's aspiration to be together.[1023] Naga Day was a means to 'shed….individualistic tribal isolationism' and 'formulat[e] a flexible, inclusive, and common identity as a people' based on shared values.[1024] This was not a 'bourgeois nationalism', which defined the Nagas in terms of difference to India, but an 'outward looking' form of community building.[1025] Finally, the FNR called for the removal of 'tribe' – associated as it is with primitivism and the Indian postcolonial state – from the Nagas' collective vocabulary. Instead, the organisation acknowledged the Nagas' *multinational* character.[1026]

Throughout, speakers implored attendees to forgive one other for past 'undesirable conduct'. Nevertheless, speakers stringently avoided discussing specifics of purported harms resulting from the actions of the NPGs or Naga publics. Unlike other efforts toward transitional justice in situations of historic trauma, Naga Day did not leave space for victim testimony nor expositions of specific crimes. Far from a means to 'assimilate traumatic history into public memory', speeches invoked historic wrongs only obliquely.[1027] The reasons for this, I suggest, are twofold. First, reflecting the FNR's church roots, speakers espoused a Christian ethic of forgiveness which teaches against resentment, practising forgiveness in terms of compassion and absolution. The former asks a victim to recognise humanity amongst sinners. The latter teaches that, once a

[1023]Temsula Ao 'Naga Day' in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp.38-39.

[1024]ibid, p.39. Also see L Adani, 'Yes to 'Nagas Without Borders', in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp.50-51.

[1025]Sharp, Margins, p.24.

[1026]Visier Sanyü, 'Naga: A nation of Peoples' in *Naga Day*, ed. by FNR, pp.7-12 (p.7). Also see Aier, Calling Home; FNR, Naga Day Declaration.

[1027]Cole, Performance and Justice, p.168.

sinner has repented, the victim must forgive unconditionally.[1028] However, rather than identify specific perpetrators and victims of the Indo-Naga conflict, Naga Day speeches espoused a conception of collective sin, in which *all* Nagas are equally responsible for societal disunity. The Naga Day Prayer, for instance, delivered by Baptist leader Rev. Y. Chingang Konyak, asked God to forgive attendees for their 'undesirable conduct' towards one another, and called upon the Nagas as a 'chosen people' to 'confess [their] sins which have worked against unity'.[1029] Rather than a mechanism to apportion blame, Naga Day was a means of building a shared future based on the recognition of historic c*ollective* wrongs.

Second, given that Naga Day was a performative demonstration of Naga eligibility for collective political rights, the FNR strategically avoided displays of tension, instead emphasising public expressions of unity. This was apparent from the decision to use the Naga Day Declaration to issue a collective, public apology, rather than facilitate a full apology-forgiveness cycle.[1030] The declaration's first article read:

> As Nagas we say 'Sorry' to each other for the hurts we have caused to one another – in words, attitudes and actions – thus provoking the worst in each other and damaging ourselves. We admit our failure for always demanding others to change, without first realizing the need to change ourselves.[1031]

The FNR's didactic approach to reconciliation was also evident in their decision to publish two pamphlets before and after Naga Day, numbering 80 and 104 pages respectively. Both were

[1028]Kevichusa, *Forgiveness and Politics*.

[1029]Y. Chingang Konyak, 'The Naga Day Prayer', in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR*,* pp.18-19. (p.19).

[1030]On the role of apology-forgiveness cycles in formal reconciliation processes, see Cole, Performance and Justice; Breed, *Performing the Nation.*

[1031]FNR, The Naga Day Declaration, p.20.

distributed amongst churches, civil society bodies, and online.[1032] The former set out the event's rationale, along with essays and poems outlining the FNR's conception of Naga nationhood.[1033] The latter published the Naga Day speeches, prayers, and songs.[1034] Reflecting the control that media organisations have over the 'symbolic distribution' of a given performance and its acceptance by a wider political community,[1035] the FNR published the Naga Day speeches in local media outlets. Jamir reflected on these texts' significance:

> Now there are [Naga Day] documents and written works… all the young people are reading, so even Naga Day became a booklet… If you combine the speeches and the declaration and the statements it will become a historical document. So that will become the legacy and that just shows how a people are doing. It's like your bank account. It's like a person. It's like a nation. People grow and… they learn from the mistakes… they go one step ahead and one step back, but they grow… these are signs of a growing people, a growing nation. Becoming stronger with each step.[1036]

The significance of Jamir's comments are twofold. First, his aspiration that the Naga Day Declaration become a 'historical document' reflects the importance of archival practices to the crafting of Naga (inter)nationalist claims. As I have illustrated, nationalists continually invoke canonical English language documents as evidence of the historical legitimacy of the Naga claim to nationhood and to naturalise particular political-territorial configurations.[1037] As Todd Shepard argues, archives have long existed 'to do things other than simply contain information-rich

[1032]NAGA DAY: A Book for Naga Reconciliation launched, *The Morung Express* (online)*,* 9 December 2017.

[1033]*Naga Day*, ed. by FNR.

[1034]*Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR.

[1035]Alexander, *Performance and Power,* p.7.

[1036]Interview 20 August 2022.

[1037]For instance, see FGN, *Platinum Souvenir.*

documents'. Instead archives help to 'constitute a state, insofar as… [they] offer proof that it is an emanation of its peoples'.[1038] In scripting a relationship between the health of the nation and the size, form, and content of this archive, Jamir's words illustrate a belief in a progressive theory of Naga history, one in which the Nagas' past, as revealed through its archive, though 'step[s] back[ward]', has contributed to the inevitable growth in Naga political maturity. Secondly, Jamir's comments reflect how print/digital media continue to be important nation-building tools *within* Naga communities, used by the FNR to circulate their message beyond Kohima.[1039] The FNR thus not only performed Naga nationhood and reconciliation, but published the play's script after the show for others to read.

3.4 Post-Naga Day

The snapshots above illustrate how Naga Day blurred the boundaries between 'formal' and 'everyday' spaces of reconciliation.[1040] On the one hand, the collective endorsement of the Naga Day Declaration and didactic modes of nation-building – both laden with religious sentiment – promoted an external image of Naga unity. On the other hand, through cultural performances and the generation of affective atmospheres of nationalism, the FNR sought to realise 'instrumental reconciliation', focused less on the recognition of past wrongs, and more on building trust through

[1038]Tod Shepard, '"Of Sovereignty": Disputed Archives, "Wholly Modern" Archives, and the Post-Decolonization French and Algerian Republics, 1962-2012', *The American Historical Review* 120 (2015) 869-883. p.870.

[1039]Longkumer, Kingdom.

[1040]Elly Harrowell, 'Towards a spatialised understanding of reconciliation' *Area* 50 (2018) 240-247. pp.244-245.

shared somatic experience.[1041] Thus, to paraphrase Hughes' discussion of international tribunals, the FNR understood that reconciliation must not only take place, but *be seen* to take place to demonstrate the Nagas' eligibility for collective self-determination.[1042]

Thus, the FNR did not simply create a space where reconciliation could take place; they used the reconciliation process to transform broader geopolitical imaginaries. By demonstrating the desirability of and possibility for relations of Naga peaceful co-existence, the FNR refuted suggestions that Nagas are too divided to live together. This project resonates with Megoran's 'Pacific Geopolitics' which explains how 'ways of thinking geographically' can promote 'peaceful and mutually enriching co-instance'.[1043] Naga Day symbolically prefigured the FNR's ambition for the Nagas to live as 'One People, Without Borders'. Through constructing both internal and external legitimacy for their geopolitical vision, the event and the reconciliation process which underpinned it was therefore both a claim *to* and articulation *of* self-determination.

How successful was Naga Day in achieving these aims? Performances are successful when audiences *believe* what they see and hear.[1044] In December 2017, Wati Aier described how, in bringing together Nagas in the spirit of unity, forgiveness, and healing, Naga Day would be 'history being made in the present'.[1045] Similarly, Akai argued that Naga Day was intended to be as

[1041]Arie Nadler and Nurit Shnabel, 'Intergroup reconciliation: Instrumental and socio-economic processes and the needs based model', *European Review of Social Psychology* 26 (2015) 93-125.

[1042]Rachel Hughes, 'Ordinary theatre and extraordinary law at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33 (2015) 714–731. p.714. Also see Alex Jeffrey, 'The political geographies of transitional justice', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (2011) 344–59.

[1043]Nick Megoran, 'Towards a geography of peace: pacific geopolitics and evangelical Christian Crusade apologies', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35 (2010) 382-398, p.383.

[1044]Alexander, *Performance and Power,* p.103.

[1045]Naga Day: A Book for Naga Reconciliation Launched.

significant as the 1947 independence declaration and the 1951 plebiscite and – like both of these events – would be commemorated annually.[1046] Early regional news coverage was favourable.[1047] In interviews, however, FNR members identified four factors limiting their ability to convince audiences of the verisimilitude of their message. First, Jamir maintained that societal complacency had prevented Naga Day from realising its potential.[1048] He argued that the stasis brought about first by the Indo-Naga ceasefire and later by the FNR's 'Covenant of Reconciliation' meant that the 'Naga issue' was no longer publicly salient. The FNR were thus victims of their own success. Second, FNR leaders struggled to balance the competing interests of the NPGs, the GON, and other civil society groups.[1049] One NPG representing Nagas outside of Nagaland refused to participate following a rumour that the event was 'engineered by the Indian state'.[1050] Third, others questioned the desirability of efforts to reconcile Naga society. Paul, a former FNR member, described resigning from the organisation in 2017:

> South Africa is the most successful story of reconciliation in the world, but there is no absolute reconciliation… they know it will be futile to go beyond a certain limit. I said [to the FNR]: Nagas have gone to an extent beyond which they should go before it becomes counterproductive.[1051]

[1046]Interview 22 September 2021.

[1047]For instance, see Call for right to self-determination, Naga homeland, *The Naga Republic* (online), 12 January 2018.

[1048]Interview 20 August 2022.

[1049]M. Sashi Jamir, Post Covenant of Reconciliation: What is the goal of Forum for Naga Reconciliation, *The Naga Republic* (online), 24 June 2019

[1050]Interview 20 August 2022; Interview 22 August 2022.

[1051]Interview 22 August 2022.

Paul thus believed that the FNR lacked legitimacy to expand their reconciliation programme, arguing that this risked inflaming societal tensions. Indeed, the FNR has been accused of contributing to a mushrooming in the number of NPGs by ending interactional violence and emboldening new political groups to operate without fear of retaliation.[1052] Fourth, Naga leaders decried the lack of attention paid to Naga Day both by media *outside* of the region,[1053] and by political leaders and state administrators, who were more interested in the Hornbill Festival and displays of 'traditional' Naga culture which don't 'unsettle' the political order.[1054] This lack of visibility undermined the FNR's attempts to gain recognition for the Nagas' claim to self-determination.

These difficulties led Aier, in January 2023, to describe Naga Day as just one in a long line of 'missed opportunities'.[1055] The FNR convener told *The Morung Express* that Naga Day had 'failed to unite the Nagas as "One People"'.[1056] Nevertheless, Aier's words perhaps overlook the intrinsic value of Naga Day for many of those I interviewed. Moreover, whilst Naga Day may not have lived up to Aier's lofty aspirations, the event has become a model for other more participatory displays of pan-Naga unity – including the NSW.

In sum, the above discussion illustrates how Naga Day constituted an effort by the FNR to mediate between the archive and the repertoire — an embodied means of transmitting historical knowledge and the sentiment of the Simon Commission Memorandum as the basis for

[1052]Interview 22 August 2022.

[1053]Pimomo, A Crossroads for Nagas as a People, p.96.

[1054]Xonzoi (Sanjay) Barbora. 'Reflections on Naga Day', in *Walking the Naga Day,* ed. by FNR, pp.97-98 (p.98).

[1055]Remembering Naga Day: A missed opportunity for the Nagas, says Rev Dr Wati Aier, *The Morung Express* (online)*,* 10 January 2023.

[1056]ibid.

contemporary claims to reconciliation and self-determination. As Taylor argues, while the archive can shape embodied practice and close the distance between the past and the present, the repertoire also has the 'capacity to *challenge*…the archive'.[1057] With this in mind, I turn to consider how the NSW used the *repertoire* to exceed the *archive* and refashion the past to make tangible an alternative future. While the FNR used an in-situ process of reconciliation to perform the Nagas' geographical imaginary of being 'One People', in the next section I consider how the GNF used mobility to perform Naga territory and materialise a unified Naga homeland across borders.

4. Performing territory: the Naga Solidarity Walk, 28-29 July 2022

> Let me then restate what the Naga Solidarity Walk is about… First, it is a walk for peace and transformative change. What we did yesterday and today was a hopeful, physical enactment of Naga unity, for an undivided homeland across the artificial barriers and boundaries put in our way by the powers that be. Second… the Naga Solidarity Walk is not against other people. It is not anti-Indian, it is not anti-Myanmarese. It is pro-Naga rights of self-determination and for peace in our homeland. Third, we hope this positive community based action will grow into a burgeoning journey for a brighter future for all Nagas. We invite every Naga to proudly exercise your right to walk in your God given homeland no matter what anyone may say to the contrary.
>
> **Speech by Professor Rosemary Dzüvichu, GNF Co-Convener, to the Naga Solidarity Walk, Tahamzan, Senapati, 29 July 2022**.[1058]

For the NSW participants, Rosemary Dzüvichu's valedictory speech marked the culmination of two days of walking. 36 hours earlier, attendees had gathered in Kohima for a 'flag off' ceremony. After a blessing from a local minister, Visier Sanyü addressed the crowd: 'all of you, who have

[1057]Dean, Meerzon, and Prince, *Introduction,* p.21; Taylor, *Archive,* pp.15-16.

[1058]I transcribed this speech based on the video of the NSW at Eastern Mirror; *Naga Solidarity Walk concludes.*

come here, are making history… your grand[children]... will say my grand[parents]... took part in the walk for Naga unity, for Naga solidarity'.[1059] Next, Kevitho Kera (the NSW convener) took his turn at the dais. This was to be a peaceful and loving march, he proclaimed; 'Do not provoke any soldiers…[or] police'.[1060] From Kohima, the crowd followed the National Highway south, through the Mao Gate marking the boundary between Nagaland and Manipur, and toward Maram Village. Here, they spent the night, resuming their journey toward Senapati the following morning. As they walked, the number of participants grew into their thousands, sustained by food, water, and supportive words proffered along the route.[1061] At Senapati, the walkers heard 'solidarity messages' from civil society organisations from Assam, Manipur, and Myanmar. The speakers implored India to recognise the 'Naga people's right to live together in [their] ancestral homeland'.[1062]

Solidarity walks are a recognised form of advocacy within South Asia – an acknowledged means of 'embodying resistance' through which activists show dissent, reclaim public space, and achieve visibility at multiple scales.[1063] The ubiquity and potency of walking as activism within India inevitably informed the GNF's decision to organise the NSW. Here, however, I suggest that what made the NSW distinct was how, through walking, the GNF performed a *cross-border* territorial claim. First, through disrupting the 'political-administrative (b)ordering' of the Indian

[1059]NLTV, *'NAGA SOLIDARITY WALK' - THE WALK FOR 'ONE PEOPLE ONE DESTINY',* online video recording, YouTube, 28 July 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euhw4AA9AIY last accessed 27 August 2023.

[1060]ibid.

[1061]Interview 20 August 2022.

[1062]Eastern Mirror, *Solidarity Walk concludes.*

[1063]Lochan, Embodied politics, p.133. Also see Mohamed Junaid, 'Counter-maps of the ordinary: occupation, subjectivity, and walking under curfew in Kashmir', *Identities*, 27 (2020) 302-320.

state.[1064] Second, through materially re-enacting Naga histories of movement and migration. Third, through articulating alternative modes of political belonging.[1065] In doing so, I show how the GNF used the repertoire to *challenge* the archive and refashion the past as the basis for an alternative future.

Turning to the first of these — Dzüvichu's speech illustrates how the GNF used walking to refuse the division of the Naga homeland. Walking enacted the embodied connections between Naga areas *within* and *across* Nagaland and Manipur, materialising an imaginative geography in which these spaces are a single political-territorial unit. Rather than a static or singular conception of territory, however, this was one defined by fluidity, multiplicity, and dynamism.[1066] In a press statement, the GNF acknowledged that participants were to pass through 'Angami, Mao, Maram, and Poumai territories', which together constitute a small part of the collective Naga homeland:

> [Our ancestors] walked the length and breadth of their respective territories for hundreds of years if not millennia… then European colonialism and modernity arrived in these parts. And with that, colonial Britain and postcolonial India and Burma split up the Naga homeland for control of our lands and ancestors.[1067]

[1064]Sanan Moradi, 'Producing Territory, Resisting the State: Embodiment, Discourse, and Symbolism in Street Demonstrations in Iranian Kurdistan', *Geopolitics*, DOI https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2022.2160711

[1065]Rafi Youatt, 'Walking the International', *International Political Sociology* 16 (2022) 1-18. p.3.

[1066]On territory as discursive, performed, and embodied see Sara Smith, Nathan Swanson, Banu Gökariksel, 'Territory, bodies and borders', *Area* 48 (2016) 258–61; Painter, 'Rethinking Territory', *Antipode* 42 (2010) 1090-1118.

[1067]This message was widely circulated on Facebook. See The Nagas*, Naga Solidarity Walk, 2022, organised under the Theme "One People, One Destiny",* Facebook, 14 June 2022, https://www.facebook.com/102308958234135/posts/549081103556916/ last accessed 27 August 2023.

The GNF thus understood Naga tribal territory as produced relationally through the maintenance of embodied connections between body and place *and* via the materialisation of interrelations between Naga tribes across space. Walking emerges as a means through which Naga actors enable(d) these territorial networks. Rano – a GNF member – argued that, by building connections between Nagas in the State of Nagaland and in Manipur, the NSW would counter the prevailing feeling amongst the former that the Indo-Naga agreement should apply exclusively to them:

> The Naga Solidarity Walk… was at the height of the dispute… amongst the Naga people… here in Nagaland… who feel that… any accord… should be about Nagas of Nagaland… which for the GNF is something… we do not agree upon, because it is a fact that we have Nagas across these state borders. And no matter where they are, they are Nagas. We wanted to give a message… to the Government of India and… the world, but also to the Nagas themselves, especially the ones who are living in comfort here in Nagaland, that our people are here you know, and no matter where we are, we are one people… we… have a common destiny, which is a common homeland.[1068]

The NSW was thus a relational strategy in which the GNF claimed and prefigured these alternative spatialities. The NSW also, by disregarding inter-/intra-state borders, challenged homogenising Indian state territoriality which has publicly identified the region as a security threat. As a GNF press-statement observed, militarisation remained a physical and metaphorical 'roadblock' to the unification of the Naga homeland.[1069]

The potency of collective walking as mode of international advocacy in South Asia is a legacy of Gandhi's 1930 'Salt March'. That act of civil disobedience saw the nationalist leader walk from Ahmedabad to the Arabian Sea Coast in opposition to a British salt tax. For Gandhi,

[1068]Interview 25 August 2022.

[1069]The Nagas*, Naga Solidarity Walk.*

the Salt March brought out into the open the excesses of British colonial rule as a counterpoint to a principled non-violence.[1070] A similar logic was evident in the GNF's anticipation of violent encounters with military officials at the Nagaland-Manipur border. As Visier Sanyü informed the 'flag off' ceremony, whilst the Nagas' ancestors had 'fought to defend our land with guns', violence 'has an expiry date'.[1071] Participants were urged to avoid public confrontation with security officials.[1072] Yet, as Rano argued, these antagonistic encounters never materialised:

> There was no sign of a single Indian military personnel… from Kohima to Senapati… the Nagaland state government has… been waiting for a very hasty peace accord only for Nagaland… they were very sceptical about the success of the walk…some of the top administrative guys here are Indians… non-Nagas, they were actually spreading the news around that this GNF they are going to be stopped at the border… But when we crossed the border of Manipur, there was no one… no armed guards… And I think this is a very strong point, when it is a people's movement, when there are people on the rise… walking for peace and recognition of their rights as a people and having a common destiny… It was taken very seriously.[1073]

Rano's words thus speak to how the *lack* of military personnel was taken by the GNF as tacit recognition of the Nagas' right to a unified homeland and as evidence of the GNF's success in reaching audiences of state officials.

Second, walking was a means of re-enacting histories of Naga movement and migration. A GNF press statement noted:

[1070]Youatt, Walking, p. 9.

[1071]NLTV, *Naga Solidarity Walk.*

[1072]Eastern Mirror, *Solidarity Walk concludes.*

[1073]Interview 25 August 2022.

> Nagas of the 21st century need to step into the soles of our ancestors and walk the length and breadth of the Naga homeland across the artificial boundaries that are dividing us.[1074]

The 'soles of our ancestors' is likely an allusion to the origin and migration myths which animate Naga nationalists. Such narratives describe the Nagas as an 'ancient race', who moved on foot from Mongolia, through Southeast Asia, before arriving in their present location several millennia ago.[1075] Through collective walking, the GNF thus sought to remake NSW participants as both '*subjects* and *agents* of history'.[1076]

On the one hand, in representing the NSW as a way for participants to follow (literally) in the footsteps of their ancient ancestors, walking generated amongst participants what Bonilla terms a sense of 'historical intimacy' – a 'personal' and 'direct' connection to the past, generated through experiential and embodied practice.[1077] This first-hand knowledge of history also revealed itself in other ways. Participants were encouraged to bring their 'lunch in a banana leaf', recreating the public meetings of 'ancient times'.[1078] For the GNF, the NSW was thus not only a means to 'honour the [Nagas'] ancestors', but a way of scripting and reenacting a collective history for the Nagas which would underpin efforts to materialise a shared future.[1079]

On the other hand, GNF members also likened the NSW to two more recent examples of Naga walking. First, Phizo's walk across the Naga Hills to canvas support for the Naga plebiscite.

[1074]The Nagas*, Naga Solidarity Walk.*

[1075]Wettstein, Naga Myths, p.219.

[1076]Yarimar Bonilla, 'The Past is Made by Walking: Labor Activism and Historical Production in Postcolonial Guadeloupe', *Cultural Anthropology* 26 (2011) 313-339. p.331. Also see Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

[1077]Bonilla, Walking, p.314

[1078]Interview 20 August 2022.

[1079]ibid.

As Jamir noted: 'the first solidarity walk was by Phizo, and we [the GNF] were the second one'.[1080] Second, the walks of NNC and NSCN leaders in the 1970s and 1980s to seek aid from China.[1081] In enfolding stories of Naga ancestral migration with recent tales of nationalist heroics, walking becomes an embodied thread connecting (and collapsing) the Nagas' near and distant past in a teleological journey toward collective emancipation. As Visier Sanyü's comments to the flag off ceremony illustrate, the GNF recast NSW attendees as the heirs to this millennia-long struggle, who would 'mak[e] history' by 'walk[ing] a common journey to unite the Nagas' and 'defend' their 'history and land'.[1082]

Importantly, in narrating the Nagas' collective history, GNF members were not motivated by historical 'accuracy' – it is unlikely, for instance, that Phizo travelled to Manipur, whilst Naga origin stories are fiercely contested by scholars and activists.[1083] However, far from an accidental error, I suggest that it was in these silences and in the slippage between the archive and the repertoire that the NSW's political potency was located. Writing in a similar vein to Taylor, Rebecca Schneider describes how historical reenactment (or the act of performing 'again') transplants the past to the present, offering opportunities to re-present history according to contemporary concerns.[1084] It is through moments of deviation from a narrativized past, Schneider argues – via the introduction of anachronisms and (un)intended errors – that re-enactors and their

[1080]Ibid.

[1081]Interview 25 August 2022. NNC and NSCN cadres walked to China in the 1970s and 80s to collect arms. For further discussion see Gordon P. Means, 'Cease-Fire Politics in Nagaland', *Asian Survey* 11 (1971) 1005-1028.

[1082]NLTV, Naga Solidarity Walk.

[1083]Wettstein, Naga Myths.

[1084]Schneider, *Performing Remains,* p.6.

audiences come to understand the meaning of history.[1085] Far from being undermined by a departure from the archive, authenticity – or the possibility of 'knowing' a 'true' or 'real' past – can be enhanced through difference and incongruity.[1086] As a form of 'embodied memory', the NSW was not merely a means of 'actuali[sing]' the 'real' past within the present.[1087] Instead, through the re-enactment of history, the GNF refashioned the past as the basis for an alternative future.

Finally, in so far as the walk produced a territorial imaginary of an integrated Naga homeland, it also refashioned participants political subjectivities. Like Naga Day, a gathering of large numbers of Nagas was a powerful visual demonstration of the Nagas' claim to be 'one people'. However, unlike Naga Day, the NSW was highly participatory. Jamir claimed:

> We need to symbolise, show that we want unity. We have… one destiny, regardless of the Framework Agreement. Whatever the solution comes, we need to stay as one people… So we said… we'll have a solidarity walk. The theme will be one people, one destiny.[1088]

In interviews, GNF members recognised that divisions between geographically dispersed Naga communities threatened Naga claims to peoplehood. The NSW was thus a means of forging cross border solidarities between Nagas of Nagaland and Manipur. Rano described the GNF's decision to end the walk in Senapati:

> We said, this is the time that we should walk to [the Manipur] side, see their land, build up a better understanding. And let our youngsters also from here walk, our people, leaders

[1085]ibid*,* pp.42-45.

[1086]ibid, pp.42-45.

[1087]Dean, Meerzon, and Prince, Introduction*,* p.6.

[1088]Interview 20 August 2022.

> also walk, and feel that they're like us also, no matter where they live. And it's worked, and I think that is the point [of the walk].[1089]

The NSW was thus a means of producing the 'very collective public it wanted to assume'.[1090] Yet, whilst Naga Day sought to achieve this through in situ reconciliation, the GNF saw *movement* as integral to this practice. The organisation sought to harness the 'collective effervescence' of walking – how moving together, propelled only by your own feet, can be generative of a sense of common identity, collectivity, and shared purpose.[1091] This potentiality was evident in Jamir's reflections on the walk's progression:

> People were… so excited about the idea of one people, one destiny, unity… So it became larger, and larger… almost … out of control… when we started in Kohima, a few hundred people walked from one village to another… then we had the first stop in one village for breakfast, then maybe 500. Then we went to the next village for lunch. By then it was six, seven hundred. Then we walked again through… Mao Gate. At that gate, because people had come from the surrounding villages, the queue was about 1 km long… By the time we reached Maran, the last stop that was left, all the villages on both sides had come down to walk with us. So sometimes ten villages, sometimes five villages… about 10,000 [people].[1092]

Jamir's words speak to the momentum generated by the NSW, literally – in terms of growing numbers of people joining the march – and politically, in terms of walking's 'affiliative power' to attract interest and forge socio-political connections across space.[1093] Whilst many faced

[1089]Interview 25 August 2022.

[1090]Youatt, Walking, p.9.

[1091]Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965).

[1092]Interview 20 August 2022. I have been unable to determine the veracity of Jamir's claim that 10,000 people participated in the NSW.

[1093]Youatt, Walking, p.10.

difficulties reaching Kohima for Naga Day, the NSW was defined by its broad accessibility whereby participants living across the Nagaland-Manipur borderland with the requisite mobility could join for some or all of the walk at their convenience.

As Rafi Youat notes, 'compared to standing still at a protest' when practised over long distances, a walk's duration can be a 'central part of its symbolic power in the moment and over time'.[1094] Whilst the 'Salt March' embodied the 'rejection of speed' underpinning Gandhian political philosophy, [1095] the unhurried nature of the NSW emblemized the GNF's desire to shape the Nagas' long-term rather than short-term future. GNF co-convener Chuba Ozukum reflected in a public statement:

> We are not talking about the ongoing peace process between the Naga groups and the Government of India… we are simply exhibiting our aspiration and willingness for our rights to live together because Nagas have been divided into different states.[1096]

The GNF thus understood the NSW as a bottom-up, embodied, and inclusive intervention toward Naga self-determination. The event also received extensive coverage in regional and Indian news media. Following the walk, the GNF was invited for dialogue with the GOI's negotiating team.[1097] The GNF intends to 'conduct more such walks' to share the message of Naga 'peace and unity' around the world and to 'reach out to Nagas in other states and countr[ies]'.[1098]

In short, while the FNR drew upon the *archive* to make a claim upon the present, the GNF used the *repertoire* to challenge and refashion the archive as the basis for an alternative future.

[1094]ibid, p.10.

[1095]ibid, p.9.

[1096]Hundreds join Naga solidarity walk for unity and peace, *The Print* (online), 28 July 2022.

[1097]Interview 25 August 2022.

[1098]ibid.

However, as forms of embodied memory, both of these performances rely, at least implicitly, on a linear understanding of time – one in which the past, be it 'real' or 'imagined', informs the present and shapes the future – and in which there exists an ontological separation between the archive as the domain of stability and persistence and the repertoire as the realm of the fleeting and the transient. The next section considers the annual NID celebrations. I draw upon Schneider's call to represent performance as that which 'remains', to show how Naga nationalist performances deconstruct this binary.[1099] By eschewing the idea that performance is characterised by impermanence or merely constitutes a snapshot in time, I explore how the NID celebration and the memories it embodies continue to haunt the present long after the festivities are finished.

[1099]Schneider, *Performing Remains,* p.144.

5. Performing independence: the Platinum Jubilee of the Nagaland Independence Declaration, 14 August 2022

It's a bright sunny morning in Chedema Village, the 14th of August 2022. I'm sitting in the far left corner of the village ground surrounded by journalists. My host – the grandson of a former NNC General – is seated next to me, decked out in an Angami tribal waistcoat and scarf. To our left are dozens and dozens of elderly men in military uniform – former members of the Naga Army – whilst to our right, atop a raised platform, are seated senior members of the NNC and the FGN, principal among them the former organsation's president and daughter of A.Z Phizo, Adino. Shortly after 11am a trumpet sounds and the 'Last Post' begins to play….With the noise of the trumpet still ringing in my ears, a member of the Naga Army marches to the centre of the grassy square and, under the watchful eyes of Retired General Viyalie Metha, the Kedahge (President) of the FGN, unfurls the Naga blue and rainbow flag. Following my cue from those seated around me, I rise for the Naga National Anthem: 'God Bless Nagaland, Land that I love' sing those around me. As the anthem draws to a close, Metha takes his turn to address the assembled audience. Wearing a dark grey suit and a smart felt cowboy hat, the elderly general slowly narrates the Nagas' history, from 'the early period to today'. After taking us on a whistle-stop tour through Naga history, Metha proudly asks the audience: 'Who can stop our independence?'

Author's field notes, 14 August 2022

Independence Day rituals have long underpinned the construction of national identity and performance of sovereign authority.[1100] The vignette from the Platinum Jubilee of the Nagaland[1101] Independence Declaration describes a celebration redolent of those seen annually across the postcolonial world. On closer analysis, however, this belies the oddity of this celebration. The Nagas are – despite the protestation of the NNC – far from independent, whilst neither the NNC nor its splinter, the NSCN-IM, possesses *de jure* or even *de facto* sovereignty. The NID is thus a commemoration of an unrealised past; an independence that never came. Coming just one day before its Indian equivalent, the NID is a cornerstone of the nationalist calendar. Indeed, while both the FNR and the GNF use performance to imagine Naga futures *outside* the postcolonial state, the NNC is one of several NPGs to celebrate this annual milestone and engage in this deliberative performance of stateness.[1102] What role do these events play in the construction of the Naga nation and the articulation of their international political claim? And what geographical imaginaries do they draw on and reproduce? In response to Taylor's call to embrace performance as 'episteme',[1103] I address these questions with reference to three aspects of the NID celebrations: the production of history and construction of collective memory; military spectacle; and cultural

[1100]Lily Kong and Brenda Yeoh, 'The construction of national identity through the production of ritual and spectacle: An analysis of National Day parades in Singapore', *Political Geography* 16 (1997) 213-239; Anssi Paasi, 'Dancing on the graves: Independence, hot/banal nationalism and the mobilization of memory', *Political Geography* 54 (2016) 21-31; Natalie Koch, 'Is nationalism just for the nationals? Civic nationalism for noncitizens and celebrating National Day in Qatar and the UAE', *Political Geography* 54 (2016) 43-53.

[1101]The NNC uses Nagaland to refer to Phizo's anticipated sovereign state.

[1102]This includes both the NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K. The GNF also commemorates NID online, while the NSF holds annual celebrations in Kohima.

[1103]Taylor, *Archive,* p.xvi.

pageantry.[1104] I then discuss the intended audience(s) of NID to evaluate the success of this performance and to illustrate how the NID celebrations refuse the binary between the *archive* and the *repertoire.*

Turning to the first theme – independence celebrations have long been pivotal to the production of history and the construction of national memory.[1105] This was the case for the NNC/FGN. Whilst Naga Day eschewed primordialist readings of the past to anchor the Nagas' political claims, the NNC/FGN used the 75th NID to tell a familiar story of Naga history. Echoing A. Z. Phizo, both General Metha and Adino Phizo used their addresses to narrate the timeless nature of Naga nationhood, whilst simultaneously anchoring their contemporary claims to independence within the post-colonial activities of the NNC (namely: the 1947 independence declaration; the 1951 plebiscite; and the Yehzabo (or constitution) of Nagaland). Notably, NID speakers made no reference to the other NPGs as rival claimants as legitimate representatives of the Nagas. Thus, if a key process in the reproduction of the nation is the ongoing 'dialect of remembering and forgetting', the NID celebrations effaced both the Naga nation's 20th century emergence and the movement's internal fissures.[1106] Underpinning this process of narrativisation, the FGN published their own 170 page 'Souvenir Booklet', which purported to 'represent the true history and unique identity of [the Naga] people as a Nation'.[1107] This was available to purchase

[1104]This approach draws non-prescriptively from Kong and Yeoh's analysis of Singaporean 'National Day' parades. Kong and Yeoh, Construction of identity.

[1105]Bjørnar Buxrud and Katrine Fangen, 'Norwegian national day oratory: constructing and reconstructing a national we', *Nations and Nationalism* 23 (2017) 770-789; Paasi Dancing on the graves.

[1106]Matthew Henry and Lawrence Berg, 'Geographers performing nationalism and heteromasculinity', *Gender, Place & Culture* 13 (2006) 629-645. p.630.

[1107]FGN, *Platinum Souvenir,* p.*i.*

at the event and, through the re-publication of historic NNC texts, naturalises a particular postcolonial conception of Naga history. The 'Souvenir Booklet' was not published online.

Claims to independence, however, fuse multiple temporal scales, and NID was as significant for its shorter-term temporalities. As Ansi Paasi argues, 'making independence meaningful is a process of performativity', one which employs 'reiterative and citational practices' to produce particular discursive effects.[1108] Repetition certainly underpins the annual NID celebrations, where the raising of the Naga flag and the singing of the national anthem help the FGN appear 'state-like', and build a collective national memory amongst attendees (figure 5). Upon arrival, I was handed a Naga flag and a commemorative badge. As the Souvenir Booklet described, the flag's sky blue background is evidence of the Naga nation's 'everlasting character'.[1109] Naga activists describe how the flag's rainbow represents God's covenantal promise of statehood to the Nagas.[1110] Flags are an archetypal symbol of nationhood and it is unsurprising that the NNC foregrounds this at NID.

'Banal' expressions of nationalism take on heightened significance at particular temporal junctures.[1111] Benwell and colleagues note how 'as lively material objects' flags can 'be enrolled by citizens to make political points and generate certain "affective atmospheres"'.[1112] The unfurling of the Naga flag in August 2022 must be read against the Indian government's 'Har Ghar

[1108]Paasi, Dancing on the graves, p.27.

[1109]FGN, *Platinum Souvenir,* p.181.

[1110]Interview, 24 August 2022.

[1111]Matthew Benwell and Klaus Dodds, 'Argentine territorial nationalism revisited: The Malvinas/Falklands dispute and the geographies of everyday nationalism', *Political Geography* 30 (2011) 441-449.

[1112]Matthew Benwell, Andrés Nuñez and Catalina Amigo, 'Flagging the nations: Citizens' active engagements with everyday nationalism in Patagonia Chile' *Area* 51 (2019) 719-727. p.719.

Tiranga' ('Tricolour in Every House') movement. Launched in the days leading up to the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence, this programme saw the government in Delhi distribute millions of tricolour flags across India.[1113] Thousands were given out across the State of Nagaland amid rumours that officials had ordered householders to display the flag to undermine the NPGs' demands for a separate Naga flag and constitution.[1114] Metha's speech commemorating the unfurling of the Naga flag was likely an explicit rebuke of these efforts. He proclaimed to the audience:

> The name of the country is Nagaland – no other name. And no other constitution and no other flag except the constitution and flag of the Federal Government of Nagaland.[1115]

However, whilst for Paasi the cyclical rhythms of national celebrations – of which flag raisings are emblematic – are 'entangled within a linear timeline that witnesses the "ageing" of the state', the NID celebrations inhabit an ambivalent temporality.[1116] On the one hand, Metha and others saw the anniversary of the Nagaland Independence Declaration as evidence of the Nagas' ability to 'survive as a nation against all odds' and 'testament to the posterity of [the Nagas'] indomitable spirit of liberty and patriotism'. [1117] Echoing her father's eschatological worldview, Adino Phizo

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[1113]Explainer: Har Ghar Tiranga campaign kicks off today, Here's how to participate, *LiveMint* (online), 13 August 2022.

[1114]This was the view of many of my interlocutors who informed me that householders had been compelled to display the flag by the state government. This view was corroborated in accounts in local newspapers, including Now Har Ghar Tiranga Campaign under flag, *Nagaland Page* (online), 9 August 2022.

[1115]Speech of Gen (Rtd.) Viyalie Metha, Kedahge, FGN, on the 75th Anniversary of Nagaland Independence Declaration: 14 August, 2022. Printed copies of this speech were distributed to participants on arrival and, to the best of my knowledge, accurately reflected what Metha said. I thus quote here from this written speech, rather than my field notes.

[1116]Paasi, Dancing on the graves, p.28.

[1117]Speech of Viyalie Metha, 14 August, 2022.

used the FGN's Souvenir Booklet to inform attendees that, although '75 years is a long period in a person's life' it is only 'the beginning in a nation's life' and the Nagas' will 'remain as a nation till the world comes to an end'.[1118] This framing belies the inescapable sense that the NNC/FGN is an venerable but increasingly tired organisation. Few of the officials presiding over the celebrations were below seventy, whilst both Metha and Phizo used their NID speeches to implore the Naga youth to take up the fight for independence. Far from strengthening the case for Naga independence or prefiguring a future to come, it is difficult not to feel that the celebrations serve as a lingering reminder of how the NNC/FGN is still no closer to achieving their ultimate ambition. The NID celebrations embody a future past that has long been foreclosed.



Figure 5: 'Naga Army' members watch the unfurling of the Naga Flag, 14 August 2022. Photo: Author's own.

[1118]FGN, *Platinum Souvenir,* p.iii.

Second, the NID celebrations were public displays of military power. Kong and Yeoh analyse such displays through the notion of the spectacle – displays of theatricality and fanfare which inspire 'positive feelings of admiration and wonder' and foster 'national identity and inculcate loyalty' in a population.[1119] At NID, Naga Army members occupied large parts of the parade ground (figure 6). Whilst veterans of the early Indo-Naga conflicts remained seated, younger soldiers took an active role. This military presence illustrates how the NID fused 'hot' and 'banal' forms of nationalism.[1120] On the one hand, the military veterans and their younger counterparts reminded audiences of the Naga nation's long history of military confrontation with India. References to the veterans' personal sacrifice discursively melded the scalar connections between the body of the soldier and the nation's collective future. On the other hand, however, the soldiers appeared unthreatening, not least because most were elderly. Younger members fidgeted uncomfortably, sweating profusely in the heat. Thus, if as Daniels and Cosgrove argue, spectacle is about creating a sense of awe, wonderment, and admiration, the NNC/FGN's displays of military power fell far short of these ambitions,[1121] such that the NNC/FGN's performance of stateness failed to 'fuse' performers and audience.[1122]

[1119]Kong and Yeoh, Construction of identity, p.216.

[1120]Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

[1121]Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, 'Spectacle and text: landscape metaphors in cultural geography', in *Place, Culture and Representation,* ed. by Stephen Duncan and Denis Ley (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.55-77.

[1122]Alexander, *Performance and Power,* p.27.



Figure 6: Retired 'Naga Army' members watch the NID celebrations, 14 August 2022. Photo: Author's



Figure 7: Naga performers perform 'patriotic dance' at NID celebrations, 14 August 2022. Photo: Author's own.

Finally, the NID reproduced nationalist imaginaries via 'cultural pageantry' (figure 7).[1123] The penultimate item in the programme was a series of 'patriotic song[s]' and 'cultural dance[s]'. Announcing that the Naga nation is 'blessed with rich cultural diversity', the compère introduced six acts, each representing a different 'region' of 'Nagaland'.[1124] These acts, he described, variously celebrated the sacrifices of those who had died fighting for independence, Naga unity, God's vision for the Nagas, and the beauty of the landscape. Lasting over an hour, these displays saw performers dressed in 'traditional' Naga clothing, including colourful shawls, feather headdresses, and shell necklaces. Some carried tribal spears or quivers. Songs were sung in both local languages and English. Several drew on Christian motifs. For instance, the *Tetseo Sisters* – an internationally famous duo from the Chakashang region – sang two 'patriotic songs' in Chokri focused on the need for the Nagas' to 'unite in Jesus' name' and to 'claim Nagaland, the nation God has promised'.[1125] After the entertainment, the compère addressed the audience. These 'cultural performances', he proclaimed, were a 'timeless element of Naga life'. The implication was clear: the Nagas' were defined by their cultural distinctiveness and only independence could ensure that these customs were maintained.

All spectacles require spectators. Echoing Longkumer's analysis of the Hornbill Festival, I contend that the significance of this cultural pageantry is best understood with reference to the intended internal and external audiences of NID.[1126] As to the former, like the Hornbill Festival,

[1123] I borrow this phrase from Kong and Yeoh, Construction of identity, p.238.

[1124]These 'regions' of Nagaland were introduced by the FGN in the 1960s as part of their plans for a sovereign state of Nagaland. Today, the FGN divides the Naga inhabited areas into 20 regions, each broadly corresponding to a major tribal group.

[1125]Chokri is one of three languages spoken by Chakhesang Naga communities living in Phek District in the State of Nagaland.

[1126]Longkumer, Ancestors, pp.56-60.

NID is a means of constructing and consolidating 'a national culture' for the Nagas, one which transcends local variations.[1127] The performances speak to a desire to showcase the variation in Naga cultural life, but also to emphasise inter-tribal commonality. The Hornbill festival tethers this national culture within the boundaries of the State of Nagaland by excluding those from other Naga inhabited areas and including non-Naga communities. NID, however, territorialised these cultural performances according to the imagined internal contours of an independent Naga state. This was evident from how the FGN introduced performers according to the 'region' they represented within this imagined polity, and from how the event included representatives from Pfosemei Village in Manipur. Unsurprisingly, the celebrations did not feature non-Naga communities living in the region.

Whilst the Naga Day cultural displays drew on notions of cosmopolitanism and a heterogeneous set of contemporary cultural influences – including youth culture, choral singing, and popular music – the compère's reference to this 'timeless element of Naga life' speaks to the NNC/FGNs desire to use these displays to (re)enact a particular conception of Naga history, one which sees these performances as rooted in an enduring pre-colonial past. These strategic displays of putatively 'traditional' Naga culture represent a means of making the Nagas 'visible' to external audiences in a context where an 'aesthetic of alterity' and self-conscious expressions of embodied (and essential) difference underpin contemporary claims to international political rights.[1128]

That the NNC/FGN recognised the strategic function of these visual regimes was evident from the local, Indian, and international journalists invited to attend. I was seated alongside these

[1127]ibid, p.60.

[1128]Karen Stocker, Locating Identity: The Role of Place in Chorotega Identity, in *Who Is an Indian?; Race, Place, and the Politics of Indigeneity in the Americas,* ed. by Maximillian Forte (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013). pp.151–171.

journalists and was invited by the organisers to film the performances and share the clips on social media. This, one NNC supporter excitedly informed me, was my chance to see a 'mini-Hornbill' festival. Though I politely declined the offer to film proceedings, the celebrations received significant press coverage locally and internationally. Alongside photos of the Naga Army and the unfurling of the flag, Indian and international news articles featured pictures of colourful Naga shawls, 'tribal' dancing, and Naga performers eating whilst wearing 'traditional' clothing.[1129]

The NNC initially welcomed the media coverage of the event. Lhouvitsü Kesiezie (Speaker of the FGN's Parliament or 'Tartar Hoho') used his closing speech to thank the media for ensuring that people around the world would 'realise the importance of the Nagas and Nagaland'. Nevertheless, there was disquiet in the NNC/FGN when several international media outlets used coverage of the event to describe the Nagas as 'Indigenous people', contradicting the NNC's own statements repudiating the term.[1130] This episode further speaks to the ambivalence of indigeneity in the Naga context. Self-consciously or otherwise, the NNC/FGN performs Indigeneity (at least in the eyes of international audiences) through engaging preconfigured regimes of Indigenous representation, whilst stringently resisting formal ascription of this label.

At first blush, the NID celebrations are a quintessential example of what McConnell describes as a 'rehearsal' of stateness.[1131] Through raising the Naga flag, singing the national anthem, and presenting national honours, the NNC/FGN anticipate and prefigure a state-like future for the Nagas in the absence of sovereign territorial control. These symbolic demonstrations of the organisation's administrative and political capabilities are accompanied by public expressions of

[1129]For instance, see AP PHOTOS: Nagas mark 75 years since declaring independence, *AP News* (online), 14 August 2023.

[1130]Interview 23 August 2023.

[1131]McConnell, *Rehearsing*, p.172.

embodied difference which consolidate a national culture amongst the Nagas and makes them visible to outsiders.[1132] The NID celebrations are thus a means for the NNC to construct both internal and external legitimacy for the Nagas' claims to nationhood and independence.

However, as McConnell argues, it is 'only when scripts are believed' – when individuals 'buy into' rehearsals of stateness – that claims to legitimacy are authenticated.[1133] How were the NID celebrations received by Naga publics? What meanings did people give to the Independence Day celebrations? I answer these questions with reference to conversations held with attendees[1134] and other interlocutors.

First, Abraham (a student politician) claimed the annual celebrations were not merely symbolic but represented a formal expression of the 'continued fight for our sovereign independence'.[1135] For him, NID was a prefigurative expression of a future within reach, but one threatened by growing youth disengagement. Second, however, Zale (the son of an NNC official) claimed that the opportunity for independence had passed but that he attended the NID celebrations to learn about Naga history and to honour his elders.[1136] For Zale, NID was less a means of rehearsing and anticipating a desired future, but a way of commemorating a future past. Third, John (a member of the revived Naga Club) articulated a logic of deferral: he believed the Nagas must utilise 'education and employment' opportunities within India first to achieve self-

[1132]Stocker, Locating Identity.

[1133]McConnell, *Rehearsing*, p.118.

[1134]These were an example of informal what Burgess describes as 'conversations with a purpose' – opportunistic, informal, and unstructured dialogues with interlocutors – rather than formal interviews. Robert Burgess, *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1984). p.102.

[1135]Interview 22 August 2022.

[1136]Field notes 26 August 2022.

sufficiency, before seeking statehood.[1137] The Nagas were analogous with the Israelites who waited 2000 years for their own state. Independence would come when God willed it. For him, NID was less a prefigurative expression of a future within reach, but a waymarker for a future long deferred. The celebrations kept 'the flame' of independence 'alive'.[1138]

Naga society thus invests multiple meanings within the NID celebrations, many of which diverged or contradicted the NNC/FGN's ambitions. This speaks to the challenge facing the NNC/FGN in constructing legitimacy for its geopolitical vision amidst long term stasis in a context where independence inhabits multiple temporalities. In the absence of strategic state resources, the organisation seeks to bring the nation and a concomitant understanding of history into being through highly choreographed performances of stateness. Nevertheless, for many attendees, far from inspiring 'awe' or 'wonder',[1139] the NID spectacle merely confirmed a belief that the organisation led a movement which had long since had its day. For most news outlets, NID was a historical oddity: a means of observing a 'traditional' but bygone tribal culture.

These ambivalent readings point to the contingent relationship between 'performative projection and audience reception' in the Naga context, and the need to go beyond purely semiotic analysis of dramatic intention.[1140] However, the NNC/FGN's performance refuses – and I suggest re-*fuses* – the binary between the *archive* and *repertoire*, between the realm of permanence and the realm of transience. Far from a snapshot in time, the NID celebrations repeatedly recall an unrealised future – a future past that simply *will not* go away. Through the performance,

[1137]Interview 8 August 2022.

[1138]Interview 14 August 2022.

[1139]Daniels and Cosgrove, Spectacle and text, pp.55-77.

[1140]Alexander, *Performance and Power,* p.108.

independence is continually revivified. It becomes that which 'remains'.[1141] NID was thus a relic of history, one which unsettles the forward march of linear time and troubles the strategic efforts the FNR and the GNF to imagine alternative geopolitical futures outside of the postcolonial nation-state. The tensions between these simultaneous performances of different moments of the Nagas' past – evident in the schism between the FNR's eschewal of the Naga Plebiscite as the basis for Naga Day, and the NNC's continued celebration of this moment – speaks to how Naga society suffers from what Freeman terms 'temporal drag'.[1142] Both the present and the future remain haunted by the unrealised histories of the aborted political projects that preceded them.[1143]

6. Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the NNC/FGN, the FNR, and the GNF use performance to make embodied claims on their audiences and to produce (inter)nationality. In all three cases, performances of nationhood were used to transmit collective identity and make the Nagas visible, regionally and globally. Whilst for the NNC, mimicry and state-like spectacle lent authority to the Naga claim to independence, the FNR used performances of reconciliation to legitimate the NPG's public assertion that the Indo-Naga negotiations must recognise the Nagas' right to collective self-determination. The GNF, meanwhile, used walking to articulate Naga territoriality, and to materialise cross-border solidarities and connections. Thus, although the NNC, the FNR, and the

[1141]Schneider, *Performing Remains,* p.144.

[1142]Elizabeth Freeman, *Time binds: Queer temporalities, queer histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). p.59.

[1143]Amber Jamilla Musser, 'The Politics and Erotics of Time', *Reviews in Cultural Theory* 2 (2011) 43-56. p.54

GNF all sang from the same hymn sheet, they performed their respective political claim according to subtly different tunes.

As I have reiterated, performances have to be believed to be successful. The groups discussed here variously sought to convince audiences of the verisimilitude of their claims through the cultivation of affective atmospheres, appeals to religious authority, military spectacle, and cultural pageantry. All three events, however, were marked by a sense of ambivalence and contingency in the relationship between performer agency and audience response. The NNC/FGN's military display fell flat in the face of audiences doubtful of their continued abilities, whilst the FNR found it difficult to perform reconciliation in a deeply divided society. The GNF initially appeared more successful in achieving their political aims. A year later, however, the Indo-Naga negotiations are still at a standstill, and GNF has yet to host further walks. Nevertheless, whilst these performances have not achieved all of their instrumental aims, they had intrinsic value in sustaining Naga (inter)nationalist subjectivities in the face of political stasis.

I have used Taylor's work, *The Archive and the Repertoire,* to argue that all three of these performances should be understood as forms of 'embodied memory' – means for the FNR, the GNF, and the NNC to re-enact, re-present, and re-construct significant moments in Naga history and to imbue the present with historical meaning.[1144] While the FNR used the *repertoire* as an embodied means of transmitting the knowledge and sentiment of the Simon Commission Memorandum to contemporary audiences, the GNF used the slippage between the *archive* and the *repertoire* to refashion the past as the basis for an alternative geopolitical future. NID, however, refused the distinction between the *archive* as that which is stable and the *repertoire* as 'that which

[1144]Taylor, *The Archive,* p.20; Dean, Meerzon, and Prince, Introduction, p.7.

disappears'.[1145] By returning to the present a recurring reminder of an unrealised past, the NNC/FGN materialised an enduring relic of history.

These events, however, were more than simply historical re-enactment. Each performance constituted what Bonilla terms 'historical praxis' – an attempt to reconstruct and bring the past closer to condition the horizons of both the present and the future.[1146] All three events thus constituted sites where the making of Naga territory through performance – broadcast internationally, and multiscalar in its form – was simultaneously also a project of spatial and temporal re-scaling, a means through which the FNR, the GNF, and the NNC/FGN sought to bring closer competing readings of the past and different aspects of Naga history to naturalise distinct political projects to varied audiences. I want to suggest, however, that these events are not merely means of furthering the Nagas' international claim and building the nation. They are also forms of *worldmaking.*

As Getachew suggests, anticolonial worldmaking is necessarily both about building a narrative of how the past relates to the present and produces futurity, and also about territory and its marking.[1147] Through scripting the relationship between the past, the present, and the future, the FNR, the GNF, and the NNC/FGN used the archive to underpin a pluralistic range of alternative 'worldly' projects which articulated internationality but were neither straightforwardly anti-state nor anti-national. The NSW refashioned the past to unsettle regional regimes of sovereign territoriality. Moreover, the GNF and the FNR's efforts to build relations *within* Naga communities across inter and intra-state borders and *between* Naga groups and their nearest neighbours, speaks

[1145]Taylor, *Archive* p.xvii.

[1146]Bonilla, Walking, p.314.

[1147]Getachew, *Worldmaking.*

to a nationalism which is not antithetical to cosmopolitanism, but instead draws upon a conception of solidarity which is at once both local, regional, and transnational. The NNC also sought to articulate a world which, while certainly not decolonial**,** draws upon a real and imagined past to unsettle the existing regional order. In seeking to articulate alternative modes of political belonging, Naga Day, the NSW and NID thus all constituted means of building Naga anticolonial futures, while challenging conceptualisation of nationalism and internationalism as necessarily 'top-down' political projects. In the final chapter, I consider what the coexistence of the different geographical and territorial imaginaries explored here reveals about the broader genealogies of Naga (inter)nationalism.

Chapter 8 | Conclusion: Spatial tensions of Naga (inter)nationalism

> From time immemorial Nagas' socio-political existence has been unique in its own right. They were guided by a common desire and expressed free will to exist as "*one people one nation*"[1148]
>
> Nagas are by nature very aggressive in defending their geographical identity. They consider the geographical identity as inviolable. Because it is land that defines the survival and prosperity of a nation.[1149]
>
> **Extracts from 'UNIQUE HISTORY OF THE NAGAS', Government of the People's Republic of Nagalim (NSCN-IM)**

1. Introduction

In June 2023, the NSCN-IM emailed a pamphlet entitled 'Unique History Of The Nagas' to their international supporters.[1150] On the pamphlet's cover is the flag which, since 1956, has come to signify the Naga struggle for self-determination – the instantly recognisable azure background with the tri-coloured rainbow running diagonally across. Beneath, a monochrome photograph of a Naga elder, draped in a tribal shawl and accompanied by a crowd of men, women, and children, casts his thumb-print vote in the Naga Independence Plebiscite of 1951. Although we do not know how this particular man voted, or indeed who he is, the photograph is a pictorial reminder of the overwhelming majority who voted in favour of Naga independence nearly eight decades ago. Inside the pamphlet, one is taken on a whistle-stop tour through several millennia of Naga history.

[1148]GPRN. (2023). *UNIQUE HISTORY OF THE NAGAS* (Kohima, GPRN, 2023). p.1. Emphasis in original.

[1149]ibid, p.2

[1150]I was forwarded the pamphlet via email by an associate of an international NGO working with the NSCN-IM.

Beginning with the establishment of the Naga nation ('when God created the earth'), the booklet goes on to narrate the subsequent trajectories of the nationalist movement as recounted in the community's oral history, stopping briefly to recount the Nagas' twelfth century resistance against the Ahom Kings, nineteenth century skirmishes with the British, and more recent engagements with the First and Second World Wars.[1151] The bulk of the pamphlet, however, is dedicated to the years following the NNC's 1947 independence declaration, and the Nagas' ongoing refusal to accept Indian sovereignty. Throughout are numerous references to many of the letters, memorandums, treaties, and pamphlets which have informed the writing of this thesis. These documents, readers of the booklet are told, provide incontrovertible evidence of the booklet's titular assertion — the '*UNIQUE HISTORY OF THE NAGAS*'.

As I have already described, such exceptionalist claims are decisively unexceptional in Naga politics.[1152] In 1988, Phizo wrote in a letter to the then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that 'Nagaland' – referring to the proposed Naga sovereign state – was 'no ordinary country' and that he (Phizo) had been sent by God to communicate a message that the Nagas were a chosen people.[1153] More recently, in July 2002 – five years after the Indo-Naga ceasefire – the Government of India used a joint communique with the NSCN-IM to acknowledge that future negotiations with Naga groups would proceed on the basis that 'the history and situation of Nagaland is quite unique'.[1154] Speaking shortly after the signing of the 2015 Indo-Naga Framework Agreement,

[1151]GPRN, *Unique Histories,* pp.1-6.

[1152]On claims to uniqueness in Naga politics see Dolly Kikon, 'What Is Unique about Naga History? *EPW'*50 (2015) 10-13.

[1153]Phizo to Rajiv Gandhi, 6 September 1988, NNC Online.

[1154]NSCN-IM and Government of India, NSCN-IM Union Government Joint Statement Bangkok, September 23 2022 *https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1833,* last accessed 29 June 2023.

Narendra Modi, who by that point had been India Prime Minister for just 14 months, released a statement claiming that the 'Government of India recognized the unique history, culture and position of the Nagas and their sentiments and aspirations'. Concluding the agreement, Modi claimed, would solve the 'lingering problem' of Nagaland.[1155] The unique history of the Nagas thus necessitates a unique political solution.[1156]

This thesis has explored how Naga actors have constructed their own geopolitical projects to address the 'lingering [Naga] problem' and protect the Naga community.[1157] Through bringing into dialogue post-, de-, and anticolonial geographies with the geographies of internationalism, I have elucidated how Naga imaginaries have been articulated in response both to shifting modalities of state and colonial power, and to shifting international norms around sovereignty, self-determination, and Indigeneity. Distilled within the NSCN-IM's pamphlet are many of the core themes running throughout the proceeding seven chapters.

Claims to the uniqueness of Naga history, for instance, speak to how Naga (inter)nationalism has been a site of temporal and spatial rescaling – a project of making competing claims upon the past to naturalise alternative territorial futures. The NSCN-IM's emphasis upon

[1155]Press Information Bureau, Government of India, PM witnesses the signing of historic peace accord between Government of India and NSCN, 3 August 2015. https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=124221 last accessed 29 June 2023.

[1156]While the Indian government publicly recognises the Nagas' 'uniqueness', in August 2019, the Modi administration revoked Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir ('J&K'). That article guaranteed J&K a special status within the Indian Union, including the right to a separate constitution, a state flag, and a degree of internal autonomy. The rights and privileges previously conferred by this provision mirror many of the NSCN-IM current demands. On the reaction of Naga communities to the revocation of Article 370, see Salman Anees Soz, Echoes of Kashmiri Disempowerment Are Being Felt in the Northeast, *The Wire* (online), 12 June 2023.

[1157]Press Information Bureau, Government of India, PM witnesses the signing of peace accord.

the Naga plebiscite illustrates the prominence of normative claims *to* and practices *of* legitimacy in shaping multi-scalar Naga political claims; while references to the Naga nation's divine providence are characteristic of religion's salience to Naga geopolitics. Critiques of both British and Indian sovereignty are paradigmatic of how Naga politicians have narrated a colonised subjectivity to legitimate claims to self-determination. Moreover, the pamphlet's very existence in addition to its recitation of extracts from other Naga nationalist political tracts is evidence of how print – and increasingly, digital – media is a site where Naga (inter)nationalism is constituted.

Within the pamphlet, the absence of any discussion of Indigeneity (save for a passing reference to the Nagas as 'an indigenous tribe of Mongoloid race') speaks to how this political designation continues to occupy an ambivalent position within nationalist discourse, and the challenge Naga groups face finding a claims making register which is simultaneously legible to local, regional, and international audiences.[1158] Finally, coming as it does on page 18 (of 24) of the pamphlet – following extensive discussion of the Simon Commission (1929), the Government of India Act (1935), the Constituent Assembly Debates (1946), the Hydari Agreement (1947), the NNC's Declaration of Independence (1947), the Yezhabo of Nagaland (1956), and the creation of the State of Nagaland (1963) – the Framework Agreement features as just the latest in a long history of attempts to renegotiate the Nagas' territorial settlement vis-à-vis both India and the international sphere. Indeed, despite Modi's triumphalism in 2015 and the creativity of Naga actors in articulating visions of the Nagas' future in the context of ongoing stasis, neither the NSCN-IM nor any other of the political and civil society groups described in this thesis remain any closer to realising their claim to self-determination.

[1158]GPRN, *Unique Histories,* p.1.

In this concluding chapter, I reflect on these different thematic foci as they are addressed within the NSCN-IM's pamphlet and in light of the discussion across the thesis as a whole. As part of the multi-scalar and spatial approach adopted here, I use this chapter to tease out three spatial tensions which, I argue, undergird the project of Naga (inter)nationalism. Each of these tensions speaks to the concerns of one of my three research objectives. First, I consider the geographical imaginaries underpinning Naga nationalist political claims to argue that the substantive project of Naga (inter)nationalism sits in tension between a post- and a decolonial project. Second, I consider how efforts to construct alternative geopolitical projects for the projection of the Naga community exist at the interplay between both domestic and international ideas of political legitimacy and between the demands of regional and global audiences. Finally, I consider how the project of Naga identity formation collapses the boundaries between the national and the international. Before discussing these three spatial tensions, however, I begin by briefly outlining some reflections on how this thesis contributes to existing scholarship on Naga nationalism.

2. Contributions to scholarship on Naga political and social life

Through adopting a multi-scalar and spatial lens, this thesis has made three interrelated contributions to a nascent body of scholarship on Naga political and social life.

First, whilst existing literature on Naga political imaginaries has focused on articulations of political subjectivity by the NPGs – particularly the NSCN-IM[1159] – through the use of archival, digital, and interview methods, this thesis has developed a multi-scalar geography of Naga statehood. It represents the views of *both* elite political actors – including Naga anticolonial

[1159]Namrata Goswami, 'Unravelling Insurgent Groups' Strategy: The Case of the National Socialist Council of *Nagalim* in India', *Strategic Analysis* 32 (2008) 413-438; Longkumer, Bible, Guns, and Land.

thinkers – *and* popular culture discourses of nationhood as articulated by Naga publics through embodied performances and via circulations of print and digital media. As I argued in Chapter 1, such an approach is vital in bringing to the fore how Naga geopolitical thought inscribes materially meaningful geographies. Nevertheless, uncovering the connections between the domain of elite and popular geopolitics has an added salience in the Naga context, where ongoing stasis has prompted calls by Naga civil society groups to 're-imagine the Naga peace process' with the 'people and their aspirations at its heart'.[1160] As I have shown, Naga groups use embodied performances of nationhood to legitimise the NPGs' geographical imaginaries, and to prefigure and materialise alternative geopolitical futures on the ground outside of the formal Indo-Naga negotiations. This study points towards the importance of exploring these situated and bottom-up articulations of self-determination as both 'sites of hope and aspiration for more egalitarian and peaceful relations' and as 'alternatives to colonial domination'.[1161] This thesis also points to the need for further research into the role of civil society actors like the FNR, the GNF, and the NPMHR as intermediaries between the NPGs and Naga publics.

Second, by drawing upon scholarship which has problematised normative scalar categories, this thesis has extended accounts of Naga nationalism which have hitherto focused either on 'local' or 'global' expressions,[1162] to illustrate how ideas of state and nation have been forged relationally, in dialogue with heterogeneous internal and external audiences and across multiple sites and scales. In doing so, the analysis speaks to Bengt Karlsson's vision for a

[1160]Nagaland: FNR calls for 're-imagining' Naga peace process, *Northeast Now* (online), 14 January 2023.

[1161]Loong, Manby, and McConnell, Geographies of self-determination.

[1162]On local expressions see Wouters, *Shadows.* On global expressions see Walker, Decolonization; Karlsson, Anthropology and the Indigenous.

'processual and open-ended geography of [Northeast India]'.[1163] However, whilst Karlsson has emphasised the importance of situating discussions of the region with reference to histories of 'contact, travel, and trade with today's international neighbours' – presumably referring to Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, Nepal, and Tibet – the discussion here extends the geographical purview of Naga studies to describe a broader range of global interactions and relationships.[1164] In particular, I have highlighted: the *inter*nationalist dimensions of Baptist Christianity (cf. existing scholarship which principally focuses on the nationalist dimensions)[1165]; Phizo's travels across Asia and Europe; Naga engagement with regional and global Indigenous movements; efforts to broadcast Naga nationalist performances globally via digital media; and attempts by civil society groups to engage the Naga diaspora both as advocates but also as geopolitical theorists who actively shape the contours of Naga political debate from outside of their homeland. This thesis has foregrounded the diverse array of people and places who shape(d) historic and contemporary Naga (inter)nationalist thought and practices thus challenging discourses which construct the Naga region as 'remote' or 'out-of-the-way'.[1166] Moreover, I have also extended the temporal horizons of existing scholarship on the internationalist dimensions of Naga nationalism, which typically focuses on the period after transfer of power. Instead, I have shown how Naga internationalism has its roots in the late colonial period. I have also discussed how communities living across Southeast and Northern South Asia engaged in practices that we

[1163]Bengt Karlsson, 'Introduction: Northeastern research entanglements', in *Geographies of Difference: Explorations in Northeast Indian Studies,* ed. by Melanie Vandenhelsken, Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh, and Begnt Karllson, (Oxford: Routledge, 2018) pp.1-14. p.4

[1164]ibid, p.4.

[1165]Chophy, *Christianity;* Thomas, *Evangelizing.*

[1166]Saba Sharma, 'Framing Northeast India—Perspectives and Positions', *Südasien-Chronik-South Asia Chronicle* 8 (2018) 257-72.

might now call transnationalism long before the nation came to prominence as a unit of claims making and collective identity.

Third, I have adopted a spatial lens to foreground the geographical imaginaries underpinning Naga (inter)nationalists' demands. As Willem van Schendel argues, there is a need to 'de-partition "Northeast India" studies'.[1167] The Partition of 1947, he argues, was both a 'political upheaval that had specific regional effects' and 'a mindset that has determined the way we study the region'.[1168] There is thus a need to uncover the alternative and at times 'irreconcilable spatial visions' underlying the 'contested incorporation' of communities like the Nagas into Indian (and Myanmarese) national space, as well as why and how these imaginaries have been sustained and 'resuscitated' at different historical junctures.[1169] Yet, although the Nagas' various demands for statehood and territorial autonomy are often acknowledged, there has been little attention to how space and socio-spatial relations have been imagined and theorised by Naga actors, or to how Naga ontologies inform these imaginaries. This thesis has addressed this lacuna, with reference to Naga nationalist and Indigenous conceptions of the state, territory, sovereignty, land, borders, and regional relationality, in addition to the spatial tensions and contradictions that at times undergird them.

[1167]Willem van Schendel, 'Afterward: contested, vertical, fragmenting: de-partitioning 'Northeast India' studies, in Vandenhelsken, Barkataki-Ruscheweyh, and Karlsson, *Geographies of Difference,* pp.276-287 (p.283).

[1168]ibid.

[1169]ibid, p. 277-278.

3. Spatial tensions of Naga (inter)nationalism

Having described this thesis' contribution to scholarship on Naga nationalism, I now turn to discuss how this research speaks to the geographical literature set out in Chapter 2. Specifically, I describe the three spatial tensions which, I suggest, underpin the broader project of Naga (inter)nationalism. As I illustrate, each of these spatial tensions speaks to the concerns of one of my three research objectives.

3.1 Between the postcolonial and the decolonial: spatial vocabularies and geographical imaginaries of Naga (inter)nationalism

Turning to my first research objective, this thesis has examined how the spatial vocabularies and geographical imaginaries underpinning the Nagas' geopolitical claim have been reinterpreted over time. There has been an obvious semantic shift in the registers through which Naga (inter)nationalists have articulated their claim, from the nomenclature of a postcolonial politics of modernity, statehood, and recognition, towards that of a decolonial politics of Indigeneity. On closer examination, however, this semantic shift belies a significant degree of consistency between the substantive content of the Nagas' call for statehood and more recent calls for Naga Indigenous self-determination beyond the state. Through attending to the continuities in the geographical imaginaries undergirding the Nagas' shifting international political claim, I suggest that, rather than a shift from a *post*colonial to a *de*colonial imaginary, efforts to imagine alternative Naga geopolitical futures have *always* refused this binary. The Naga case thus challenges the received space/times of post-, de-, and anti-colonial geographies, and through defying easy categorisation and periodisation exemplifies the 'messiness' and ambivalences of colonial rule.[1170] Echoing

[1170]Namakkal, *Utopia,* p. 205.

Namakkal's approach to the study of the legacies of both historic and contemporary coloniality in French India, I argue that, to comprehend the nature of Naga identities and spatial imaginaries past and present, there is a 'need to dig deep[er] into this mess'.[1171]

Our enquiry began with Phizo's theory of the state (Chapter 5). At first blush, the NNC leader's geopolitical project appears quintessentially postcolonial. Phizo articulated a theory of the state rooted in a hybrid modernity grounded upon a Naga vocabulary of time and nationhood and a distinct Naga Baptist theology. Nonetheless, while Phizo drew upon British territorial and demographic categories to articulate the Naga political claim, this was not his only political reference point. Phizo's critique was also rooted in an understanding of the growing settler-colonial tendencies of the Indian state, claims as to the distinctiveness of Naga Indigenous cultural life, and a desire to sustain Indigenous territorial configurations, including the village republic and decentralised sovereignty based on the Nagas' relationship with the land. For Phizo, the state was, first and foremost, a vehicle to forestall Indian colonisation. Moreover, by attending to the indeterminacy of the period 1929-1947 (Chapter 4), it is apparent that entrenched forms of statehood and Indian internal colonialism over Naga territories were far from inevitable, nor was the state the only potential vehicle for the Nagas' future claims. Instead, Phizo's call for statehood only materialised once various other territorial proposals for the Nagas' future – some that we might consider to be 'postcolonial', some potentially 'decolonial' and some a reconfiguration of the nature of British imperialism – had been foreclosed. Thus, as well as unsettling the received space/times of decolonisation, foregrounding the decades immediately before and after the transfer of power unsettles the teleology of both the Nagas' claim to statehood and Indian sovereignty over Naga territories.

[1171] ibid.

As I described in Chapter 6, contemporary Naga political and civil society bodies eschew Phizo's demand for Naga independence and activists increasingly explicitly deploy the language of decoloniality when articulating their political claims. Drawing upon Naga Indigenous ontologies and territorial formations, these concern inter-/intra- community reconciliation, decentralised sovereignty, and a future 'without borders'. While Phizo sought to reconcile these claims within the bounds of the Westphalian state system, contemporary Naga civil society activists seek to build futures outside of the state paradigm. Nevertheless, these imaginaries continue to be articulated by reference to the postcolonial categories of Western modernity – most significantly the nation. Importantly, Naga claims to Indigeneity also have an ambivalent relationship to the interstate system and to ongoing coloniality. On the one hand, contemporary Naga nationalist politicians disclaim the idea that Indigenous self-determination should be read as a demand for rights *from* India and dismiss the idea that they are secessionist. On the other hand, however, many Naga activists articulate exceptionalist claims to Indigeneity which draw their legitimacy from the Nagas' earlier claim to statehood and delimited the imagined outcomes of Indigenous self-determination for other groups according to the historical operation of imperial power. Some Nagas disclaim the label entirely. Thus, while contemporary Naga anticolonial nationalist certainly articulate imaginations toward a decolonial future, the history of Naga geopolitical thought also points to the limits of existing frames of reference in materialising such a project in a world saturated with colonial modernity. The specificities of Naga Indigeneity speak to the often-unsatisfactory nature of much existing scholarship concerning Indigenous decolonisation, including that written with reference to liberal-democratic Anglo-American contexts, but also scholarship on Asian Indigeneity in understanding Naga articulations of Indigeneity. The Naga case certainly resonates with Howitt's call to reframe Indigenous studies

by ‘learning and listening in the margins’ of the discipline, including from Asian case studies which challenge some aspects of the ‘conqueror/settler imaginary’ derived from a ‘Eurocentric’ perspective on colonialism.[1172]

As I have shown in Chapter 7, efforts to forge futures *outside* of the Westphalian state coexist with the NNC’s efforts to materialise state-like futures on the ground. Here again decolonial and postcolonial visions co-exist. There exists a broad corpus of literature on the enduring resonance of the ‘state ideal’ amongst a heterogenous range of state and non-state actors.[1173] McConnell has argued the Tibetan Government in Exile’s ongoing rehearsal of the state exists both as a mode of resistance and as a means of ‘keeping the idea of Tibet alive’ outside of the homeland.[1174] There are clear parallels between the activities of the TGiE and the NNC’s performances of stateness described in Chapter 7 — not least how the latter sustain Naga nationalist subjectivities under conditions of ongoing stasis. Nevertheless, while McConnell argues that the state constitutes a source of hope and a ‘strategic lifeline’ for Tibetans in exile,[1175] for the Nagas, the state generates a more ambivalent set of affects. While Phizo saw the state as a strategic necessity – one he embraced to preserve Naga sovereignty against Indian coloniality – today the memory of unrealised statehood continues to trouble Naga society, hindering efforts to figure alternative ‘non-state’ geopolitical futures. Thus, this case not only affirms the need to take

[1172]Howitt, Unsettling the taken, p.200.

[1173]*De facto states: the quest for sovereignty*, ed. by Tozum Bahcheli, Barry Bartmann, and Hentry Srebrni (London: Routledge, 2004); Alice Wilson, *Sovereignty in Exile: A Saharan Liberation Movement Governs* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Gëzim Visoka, *Acting Like a State: Kosovo and the Everyday Making of Statehood* (London: Routledge, 2018).

[1174]McConnell, *Rehearsing,* p.185.

[1175]ibid.

seriously the potency of the 'state ideal' as a site of ''hope' and 'aspiration about the future',[1176] but also how the ghost of the state induces its own anxieties about an unrealised past, lingering in the shadows of efforts to forge putatively decolonial futures.

The postcolonial state's hold over Naga society also speaks to the multiple, sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory temporalities which undergird Naga efforts to imagine alternative political futures. Since the transfer of power – and especially since the Indo-Naga ceasefire of 1997 – Naga society has been marked by continued stasis brought about in no small part by a politics of deferral whereby Naga and Indian political actors have both deliberately adjourned efforts to solve the 'Naga problem' for political gain. There also exists a millenarian belief amongst many nationalists that Naga nationhood is pre-ordained — for them, the realisation of Naga self-determination is in God's hands and according to *His* (potentially endless) timeframe. On the other hand, however, echoing Phizo's fears about the eradication of Naga traditions, many of my interlocutors expressed concern that the Nagas' collective future was threatened by the gradual assimilation of Naga society within India following the Indo-Naga ceasefire of 1997. This anxiety is compounded by an awareness of the numerous unrealised territorial projects which litter Naga history, in addition to a sense of urgency created by the Indian Government's frequent assertions that a conclusion to the Indo-Naga negotiations is imminent.[1177] Throughout the last nearly eight decades, this tension between stasis and exigency has been overlaid by another recurring temporal dynamic: that in which the Nagas' future oscillates between being understood as open-ended versus closed shut, in ways which map on to the tensions between efforts to figure

[1176]ibid.

[1177]For instance, see Prabin Kalita, Naga group hopes for deal, govt refuses to relax deadline, *The Times of India* (online), 30 October 2019.

post- versus decolonial futures. Whilst the former limit the Nagas horizons according to the structures of the interstate system, the latter speak to the possibilities of other ways of organising socio-spatial relations. Indeed, as I argued in Chapter 4, the ongoing debate as to whether the Nagas should pursue independence or autonomy within India only materialised when various other futures both inside and outside of this nation-state paradigm had been forestalled. Although much of the late twentieth century saw Naga futures prescribed according to this binary, it is a desire to return to a moment of political possibility that increasingly underpins contemporary calls for Naga self-determination *without* borders.

In foregrounding these tensions between the postcolonial and the decolonial within practices of Naga (inter)nationalism, this thesis has contributed to efforts to provincialise and historicise the nation-state by demonstrating its contingency.[1178] However, through attending to the geographical imaginaries underpinning Naga (inter)nationalist claims, it has also demonstrated the stubborn persistence of the state for those whose quest for self-determination has been perpetually deferred. For Phizo, the state was seen as the only means for achieving territorial decolonisation before both British and Indian coloniality. For contemporary Naga activists, the state and its concomitant institutions loom large — sometimes as a block to efforts to build non-state futures, and sometimes as the implicit (if sometimes unwanted) basis for contemporary imaginaries. Writing in this vein, Mahmood Mamdani attributes the ongoing impossibility of political decolonisation to the fact that nationalism and colonialism are 'co-constituted' aspects of modernity.[1179] Accordingly, colonisation can be understood as the 'making of permanent

[1178]Yarimar Bonilla, 'Unsettling sovereignty', *Cultural anthropology* 32 (2017) 330-339. p.333.

[1179]Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler Nor Native* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2020). p.9.

minorities and their maintenance through the politicisation of identity'.[1180] Indeed, in the Naga case, the violence of the nation-state project is evident both in the coloniality of the Indian state towards its geographical, political, and sociological margins, but also in the ongoing tensions between Naga groups and both neighbouring Indigenous communities and the descendants of central Indian Adivasi communities living in Northeast India.

Throughout this thesis, I have thus illustrated how the Naga case transcends easy categorisation. In addition to existing in tension between the post- and the decolonial, the Nagas' political struggle also refuses easy classification as to claims to Indigeneity vs. statehood; internal vs. external self-determination; settler vs. saltwater colonialism; and attempts to materialise state vs. non-state futures. It is therefore difficult to situate and periodise the conceptual genealogy of Naga political thought in accordance with changing global norms of postcolonial sovereignty, minority rights, Indigenous self-determination, or to situate Naga (inter)nationalist practices within broader genealogies of transnational advocacy.[1181] By foregrounding this sense of indeterminacy, this thesis responds to Namakkal's call for historians to attend to the 'impossible messiness of colonial rule' – particularly that produced by the multiplicity of colonialisms within a single place.[1182] As a methodology for doing decolonial history, this approach refuses both the received periodisation of decolonisation but also the stability of historical (and, I suggest, geographical) categories of analysis, including of the state, the nation, and Indigeneity. It means 'seeing beyond

[1180]ibid, p.25.

[1181]On self-determination see Massad, Against Self-Determination. On minority rights see *Global Minority Rights (The International Library of Essays on Rights),* ed. by Joshua Castellino (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). On transnational advocacy see Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (New York Cornell University Press, 1998); De Waal, *Advocacy in Conflict.*

[1182]Namakkal, *Utopia,* p.5.

the colonial binary of success and failure, of colonized and decolonized' to recognise that 'the unruly mess of history is actually bursting at the seams of categorial boxes'.[1183] The Naga case exemplifies this messiness and speaks to the need to attend to those identities and ways of being in the world which exist within and across these interstices.

The Naga case, however, is also a challenge to Mamdani's assertion that the ongoing pervasiveness of nationalism and the state amidst efforts to decolonise the political means that material decolonisation must involve the 'unmaking of the permanence of these identities'.[1184] This is because Naga identities have never been permanent. Despite the ambivalences of the nation, of Indigeneity, and of the state in the Naga context, these same categories have also provided a source of emancipation in the face of ongoing coloniality.[1185] Far from a simple rearticulation of colonial organising categories, Naga national and spatial imaginaries are continually debated and refashioned according to local, regional, and international conditions and the shifting contours of Indian colonial power. In short, the Nagas have never accepted the constraints of the interstate system passively; they have continually pushed against it to suit the ever-shifting situation on the ground. Moreover, as described in Chapter 6, Naga geopolitical theorists understand Indigenous thought as instructive not only for the Nagas and India, but also for South Asia and the world. I suggest that it is here, amidst these practices of regional and global solidarity and the creative possibilities of 'self-articulation',[1186] that the potential to decolonise Naga political imaginaries

[1183]ibid, p.205.

[1184]Mamdani, *Neither Settler*, p.25.

[1185]For a complementary critique of Mamdani see Eve Troutt Powell, 'Ignore the Poets at Your Peril: A Reflection on Neither Settler nor Native; The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities', *Journal of Palestine studies* 51 (2022) 78-84.

[1186]Ricarda Hammer, 'Rethinking the Political Community: Violence and the Making of the Modern Nation State' *European Journal of Sociology* 3 (2021) 536-544. p.540.

should be located. Advancing Namakkal's call to embrace 'messiness' as a decolonial method,[1187] I thus argue that the messiness of colonialism must be taken seriously as a site of geopolitical creativity,[1188] a site for fashioning identities and spatial imaginaries which exceed both the bounds of the conventional interstate system and also hegemonic analytical categories. It is to a discussion of the creative efforts of Naga actors to construct both internal and external legitimacy for heterogeneous political projects to which I now turn.

3.2 Between local and global audiences: Naga claims to legitimacy across scale

Turning to my second research objective — drawing upon geographical scholarship which understands the production of legitimacy as a dynamic and ongoing process rather than an achieved status,[1189] I have detailed how claims to legitimacy have underpinned heterogenous Naga geopolitical imaginaries, including Phizo's theory of the state and contemporary Naga claims to Indigeneity. With reference to the broader aim of this thesis, I want to foreground two aspects I consider to be central to Naga actors' construction of legitimacy since 1947: the relationship between legitimacy and both spatial and temporal scale.

As to the relationship between legitimacy and spatial scale, I have shown throughout this thesis how efforts to achieve legitimacy for shifting Naga geopolitical imaginaries is a multi-scalar project, a means of demonstrating the validity and viability of particular territorial imaginaries to global, regional, and local audiences. In this way, legitimacy represents a mediating concept – a conceptual bridge through which to understand how Naga actors reconcile between their aspirations on the ground with the broader structures of the interstate system. Holding in tension

[1187]Namakkal, *Utopia,* p.205.

[1188]Pinkerton and Benwell, Rethinking geopolitics.

[1189]Jeffrey, McConnell, and Wilson, Understanding legitimacy.

understandings of legitimacy as a normative claim and a set of practices sheds light on the relationship between Naga political imaginaries as articulated internationally and the everyday practices of Naga political and civil society actors.[1190] For instance, I have illustrated how Phizo buttressed his claims that the Nagas met normative (read: Western) conceptions of statehood through performances of stateness and the Naga plebiscite. Conversely, the NNC leader also drew upon his charismatic legitimacy and his tours of Naga villages to assure Naga publics of the desirability of independence. However, I have also described how the FNR and the GNF use contemporary performances of 'oneness' to demonstrate simultaneously the Nagas' eligibility for collective international rights and to produce the collective Naga public whose existence and singularity they assume.

Nevertheless, throughout this thesis, I have also highlighted the existence of various disjunctures of scale which beset Naga efforts to translate international norms of legitimacy within local communities. On the one hand, I have highlighted the difficulties Naga civil society groups face communicating notions of Global Indigeneity to Naga communities in a context of competing Indian and regional understandings of the term. On the other hand, I have highlighted the challenges Phizo and the NNC faced balancing a commitment to non-violence and Naga Pan-Asian, Christian, and Commonwealth solidarities in the face of shifting realities in the Naga homeland and across the Himalayan region. These scalar tensions have long hindered efforts to materialise alternative geopolitical futures. With reference to the project of subaltern geopolitics, the Naga case thus highlights the importance of analysing how subaltern geopolitical imaginaries are articulated not only according to hegemonic global scale geopolitical scripts and norms of legitimacy, but also according to local, national, and regional relationships.

[1190]ibid.

Amongst (inter)nationalist claimants, the Nagas are not unusual in promoting exceptionalist narratives as a means of attracting international attention. These claims have their roots in part in the colonial practices of territoriality described in Chapter 4, but also reflect area studies scholarship's tendency to treat Northeast India as a regional anomaly.[1191] I have also described, however, how the Nagas frequently present their future as one that will be instructive for the global. Potential sources for this tension include the proselytising nature of Naga Baptist Christianity, which teaches that it is the Nagas' exceptionalism and the divine nature of their territorial claim which makes them an example for other nations to follow. However, we might also trace the emergence of this tension to the challenges Naga actors face strategically (re)orienting their claim in relation to local, regional, and global actors, whereby Naga actors must simultaneously demonstrate the merits and uniqueness of their claim vis-à-vis that of other groups within Northeast India (and South Asia more broadly), while also reassuring audiences that the Nagas are eligible international actors who will not threaten the existing interstate order. Navigating this tension is thus at the heart of the project of Naga (inter)nationalism.

Attending to the construction of legitimacy across scale enables one better to appreciate the actorness and subjectivity of Naga political and civil society groups. Wilson and McConnell have suggested that it is the ambiguity of legitimacy – its 'polysemous relationship' to sovereignty, legality, and statehood – that leaves space for 'creative experimentation' in how legitimacy is produced.[1192] The Nagas are a case in point. None of the groups described in this thesis have ever possessed either de jure or de facto sovereignty – nor, save the NNC, do any of them aspire to either status for themselves. Nevertheless, the NNC, FNR, GNF, and NPMHR all possess

[1191]Sharma, Framing Northeast India.

[1192]Wilson and McConnell, Constructing legitimacy, p.207.

considerable authority within Naga society derived from a publicly proclaimed fealty to the Nagas' historic struggle for self-determination, but also a combination of charismatic, moral, and religious authority. However, while Jeffrey, Wilson, and McConnell have argued that attending to anomalous geopolitical spaces 'highlight[s] how legitimacy claims are not necessarily the purview of the state',[1193] this case extends the purview of legitimacy studies of non-state actors to a broader set of civil society actors beyond governments-in-exile, international-NGOs, refugees, and bureaucratic and military actors. Indeed, as well as possessing their own international geopolitical subjectivity, the FNR, the GNF, and the NPMHR claim and construct legitimacy for Naga nationalist imaginaries both internationally and on the ground. The Naga case points to the importance of considering the agency and actorness of such civil society actors in other cases of ongoing geopolitical uncertainty, where questions about the legitimacy of hegemonic political actors continue to hinder peace negotiations.

The Naga case also speaks to the intersection of religion and political legitimacy both locally and globally.[1194] As I have demonstrated in this thesis, it is impossible to understand Naga geopolitical thought and practice without reference to Naga Christianity. Phizo's scripting of a Christian Naga state offered a strategic advantage in the context of a post-Second World War shifting geopolitical landscape. However, responding to Browning and de Oliveira's call to avoid overemphasising the 'rational dimensions of subaltern geopolitics', I caution against reading Naga

[1193]Jeffrey, McConnell, and Wilson, Understanding legitimacy, p.182.

[1194]There are parallels here with other scholarship on religion and legitimacy elsewhere in geography. See Weihsuan Lin, 'Religion as an object of state power: The People's Republic of China and its domestic religious geopolitics after 1978', *Political Geography* 67 (2018) 1-11; Dmitrii Sidorov, 'Post-Imperial Third Romes: Resurrections of a Russian Orthodox Geopolitical Metaphor', *Geopolitics* 11 (2006) 317–347;

religious geopolitics only as a form of 'calculated "subaltern realist"' subversion'.[1195] Instead, I have situated this religious geopolitics within historical processes of Naga identity-formation, particularly as this relates to the experience of colonialism. As I have shown, Christian teachings – shaped by his formative engagement with Baptist missionary education – undergirded Phizo's theory of the state, his claims to Naga nationhood, and his personal authority. Claims as to the NNC leader's messianic character continue to inform the contemporary reception to Phizo's vision. Global networks of Christian internationalists aided both Phizo's travels to the UK, and the Nagas' recent engagement with the UN's Indigenous Peoples' mechanisms. Religiously inspired performance – including collective prayer, singing, and sacral covenants – work to meld the scalar connections between Christian teachings which see a collective Naga future as providential, and embodied behaviours which work toward this aim, notably Naga societal reconciliation. The Naga case thus expands the empirical gaze of existing studies of religion and politics in South Asia beyond the traditional focus on Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism and speaks to the importance of religion, both in legitimating particular geographical imaginaries and in undergirding the agency of political leaders.[1196] By interrogating the role of religion in also shaping embodied practices of nation building and legitimating Naga national imaginaries on the ground, however, this thesis also situates the activities of groups like the FNR within an emergent scholarship on 'intimate geopolitics', one which locates the co-constitutive and overlapping process of nation-building and religious identification within the grounded spaces of everyday life.[1197]

[1195]Browning and de Oliveira, Brand Africa, p.645.

[1196]On religion, legitimacy and agency in the Tibetan context, see Fiona McConnell, 'The geopolitics of Buddhist reincarnation: contested futures of Tibetan leadership', *Area* 45 (2013) 162-169.

[1197]Sarah Smith, *Intimate Geopolitics: Love, Territory, and the Future on India's Northern Threshold* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

As to the relationship between legitimacy and temporal scale, this thesis has two thematic foci. First, is the challenge of sustaining legitimacy over many decades. Here again, Naga actors' embodied performances play an important role in convincing both domestic and global audiences of the validity of the Nagas' cause. Returning to the notion of creativity, Naga actors have been innovative in their attempts to rejuvenate and reimagine their claims according to shifting historical events and international norms. Nevertheless, far from a wholesale acceptance of hegemonic norms around sovereignty, self-determination, and Indigeneity, I have argued that Naga actors have pushed against and creatively refashioned all of these constructs over time. With regards to the latter, I have shown how Naga activists have refashioned ideas of Indigeneity circulating *both* within settler-colonial contexts *and* within Asia. Nagas continue to repudiate any association between Indigeneity and minority status and emphasise continued Naga occupation of their ancestral land. Moreover, Naga actors were both active contributors to the drafting process for the UNDRIP, while continuing to reinterpret its contents according to the specifics of the Naga situation. This thesis therefore responds to Pinkerton and Benwell's call to investigate the role of creativity in the construction and propagation of geopolitical imaginaries 'beyond the elite spaces and actors most often associated with diplomatic activities' to consider the 'diverse actors' involved in this process across 'different geographical scales'.[1198] Moreover, the Naga case demonstrates the need to take both instability and stasis seriously as sites of geopolitical innovation.[1199]

[1198]Pinkerton and Benwell, Rethinking geopolitics, p.15.

[1199]McConnell makes complementary arguments concerning the need to take seriously liminality as a site of creativity. See McConnell, Liminal geopolitics.

Second, as demonstrated by the NSCN-IM's assertions of the 'Unique History of The Nagas', is how attempts to construct historical legitimacy underpin Naga spatial and scalar imaginaries. I have elucidated how efforts to produce Naga futurity draw upon and rework the past, but also to unsettle and rescale the link between the Nagas' past, present, and future. In Chapter 4, I described the NNC's attempts to mediate between notions of Naga tradition, modernity, and progress in the 'Atomic Age'. In Chapter 5, I illustrated how Phizo sought to naturalise Naga claims to statehood through reconciling between Christian and Indigenous temporalities; while in Chapter 6, I explored how Naga politicians legitimate claims to a global Indigenous identity through scripting a collective pre-colonial Naga history which preceded the state. Finally, in Chapter 7, I elucidated the efforts by Naga political and civil society actors to mediate between the Naga *archive* and *the repertoire* to produce territorial futurity. As I have shown, the NNC, the FNR, and the GNF use multi-scalar performances to 'retain and anticipate a presence' from the past within the present.[1200] Each of these historical moments inhabits its own temporality: the FNR embraces the Simon Commission memorandum as a harbinger of the *openness* of the Nagas' future; the GNF use the slowness of walking to invoke the *timelessness* of the Naga cross-border claim; while the NID celebrations inhabit a *recurring* – even haunting – temporality, one which collapses the already impermeable boundaries between the past, the present, and the future.

I have also shown, however, how these self-conscious attempts by Naga groups to mobilise different historical regimes exist alongside competing efforts by non-Naga actors to construct co-constitutive Naga spatial and temporal identities. In Chapter 4, I described how the

[1200]Margrit Pernau, Chronocenosis: How to Imagine the Multiplicity of Temporalities Without Losing the Emphasis on Power and Conflicts, *History and Theory,* 2023 https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.12315 .

NNC's attempts to script a national time for the Nagas were articulated in the face of a British and Indian logic of primitivism: a politics of deferral which denied the Nagas' capacity for self-governance. I described in Chapter 5 how Phizo's providential belief in the teleological inevitability of Naga statehood existed in conflict with Nehru's conviction that the Nagas would quickly (and quietly) assimilate within India. In Chapter 6, I set out the GON's attempts to use the RIIN to temporally and spatially (re)scale meanings of Naga Indigeneity to apply only to those people or their ancestors who were living in Nagaland State at its creation in December 1963. Moreover, all of the events described in Chapter 7 coexist with increasingly prominent Hindu nationalist counter-narratives which script the historic 'civilisation and familial' connections between the Nagas and those inhabiting the rest of the subcontinent in an attempt to construct a larger 'territorial and civilisational space of Hindutva'.[1201]

I suggest that Edelstein, Geroulanos, and Wheatley's model of chronocenosis is instructive in attending to the relationship between these heterogeneous temporal regimes.[1202] Chronocenosis is 'a way of theorising multiplicity but also the conflict of temporal regimes operating in any given moment'.[1203] Power operates 'by arranging, managing, and scaling temporal regimes and conflicts'.[1204] At the same time, however, 'these fault lines function as seams of structural weakness and possibility: power is often undone in the cut and thrust of temporal antagonisms'.[1205] The author's emphasis on the competition between different temporal regimes and on how this

[1201]Longkumer, Power of persuasion, p.303.

[1202]Dan Edelstein, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Natasha Wheatley, 'Chronocenosis: An Introduction to Power and Time', in *Power and Time: Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History*, ed. by Dan Edelstein, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Natasha Wheatley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) pp.1-53 (p.4).

[1203]ibid.

[1204]ibid.

[1205]ibid.

multiplicity of temporalities shape competing claims to authority sets chronocenosis apart from Koselleck's earlier theorisations of layers or 'sediments of time'. [1206] The relevance of this (re)pluralisation of our understanding of the relationship between time and legitimate authority to the Naga case is threefold.

First, chronocenosis captures how claims to Naga authority *amongst* Naga groups are based upon efforts to negotiate multiple mutually competing, cooperating, conflicting and converging temporal regimes.[1207] The Naga case extends existing geographical scholarship which has illustrated that articulations of political legitimacy are staked on *both* alleged continuity or rupture from the past *and* on a 'notion of the desired future',[1208] by demonstrating how claims to legitimacy exceed and unsettle these largely sequential models of temporality. Second, however, with its focus on the mutual constitution between power and time, chronocenosis points to how the struggle for hegemony *between* the Nagas and India is in no small part one about asserting the primacy of a particular temporal order. This speaks to the need for greater interrogation of how competing claims to legitimate authority in situations of geopolitical uncertainty have been shaped by divergent conceptions of time. Finally, the Naga case also extends scholarship on chronocenosis by bringing to the fore how these plural *temporal scalar* imaginaries are also used to legitimate

[1206]ibid, p.10. Also see Reinhart Koselleck, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories* (Redwood, California: Stanford University Press, 2018).

[1207]Jonathan Catlin, Dan Edelstein, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Natasha Wheatley, 'Time is a Tense Ecosystem an Interview on Power and Time (Part II)', *Journal of the History of Ideas Blog*, 9 June 2021 https://jhiblog.org/2021/06/09/time-is-a-tense-ecosystem-an-interview-on-power-and-time-part-ii/ last accessed 10 July 2023.

[1208]Wilson and McConnell, Constructing legitimacy, p.208.

concomitant *spatial scalar* imaginaries.[1209] By drawing work on chronocenosis into dialogue with geographical scholarship concerned with the discursive-practical work involved in the deployment of 'scale', I suggest that Naga and Indian actors strategically engage *both* temporal and spatial scalar categories and discourses to naturalise the scaling of competing political projects.[1210] Naga (inter)nationalism thus poses a challenge to the Government of India's 'scalar sovereignty' — what Stephen Legg describes as its nominalist ability to dictate the nature of its own networked hierarchies.[1211] Nevertheless, through refusing attempts to enfold Naga pasts, presents, and futures within broader Indian nationalist historiographies, the projects described within this thesis also represents an ongoing challenge to the Government of India's *temporal* scalar hierarchies.

3.3 Between the national and the international: sites, practices, and actors of Naga (inter)nationalism

I have so far discussed the substantive content of the Nagas' geopolitical claim and how this has been shaped by multi-scalar norms around legitimacy. I now turn to the question of how Naga political and civil society actors have articulated their international claim. What does this tell us about the broader geographies of internationalism? Central to the arguments made within this thesis is that Naga nationalism has emerged through and been shaped by its *inter*nationalist

[1209]On historian's application of chronocenosis, see Jonathon Catlin, 'When does an epidemic become a 'crisis'? Analogies between Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS in American public memory', *Memory Studies* 14 (2021) 1445-1475; Sunil Purushotham, 'History and Temporal Sovereignty in the Thought of Jawaharlal Nehru' in Edelstein, Geroulanos, and Wheatley, *Power and Time,* pp.334-354; Stephen Legg, *Round Table Geographies: Constituting Colonial India in Interwar London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), p.40.

[1210]Moore, Rethinking scale; MacKinnon, Reconstructing scale.

[1211]Legg, Of scales.

activities. Rather than understand the Naga nation as a self-contained unit or Naga subaltern geopolitical actors as 'trapped in place',[1212] this thesis has illustrated how Naga nation making is tied to a larger project of identity formation, one which is itself international and rooted in and routed through connections with varied communities and political projects. At first blush, this may appear to be a classic 'relational geographies' argument, one which acknowledges how Naga identities and spaces are shaped by interactions across numerous sites and scales, even as they are articulated with reference to a homeland.[1213] While this framing certainly has resonance with the Naga case, throughout this thesis, I have drawn upon geographical scholarship which unsettles normative scalar categories through foregrounding the particular discursive and political work involved in the production of scale. In particular, I have drawn upon an understanding of scale as an *effect* of nominalist, performative, and networked practices to illustrate the heterogeneous means through which Naga political and civil society actors have constructed a putatively (inter)national identity and the sites, practices, and people involved in this project.

This thesis thus speaks to a growing corpus of literature on the internationalist dimensions of nationalist movements.[1214] With some notable exceptions, however, this scholarship has principally focused on anticolonial nationalist movements which went on to achieve statehood, particularly in the South Asian context.[1215] I have expanded the temporal and spatial scope of these

[1212]Sharp, Margins, p.27.

[1213]Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender,* p.264.

[1214]For instance, see Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), Emma Kluge, 'West Papua and the international history of decolonization, 1961-69', *The International History Review*, 42 (2020) 1155-1172; Julie Hauser, 'Internationalism and Nationalism: Indian Protagonists and Their Political Agendas at the 15th World Vegetarian Congress in India (1957)', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 44 (2021) 152–66.

[1215]Guyot-Réchard and Leake, Introduction: South Asia Unbound.

studies. As to the former, I have considered the relationship between nationalism and internationalism over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While scholars have productively analysed practices of nationalism, internationalism, and worldmaking both 'during' and 'after' empire, the Naga case unsettles these efforts at periodisation.[1216] In particular, I have shown how Naga (inter)nationalism has long had an ambivalent relationship to imperial power. On the one hand, a Naga (inter)nationalist consciousness formed on the grounds of an imperial social formation. On the other, it is the ongoing struggle against imperialism which continues to drive contemporary Naga (inter)nationalist practices. Moreover, echoing geographical scholarship which has highlighted how prolonged periods of waiting and anticipation can foster opportunities for resistance and political dynamism,[1217] the Naga case brings to the fore how ideas of (inter)nationalism are far from static and are instead strategically reconstituted at particular historical junctures.

The Naga case expands the spatial scope of studies of (inter)nationalism by foregrounding the need to investigate the internationalism of aspirant-, non-, and sub-state actors, particularly in non-Anglophone contexts. This thesis also points to the need to interrogate the scalar politics underpinning how inter(nationalism) is articulated both in dialogue with and in opposition to other scalar identities, including those that represent particular regions as at the 'margins', as 'borderlands', or as 'remote'.

I have used the Naga case to extend the historical and contemporary geographies of internationalism in four ways. First, this thesis contributes to scholarship which advocates for a

[1216]On worldmaking after empire see Getachew, *Worldmaking*. On worldmaking during empire see Hartnett, Love is worldmaking.

[1217]Craig Jeffrey, 'Timepass: Youth, class, and time among unemployed young men in India', *American Ethnologist* 37 (2010) 465-481; McConnell, *Rehearsing,* p.185.

'non-state centred' history of internationalism.[1218] As described in Chapter 2, there is an established body of literature on the role of elite actors – particularly statesmen and diplomats – in internationalism, as well as a newly emergent body of scholarship on practices of internationalism from 'below'. This thesis has brought, however, the geographies of internationalism into dialogue with subaltern geopolitics scholarship to foreground the internationalist practices of those who occupy a more 'ambiguous position of marginality' and who are neither fully 'inside' nor 'outside' the interstate system.[1219] Those whose stories I have told here – including A. Z. Phizo and three Naga civil society organisations engaged in international advocacy – are neither state elites, but nor are they 'small scale, ground-level' or 'invisible' political actors.[1220]

Second, the Naga case adds empirical depth to geographical and historical scholarship on the plural modes of internationalism. I have shown how Naga actors engage with conventional modes of diplomacy through speaking (and attempting to do so) at the UN and in negotiations with state representatives. Nevertheless, throughout this thesis, print media has emerged as a locus of Naga (inter)nationalist activity reflecting inter alia the emergence of a Naga (inter)nationalist political subjectivity within Baptist missionary education. Written correspondence has long enabled individuals to engage in in situ internationalism in the absence of mobility.[1221] Emma Hunter and Leslie James have proposed that scholars examining the workings of print media in 'colonial and semi-colonial settings' consider how the 'materiality, addressivity, performativity, and periodicity' of different publications can 'activate spaces of discourse into various publics' —

[1218]Guyot-Réchard and Leake, Introduction, p.18.

[1219]Sharp, Margins, p. 21.

[1220]Guyot-Réchard and Leake, Introduction, p.18.

[1221]Krishnan, Ideal girls.

both nationally, transnationally, and internationally.[1222] This thesis speaks to this imperative and extends scholarship on print internationalism in two ways. On the one hand, I expand the temporal horizons of existing scholarship on missionary education, print culture, and the production of Naga (inter)nationalism,[1223] to consider the dis/continuities between letters and pamphlets circulating in the period immediately before and after the transfer of power and contemporary newspaper, digital, and social media circulations. On the other hand, I speak to a growing body of scholarship concerned with the archival geographies of internationalism to demonstrate the constitutive role of archives in shaping historical and contemporary (inter)nationalist imaginaries.[1224] In this vein, I have advocated for taking seriously the embodied repertoire of Naga (inter)nationalist performance alongside imperial sources housed in the UK.

Third, this thesis responds to Hodder, Legg and Heffernan's call to reflect on the performative and affective dimensions of internationalism.[1225] As described in Chapter 2, a nascent body of geographical scholarship has considered how internationalism was imagined, negotiated, and contested through a wide range of international conferences, summits, and meetings.[1226] This scholarship has considered the social, affective, and multi-sensory dimensions of such events, and reflects geographical scholarship on the spatialities of diplomacy amongst both hegemonic and subaltern geopolitical actors which is concerned with like issues.[1227] Both bodies of thought have

[1222]Hunter and James, Colonial Public Spheres.

[1223]Longkumer, Kingdom.

[1224]Hodder, Heffernan, and Legg, Archival internationalism.

[1225]Hodder, Legg, and Heffernan, Historical internationalism, p.5.

[1226]Hodder, Conferencing the international. Also see Legg, Heffernan, Hodder, and Thorpe, *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences;* Legg, "Political Atmospherics".

[1227]Craggs, Subaltern geopolitics. Also see McConnell, Moreau, and Dittmer, Mimicking diplomacy; Iver Neumann, *Diplomatic sites: A Critical Enquiry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

drawn attention to the role of symbolic and choreographed performances in articulating international identities and enacting alternative visions of internationalism in formal sites of diplomacy. This analysis chimes with the engagement of Naga groups at the UN's Indigenous Peoples' mechanisms, where speakers enfold powerful appeals to emotion with close engagement with the UNDRIP. An example of a less successful choreographed performance – but nevertheless still one which continues to hold symbolic importance in Naga nationalist historiographies – is Phizo's first 'International Press Conferences'. Nevertheless, in an attempt to diversify the 'spaces and sites not previously considered in internationalist histories', Chapter 7 drew attention to the role of performance in articulating internationality from within putatively 'local' spaces of Naga politics. In doing so, I have responded to calls to attend to how the international is felt and embodied, whilst further demonstrating the role of cultural and military spectacle in shaping internationalism and the relationship between the simultaneous performance of both temporal *and* spatial scaler identities. I have extended Kaiser and Nikiforova work on the performative dimensions of scale to also elucidate how scale is performed via more deliberative and theatrical performances, whose meanings are derived from the specific conjecture of actors and audiences in a given moment.[1228]

Finally, this thesis responds to Hodder and colleagues' call to pay attention to how identity politics undergirds claims on 'the international'. It has done so in two ways. As to the first way, as described above, this thesis has considered the role of religion in shaping expressions of Naga internationalism. Of course, the significance of missionary and Christian networks in shaping twentieth-century internationalism has been well documented.[1229] Nevertheless, through attending

[1228]Kaiser and Nikiforova, Performativity of scale.

[1229]Thompson, *For God and Globe;* Brunner, From converts.

to how Baptist Christianity has shaped both the spatialities and territorialities of Naga internationalist claims, I unsettle existing accounts of 'Pan-Asian Ecumenism' which see Christianity as the basis for a deterritorialised identity — one which transcends national and regional boundaries.[1230] Instead, Chapter 5 documents how A. Z. Phizo drew on Christian theology to support his demand for statehood and to navigate a post-Second World War international political landscape. Moreover, echoing the discussions above, I have also considered how the efforts of Naga nationalists to reshape the 'international' have drawn upon *both* Christian eschatological and Naga Indigenous sempiternal temporalities.

As to the second way in which this thesis furthers our understanding of the relationship between identity politics and the international, I have considered the Nagas' engagement with global Indigeneity. In doing so, I contribute to a broad body of scholarship concerned with how communities outside of liberal democratic contexts have articulated Indigeneity both 'locally' and 'globally'. By interrogating the relationship between Naga articulations of Indigeneity in international fora and on the ground, I have shown how activists draw on claims to Indigeneity to position the Nagas as members of a political community which preceded the establishment of the Indian Union. Moreover, while shedding light on the networked practices through which Naga activists forge global solidarities, I have elucidated a series of spatial tensions and contradictions which unsettle the often-romanticised imaginings of Indigenous solidarities. Echoing calls by legal geographers to explore the disjunctures of scale between international legal instruments and the socio-political realities they seek to regulate,[1231] I have illustrated how Naga activists have grappled with, reclaimed, and refashioned international instruments and norms – including the

[1230]Billington Harper, *Shadow of the Mahatma.*

[1231]Carmalt, Geographies of human rights.

UNDRIP and the right to self-determination – according to local and regional circumstances. However, I have also shown the important role that Naga actors have played in articulating and refashioning broader understandings of Asian Indigeneity.

4. Conclusion: Unique histories and geographies of the Nagas

I conclude this chapter in the same vein as I started: by considering the NSCN-IM's claims in their pamphlet entitled 'Unique Histories of the Nagas'. This thesis has brought the Naga historical archive into dialogue with ethnographic approaches to the study of contemporary Naga social and political life. In doing so, I have illuminated both the centrality of 'the international' to Naga nationalism, but also how Naga geopolitical imaginaries have been forged with reference to the Nagas' colonial, pre-colonial, and putatively postcolonial past. Far from being a purely positivist account of Naga history, this thesis has elucidated how temporality and claims as to the uniqueness of Naga history have been strategically deployed to diverse territorial ends. The struggle over the politics of alternative futures, argues Ali Razza, is also a struggle over memory.[1232] History – and, I argue, geography – is thus necessarily an ethical project to uncover these futures.[1233] Throughout this thesis, I have foregrounded the various unrealised political projects which continue to litter the Naga present, not as evidence of the failure of Naga nationalism, but as proof of the Nagas' success in scripting and sustaining their identity before both British and Indian coloniality.[1234] Uncovering these future pasts and elucidating the historical lineage of Naga geopolitical

[1232]Ali Raza, *Revolutionary Pasts: Communist Internationalism in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). p.254.

[1233]ibid.

[1234]Namakkal makes complementary arguments concerning the historical perseverance of a French-Indian identity. Namakkal, *Utopia.*

imaginaries is vital to understanding contemporary Naga political and social life – not least because Naga society continues to live with the legacies of these unrealised possibilities – and to keep open the possibilities for the Nagas' geopolitical future.

As Naga poet Easterine Kire wrote in a poem published to commemorate Naga Day:

> Of our shared walk as a people
> Do we look back or
> Do we look to the future?
> Perhaps we should do both
> For the answer lies in both directions.[1235]

This thesis has tried to do precisely that, namely to use a multi-scalar temporal approach to look both to the past and to the future. I have also, however, adopted a multi-scalar *spatial* lens to understand the geographical imaginaries which inform these temporal claims. I have shown the centrality of practices of internationalism in constructing Naga national identities and spatial imaginaries and thus the importance of internationalism in the Naga's 'shared walk as a people'. This thesis is thus an intervention into situating and diversifying the histories and geographies of internationalism. It is a call to take seriously alternative foci of (inter)nationalist activity among subaltern, minority, Indigenous and otherwise marginalised non-state geopolitical actors.

[1235]Easterine Kire, 'Naga Day' in *Naga Day,* ed, by. FNR, p. x.

Appendix A – Chronological table of key dates in the Naga self-determination movement

Date	Event
October 1918	Naga Club established.
11 January 1929	Naga Club submit a Memorandum to the Simon Commission calling either for the Nagas' exclusion within a reformed British India, or for the Nagas to determine their own future.
2 August 1935	Government of India Act 1935 published. Naga Hills designated an 'excluded area' within British India.
2 February 1946	Naga National Council ('NNC') established.
June 1946	NNC submit memorandum to the British government demanding autonomy within Assam.
February 1947	NNC submit second memorandum to the Indian Constituent Assembly calling for the establishment of an interim Naga government.
26 June 1947	NNC and the Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari, sign the 'Nine Points Agreement' (or the 'Hydari Agreement'). The agreement provides judicial, executive, and legislative autonomy for the NNC.
14 August 1947	Nehru's repudiation of the Hydari agreement leads some NNC members to declare Naga independence via a memorandum to the United Nations.
15 August 1947	Independence of India.
28 December 1950	Angami Zapu Phizo elected NNC President.
16 May 1951	NNC organise independence plebiscite. 99% of Nagas reportedly vote in favour.
January 1952	Nagas boycott first Indian General election.
March 1953	India begins repressive measures against NNC.
22 March 1956	Formation of the Federal Government of Nagaland ('FGN').
June 1960	Phizo arrives in London, en route to the UN, to advocate for Naga independence.

July 1960	Disillusioned NNC members establish the Naga People's Convention ('NPC'), aiming to end Indo-Naga violence. The NPC and the GOI sign the 'Sixteen Point Agreement', establishing the State of Nagaland *within* India.
1 December 1963	Nagaland State inaugurated. Violence escalates between supporters of Nagaland state and the NNC/FGN who are in favour of independence.
April 1964	Formation of the Nagaland Peace Mission, led by the Nagaland Baptist Church Council.
6 September 1964	Peace Council brokers a ceasefire between India and the FGN/NNC
1972	Indo-Naga ceasefire breaks down
November 1975	NNC members sign the 'Shillong Accord', agreeing to accept the Indian constitution and surrender arms. The agreement is quickly condemned by many NNC leaders.
January 1980	Prominent NNC officials including Thuingaleng Muivah, Isak Chishi Swu, and S. S. Khaplang leave the organisation and establish the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The NSCN reject the Shillong Accord. Further Indo-Naga violence begins.
April 1988	NSCN splits into the NSCN-IM, led by Isak Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah, and the NSCN-K led by S. S. Khaplang.
30 April 1990	Death of A. Z. Phizo
23 January 1993	NSCN(IM) joins the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation ('UNPO')
27 July 1993	NSCN-IM speak at the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations ('WGIP') - the first time Naga representatives have spoken at the UN.
1 August 1997	Second Indo-Naga cease-fire brokered between the NSCN-IM and the GOI.
14 November 1998	Indo-Naga ceasefire extended to include the NSCN-K.
June 2009	NSCN(K) and NSCN(IM) sign a 'Covenant of Reconciliation, committing to end interfactional violence.
3rd August 2015	The NSCN(IM) sign an historic 'Framework Agreement with the GOI. The agreement aims to establish a sui generis system of 'shared sovereignty' between the Nagas and India.
17 November 2017	The GOI begins parallel peace talks with other Naga nationalist political groups.
31 October 2019	Indo-Naga talks miss GOI for resolving the 'Naga Issue'. The key stumbling block is the NSCN-IM's demand for a separate Naga constitution and flag.

Appendix B – List of interviewees

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Organization	First interview	Second interview
Simon	21-30	M	Naga Students Federation ('NSF')	07/07/2020 – 60 minutes, online	
Ali	51-60	M	GNF	25/06/2021 – 60 minutes, online	
Neiphiu	51-60	M	GNF	10/07/2021 – 60 minutes, online	
Lily	41-50	F	NPMHR	04/08/2021 – 90 minutes, online	
Chingmei	51-60	M	NPMHR, GNF	09/08/2021 – 90 minutes, online	23/08/2022 – 105 minutes, Nagaland
Abacho	71-80	M	NPMHR	13/09/2021 – 105 minutes, online	15/08/2022 – 150 minutes, Nagaland
Narola	41-50	F	NPMHR	17/09/2021 – 60 minutes, online	21/09/2021 – 60 minutes, online
Akai	41-50	M	FNR, NPMHR	22/09/2021 – 90 minutes, online	12/08/2022 – 105 minutes, Nagaland
Vikheli	31-40	M	Researcher (no affiliation)	23/09/2021 – 90 minutes, online	
Asangla	31-40	F	NPMHR	06/10/2021 – 45 minutes, online	

Rovi	31-40	F	Researcher and activist (no affiliation)	08/10/2021 – 60 minutes, online	
Atoli	41-50	F	NPMHR	20/10/2021 – 60 minutes, online	
Felix	71-80	M	Transnational advocate (non-Naga)	25/05/2021 -- 30 minutes, phone	
Lanu	21-30	M	Activist (no organizational affiliation)	09/06/2021 - 60 minutes, online	
Alice	71-80	F	Transnational advocate (non-Naga)	04/08/2022– 90 minutes, Delhi. *Included oral history.*	
John	61-70	M	The Naga Club	08/08/2022 – 75 minutes, Nagaland	
Alem	21-30	M	Eastern Naga Revolutionary Front	19/08/2022 – 45 minutes, Nagaland	
Jamir	71-80	M	GNF, FNR	20/08/2022 – 135 minutes, Nagaland. *Included oral history.*	
Seno	61-70	F	GNF	20/08/2022 – 45 minutes, Nagaland	

Abemo	81-90	M	NNC	21/08/2022 – 105 minutes (with interpreter), Nagaland	
Yanthungo	41-50	M	FNR, NPMHR, GNF	22/08/2022 – 120 minutes, Nagaland	
Abraham	31-40	M	NSF	22/08/2022 – 75 minutes, Nagaland	
Paul	61-70	M	NPMHR, FNR	22/08/2022 – 90 minutes, Nagaland	
Along	41-50	M	NPMHR	23/08/2022 – 90 minutes, Nagaland	
Apong	81-90	M	NNC, FNR	24/09/2022 – 60 minutes (with interpreter), Nagaland. *Included oral history.*	
Rano	51-60	F	GNF	25/08/2022 – 90 minutes, Nagaland	
Benjamin	81-90	M	NNC	25/08/2022 – 90 minutes (with interpreter), Nagaland. *Included oral history.*	

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[1236] As part of this thesis' interest in the relationship between the form and location of archival collections and practices of internationalism, I present archival sources by archive location, rather than source type.

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