THE INDIA FORUM
A JOURNAL-MAGAZINE ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

October 31, 2023

Colonial Lines and Postcolonial Conflicts in North East India

By: Jelle J.P. Wouters

The incorporation of the North East into the Indian Union replicated the colonial order of administrating tribe and territory. The history of the region since has been of shots fired, initially towards visions of alternative polities, and lately, for privileged access to existing state structures.

"The Hill people are suspicious of the plains Manipuris," Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the minister of states, was told by a high Indian official in Manipur in June 1948.

The "plain Manipuris" referred to the Meiteis, Manipur's dominant ethnic group residing in the Imphal Valley, which housed the Kangla Fort, the seat of the Manipuri monarchy. The "hill people" - to whom the nomenclature "Manipuri" was not applied - were known by tribal and clan appellations: Naga of various variations, Kuki, and Mizo. With the end of the British Raj, the Manipur maharaja and his subjects had differing visions of their political future, within and outside the Indian Union the Sardar was forging together from the princely states and other loosely linked political units.

Patel's man in Manipur was Debeswar Sarmah. Hailing from Jorhat, Sarmah was the speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly until he was appointed, in October 1947, as Manipur's Dominion Agent, responsible for the relations between newly independent India and the princely state.

It was his letter that Patel was reading that day in June. Sarmah specified that the "Mao Nagas inhabiting that part of Manipur State which adjoins the Naga Hills in Assam have made constant efforts to secede from Manipur and join other Nagas in the Naga Hills." A similar demand for secession existed on the other end of the Imphal Valley. There, "the Mizo Union comprising the Mizo people inhabiting that area which lies adjoining the Lushai [Mizo] Hills in Assam, want to secede from Manipur and join their kinsmen in these Lushai hills." (The Mizo Union in Manipur, Sarmah had qualified in an earlier letter, also comprised the Kukis.)

Sarmah explained how "formerly, they [the hill communities] were not under Manipur state." With "formerly", he referred to the colonial era in which the hills were administered directly by a British officer. In Sarmah's evaluation, "these aspirations on the part of Maos and Mizos are natural, and these peoples are being kept with Manipur only by force of our Assam Rifles."

> "With the first shot, or with the first trouble due to outside or inside instigation, Manipur, for the matter of that this frontier, will disintegrate."

Indeed, Manipur's chief minister, Priya Brata Singh, who was the maharaja's brother, repeatedly appealed to the Assam governor, Akbar Hydari, to be allowed to employ the Assam Rifles to go after Athiko Daiho, the Mao Naga president of the Naga National League (NNL), which represented the Nagas in Manipur. An intelligence report in May 1947 relayed a similar threat of violence directed at the hill communities.

If the hill communities professed no loyalty to the idea of Manipur and wished to join the Naga and Mizo Hills in Assam, the maharaja and his court, in turn, felt no obligation to join the Indian Union. When the British Raj announced its retreat, the maharaja, in fact, assumed that his kingdom would return to its earlier independent status, a notion he was quickly disabused of by the Indian government.

Sarmah ended with a warning: "with the first shot, or with the first trouble due to outside or inside instigation, Manipur, for the matter of that this frontier, will disintegrate."

His caution has since repeatedly been thrown to the wind, in Manipur and in places across North East India.

<<>>

The 'first shot' was fired in 1948.

The Naga National League had launched a no-tax campaign to protest independent India's refusal to decolonise the boundary between the Naga Hills District and Naga-lands in Manipur. The government went after the League's president, Daiho. In the stand-off that followed, two Mao Nagas were killed.

In subsequent years, there were to be many 'first shots', unleashing gruesome bouts of violence. And not just against the Nagas. And not just by states. In fact, the postcolonial history of the North East is, in very many places, significantly also a history of first shots being fired, both between states and ethnic-tribal communities, and between these communities themselves.

> In more recent decades, first shots are progressively part of a distinctly non-radical politics.

But whereas in the aftermath of India's independence, first shots were often related to revolutionary and decolonial visions for alternative polities and politics, in more recent decades, first shots are progressively part of a distinctly non-radical politics in which the political imagination has been reduced to visions for privileged access to, and ownership, of existing state structures and resources.

This is a tragedy, considering that the region was once a thriving laboratory of organic political forms and ideas.

Behaving like a colonial state

The hills of what is today known as the North East are part of a larger Indo-Burmese arc that extends from the Eastern Himalayas until it flattens into the Indian Ocean. This highland space is flanked by the populous societies of India and China, but part of neither in civilisational terms. For the longest time, this nonstate space was inhabited by a bewildering variety of people, speaking a wide range of languages, adhering to different cultural traditions, and organised socially in various ways. This was a space of mobility, in which villages and communities, across time, moved in and out, and established themselves in different ecological niches.

More than this, the hills were the most extraordinary laboratories of organic political forms and experiments that offered viable alternatives to state-living.

Hill polities, prior to their eventual annexation by the British Raj, resembled a gallery of political possibilities. There were experiments with royalty, ranked lineages, chieftainship, and plunges into hierarchy and domination, as much as elaborate exercises on egalitarian lines with self-organising village republics, public assemblies, situational leadership, and acute political fragmentation. The realm of 'the customary', as manifested orally, and added by ceremonial activities of many kinds, is what bound these polities internally. Relations between polities were variously oppositional - for instance through ritualised headhunting - and reciprocal in terms of alliances, prophetic movements, feasts, and marriage patterns.

Colonial administrators, when they first climbed the hills, were astonished by the variety of political forms and finesse they encountered and wrote about these in detail. What stood out - to them - was the sheer diversity of political arrangements.

> As the British began to annex parts of the hills […] they gradually sucked the creative oxygen out of this political laboratory.

Amongst the Naga alone, they observed a continuum with hereditary autocracy (Konyak and Sumi Nagas) and radical democracy (Angami and Chakhesang Nagas) as its opposite ends, with the in-between space consisting of village councils (Ao Nagas) and clan-based political forms (Lotha Nagas). Colonial officials were particularly impressed with the democratic variants, which they lauded as superior, in many ways, to the exclusionary modes of political representation and hierarchical decision-making of Victorian Britain.

However, as the British began to annex parts of the hills, at different points of time, and brought them under separate administrations, they gradually sucked the creative oxygen out of this political laboratory. The hills areas became divided, in constitutional-legal terms, between "partially excluded," "excluded," "control," and "tribal areas," with the latter referring to those hills that remained altogether outside the ambit of colonial jurisdiction.

In formal terms, the British professed indirect rule and a non-intervention policy in the hills. In actual practice, their actions and inactions were often ad-hoc and overall, in pursuit of a cost-efficient control of the hills. It was, for instance, to render the hills better legible and therefore governable that the British encouraged hill communities to politically arrange and represent themselves in tribal councils with which British officers could then work with and through. Through detailed reconstructions, historians have shown how the

form and functioning of 'the tribe' in the North East was significantly a colonial product.

To be sure: we are speaking here of a very particular and colonial understanding of what 'a tribe' is, namely a fairly homogenous, linguistically uniform, culturally coherent, and territorially delimited community.

In the pre-colonial era, before 'the tribe' was put into discourse and policy, people in the region, to be sure, did not have any difficulty in knowing who they were or in articulating relations of sameness and otherness. It is just that they did so in a different regime of self-reference and representation, for instance in relation to totems, moieties, phratries, clans, khels, villages, and village-clusters, or as subjects, serfs, and followers of traditional kings, chiefs, and headmen. In those days, modalities and moods of identity and belonging were also often fluctuating, fluid and multiple, making for a polyphony of contextual and overlapping affiliations. The colonial process of tribe-making necessitated the straitjacketing of these multidimensional, heterogeneous, fragmented, and overlapping identities into discrete and singular units of 'the tribe.'



If the colonial process of tribe-making impelled a radically different social reality in the hills, reality was further altered by the - equally radical - administrative divisions through the drawing of internal and international boundaries.

This boundary-making process was a highly fraught exercise. Colonial officers readily admitted to this. George Watt, who was involved in the drawing of the boundary between the Naga Hills District and Manipur confessed that "the northern neighbours of the hill tribes of Manipur [… are] so intimately related to one or two of the Manipur tribes that they can with difficulty be separated from them." (Watt 1887)

And yet, administratively separating them is what the British did.

> "The people on both sides of the provisional boundary are of the same stock, and it is most desirable that they should be controlled by one administration."

Certain communities were particularly severely afflicted by colonial boundary-making. The Zeliangrong and the Konyak Nagas, for instance, found themselves divided between three administrative units. In the case of the Konyak Naga, the Indo-Burma boundary ran through their ancestral lands. Communities of the broad Chin-Kuki-Zo affiliation also encountered the drawing of colonial lines through the lands they inhabited.

During the dying years of the British Raj, colonial officers attempted to set some of these wrongs in boundary-drawing right. J.P. Mills, advisor on tribal affairs to the Assam governor, in 1946 designed a proposal to redraw the Indo-Burma border. "The people on both sides of the provisional boundary are of the same stock, and it is most desirable that they should be controlled by one administration." By that time, however, India and Burma were preparing for their independence and geopolitical relations had hardened. Mills' proposal to redraw political boundaries on ethnographic lines was relegated to the archives.

Many of the conflicts that erupted in the North East have their roots - directly, indirectly - in these colonial processes of tribe, territory, and boundary-making.

Dreams of sovereignty

At the time the British Raj announced its retreat, the Second World War had completely transformed life in North East India. The hills became home to a rich assortment of political movements, imaginations, and aspirations. Many of these sought to undo the policies, arrangements, and boundaries that had been made in Britain.

Manipur was a case in point. In July 1947, the Assam governor, Akbar Hydari, travelled to Imphal to meet the maharaja, Bodhchandra Singh. He found "the Maharaja and his Court Camarilla somewhat drunk with the wine of independence on the lapse of [British] paramountcy." Hydari gave them "a few blunt truths as to what would happen if they did not come to an agreement which I considered would be acceptable to the Indian Union." After several days of terse discussion, on 2 July, "a rather dishevelled Highness came with the document duly signed."

> Rather than surrender his sovereignty, Bodhchandra wanted to expand his realm.

This agreement notwithstanding, one month later, on 15 August, as India erupted in joyful celebration, Bodhchandra conducted his own independence celebration in the Kangla Fort. The flag he hoisted was emblazoned with the image of the supreme Meitei god, Pakhangba, in his divine serpent form. The maharaja refused to raise the Indian tricolour, despite being urged to do so by Congress workers and the departing British resident, G.P. Stewart. (Moon-Little 2022).

Rather than surrender his sovereignty, Bodhchandra wanted to expand his realm. He petitioned both Delhi and London for the return to Manipur of the Kabaw Valley, which now lay in Burma. In the aftermath of the first Anglo-Burma war (1824-1826), as part of laying down the boundary between Manipur and Burma, the British had allocated this valley to the Burmese in 1834. The making of the border involved a long process of claims and counterclaims by the kings of Ava and Manipur and ultimately was an arbitrary call. The British government subsequently compensated the Manipur maharaja with an annual subsidy for his loss. In 1947, the maharaja wanted no more subsidy, only restoration of territory.

But it was not irredentism alone that animated the maharaja's mind. The end of the Raj also fuelled ambitions of more firmly establishing the court's sway in the hill districts. As Bodhchandra lamented to the British Political Agent in April 1947, "Though the Hill people are my subjects, unfortunately I have never been given the chance of carrying on the direct administration over the areas. This being so, it may be said that I am quite ignorant of how the administration is going on in the Hill Areas."

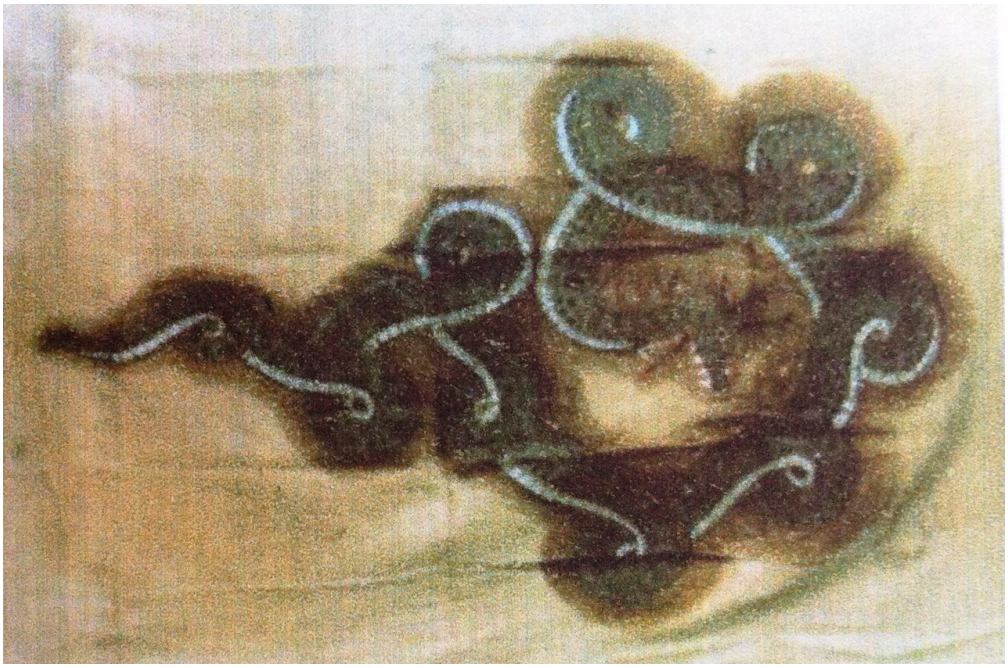
Prior to 1824, when Manipur had ceded into a British protectorate in response to recurrent invasions from the expansionist Burmese empire, relations between the maharajah, his court and council, and hill communities were varied, piecemeal, and fluctuating over time. These relations were variously oppositional and reciprocal, encompassing raids, retaliations and revenge, taxation and tribute, suspicion and scorn, ritual, mythical, and festive alignments, and occasional intermarriage. The boundaries and jurisdiction of the Manipur royal court similarly fluctuated over time. When the British arrived, they found it impossible to clearly delineate the maharaja's sphere of reign and influence, noting: "the territories of Muneepor [sic] have fluctuated at various times with the fortunes of its princes" (Pemberton 1835).

Pax Britannica changed little: the hill tribes were administered by a British official and "the Maharaja has practically, the Darbar actually, no control" - an arrangement justified by the claim that "the Manipuri has not yet learnt to look upon the Hillman as a human being."

When Bodhchandra ordered for a distinct Manipur Constitution to be drawn up in 1947, hill representatives in the Advisory Manipur Constituent Assembly insisted on a clause to be inserted "whereby should they find the new constitution unpalatable they can secede

from the State and join the surrounding hill districts in British India and Burma." This clause was vehemently opposed by Meitei members. An intelligence report noted threats that: "if hill people did not come into the new constitution of their own accord, the State would forcibly occupy the hills."

The maharaja also tried blandishments. As a sign of goodwill, he proposed the abolishment of "forced labour on my hill subjects." The gesture did little to placate the hill communities, even less so after the Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation, adopted as part of the new Manipur Constitution, did not safeguard the hill autonomy, as had been assured. Rather, it appeared to be a crafty worded device for the maharaja and his government to expand their control over the hills. In defiance, the Mao Naga had "not paid tax to the state but collected and administered their own fund."



Manipur's case was particularly complex with competing claims, counterclaims, and aspirations. But it was not the only part of this region that witnessed political agitation and strife at the turn of India's independence.

The Nagas of the Naga Hills District, as well as those living in the so-called 'control' and 'tribal area', amalgamated as the Naga National Council (NNC) and debated their political future with ideas of autonomy, an interim government, and complete independence. The Nagas in Manipur organised as the Naga National League (NNL) and petitioned to be merged with their Naga neighbours. The revolutionary Naga leader Angami Zapu Phizo in 1951 called for the devolution of sovereignty to the Naga "community-group organiation" and for the rolling back of state structures. For these demands, he was arrested.

The Mizo Union, besides pursuing the integration of Mizo-lands, stood divided on whether to join independent India or to seek independence. Another Mizo organisation advocated for a unified *Zoram* consisting of the Mizo and the Chin hills, and deliberated on joining Burma.

Several Khasi states, in what later became Meghalaya, wished to merge with Pakistan to avoid being cut off from some of their lands, markets, and kin in Sylhet. Up north, in what is today Arunachal Pradesh, Tibetan tax collectors travelled to towns and villages, asserting this area's belonging to Lhasa, not Delhi. Apatanis took up spears, bows, and arrows to resist their incorporation in India.

In Kangla, the Meitei maharaja dreamt of reclaiming his earlier sovereignty; a dream shared by some of the remaining Ahom royals in Assam whose throne had been appropriated by the East India Company. The royal palace in Tripura fragmented between those who favoured India and those who saw their future as a part of Pakistan.

Assam, as a whole, became a battleground between the Congress and the Muslim League, both of which staked claim to it. Meanwhile, some British officers were scheming a Crown Colony for the entire Indo-Burmese Arc, wresting them from India and Burma's jurisdiction on the basis that highland communities were different.

There are many other examples that can be invoked, but the general point is that little was politically settled in this region at the time the British retreated.

Incorporating the region

Early in 1947, India's Constituent Assembly enacted a sub-committee to assess the political future of this region. Gopinath Bordoloi, Assam's first chief minister, was appointed its chairman. The Bordoloi committee undertook extensive visits to most of the hill districts where they sat down with tribal organisations and representatives to discuss their future, received petitions, and interviewed British officials. In their discussions, they emphasised that they had come with an open mind, that they had no agenda of their own, but came to solicit local views.

The front-stage openness of the committee was, however, contradicted by their backstage biases, preconceptions, and objective of bringing the hills within the Indian Constitution. Members adjudged the hill tribes to be lacking in civilisation, that tribals were primitive, simple people who needed guidance, and that, in the long run, a gradual process of assimilation with the plains would serve them best.

> The committee's jurisdiction was limited to recommending the specifics of their inclusion into the Indian dispensation and they were not empowered to discuss alternative political possibilities and aspirations.

In a clear act of the postcolonial refusal to decolonise, they also emphasised, to the hill representatives, that the committee's jurisdiction was limited to recommending the specifics of their inclusion into the Indian dispensation and they were not empowered to discuss alternative political possibilities and aspirations. Bordoloi, for instance, expressed being 'hurt' by the Naga National Council (NNC), which wanted a political future outside the Indian Constitution.

While the travels and travails of the Bordoloi committee have been praised as participative constitution-making, there were frequent complaints about their biases and high-handedness, and especially of the committee deliberately sowing division to break or prevent unified political visions that did not align with the committee's agenda of securing these hills for India. Because of this, Aliba Imti, the Naga representative in the Bordoloi Committee, refused to sign the committee's proposal.

J.P. Mills lamented in a private letter thus:

"The outstanding impression gained is that the Subcommitee are quick to seize on any difference of opinion and to stress them. If no differences are immediately apparent cross-examination on points which have not occurred to the hillmen will usually produce them. Where differences of opinion can be shown the Subcommitee clearly consider themselves free to choose the alternative they themselves prefer or even to dictate to people 'who did not know their own mind."

Because of this, the space for actual discussion was severely limited and several of the committee's meetings soon turned sour, agitated, and inconclusive.

When the Bordoloi committee submitted its report, it read as little more than a stratagem to straitjacket the many disparate aspirations, demands, and dissents that existed in the hills into a single schedule. Any and all demands for the redrawing of the region's administrative map were ignored, as were proposals for alternative political futures; futures, that is, outside of the normative-legal encompassment of the Indian Constitution.

The committee's recommendations were subsequently adopted as the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. It offered autonomy, exclusive belonging, and tribal and territorial rights - including over landownership and use, customary law and justice, village and town administration, marriage, inheritance and property, and social practices.

In its rationale, the Sixth Schedule significantly transmitted the colonial order of things, both by adopting "the tribe" as the unit of administration, and by refusing to reconsider the political redrawing of the region. Instead, it transmitted colonial policies of linking, in terms of administration, tribe and territory, in the sense of a constitutionally enshrined regime of governance that provides autonomy and exclusive, near inalienable rights over state, political representation, land, resources, and belonging to selected ethnic tribal communities in designated territories drawn and divided by colonials.

What this set in motion was firstly, a chequered postcolonial history of boundary conflicts, and secondly, a distinctive political process in which state, development, citizenship, rights, territory, identity, politics, and social life itself become increasingly reckoned in terms of tribal-territorial exclusivity. The latter propelled a distinctive epoch of ethnopolitics, in which articulations and assertions of ethnic tribal uniqueness and difference became a highly contested space and elevated ethnopolitics into a prime, potential, and political force to stake claims on the state.

The quest for the state

The Indian state, in affording territorialised regimes of recognition, positive discrimination, and exclusive rights turned the North East into a place of governmental exception. The Sixth Schedule's possibilities, provisions, and protection were more elaborate than those of the Fifth Schedule, which exists for mainland tribes, or for that matter from any other forms of India's elaborate affirmative policies, all of which are non-territorial in form and character.

With ethnic-tribal exclusivity as the now most sought-after form of administration and governance, communities across the region began to stake claims for the state's forms of recognition and rights. Scheduled Tribe, Sixth Schedule, Autonomous and Territorial Councils, intra-tribal reservations, and ethnic statehood became central ingredients in a continuously explosive contentious politics in the region.

The postcolonial state responded to these claims in two major ways. First, it expanded the territorial reach of the Sixth Schedule, even extending it to parts of the Assam plains that were never excluded, partially or wholly, in colonial times. Second, the Indian state transformed selected hill areas into fully-fledged ethnic-tribal states with specifically tailored constitutional amendments that secure and protect exclusive rights to designated communities.

In the case of Nagaland and Mizoram, the grant of statehood was an explicit attempt to conciliate ethno-national uprisings. Consequently, the postcolonial political history of Assam can be read in terms of its shrinking physical space as the ethnic tribal states of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh were sliced out of it, and additionally through the formation of a series of territorial or autonomous councils. While these councils are formally part of the state in which they are in, the means and ends of their governance is the prerogative of ethnically delimited populations, governed by an ethnic tribal political class whose perpetuation is guaranteed through reserved electoral seats.

There are many voices in and on the North East that engage the roots, rationale, and ramifications of institutionalised ethno-territorial homelands and exclusivity. This includes dissenting voices that see in them an affront to liberal statecraft and universal citizenship. After all, within ethnic tribal states and councils only those who 'belong' enjoy rights and provisions. Defenders of ethnic-tribal homelands, however, point to the treat of ethnic-tribal communities' demographic, cultural, and political devouring by neighbouring much larger populations and see in the existence of exclusive territorial homelands the last line of defence for these ethnic tribal identities to survive.

What both defenders and criticasters may agree to, however, is that, in recent decades, the endless quests, claims, and counterclaims for ethnic-territorial exclusivity, for privileged forms of state-society sociality, has completely saturated the administration and politics of this region.

> Since the government recognises tribal-ethnic communities as the prime administrative units within a state, these communities create the political basis for governance. Yet, in the process they threaten to disintegrate state and society.

What we witness is that communities, one after the other, stake claims on exclusive rights, reservation, and recognition, and strategically position and reposition themselves in relation to the state and other communities to increase their chances of securing these. The Indian state, in turn, has appropriated the exclusive powers to recognise ethnic-tribal communities and to extend these rights to them.

In what has become a distinctive epoch of ethnopolitics, the most sought-after template of state-society sociality, as vigorously and variously pursued by communities across the North East, is a constitutional-legal arrangement in which ethnicity (here also including tribal and indigenous identity) and territory contain each other. It is an arrangement in which identity, territorial belonging, rights, material development, public employment, and elected offices continuously configure each other. As a result, state administration has become increasingly fragmented, sectional, and divisive, with communities competing over its lucrative, but ultimately always also scarce, resources.

This has resulted in a structural paradox. Since the government recognises tribal-ethnic communities as the prime administrative units within a state, these communities create the political basis for governance. Yet, in the process they threaten to disintegrate state and society through mutually exclusive and competing claims for ethnic-tribal exclusivity.

As a case in point, a conglomeration of Meitei civil society organisations, leaders, and activists now express their dissatisfaction with being listed outside the categories eligible for such affirmative action. Instead, they wish to be classed as a Scheduled Tribe, which offers them further rights and leverage in relation to the state. In this, however, Meiteis encounter one major stumbling block, namely that they are a dominant and predominantly Hindu community, which makes them part of India's mainstream.

To overcome this, influential Meitei voices now insist that Hinduism was forcefully imposed upon them by Bengali Brahmans centuries ago, and they seek to resurrect their traditional and animistic rituals and beliefs known as *Sanamahi*. This move for recognition as a Schedule Tribe is resisted by Naga and Kuki-Zo communities in Manipur, for whom this means an infringement on their current territorial and tribal rights, protection, and state entitlements.

These contests for recognition and exclusive rights always houses within themselves the potential for violence. Put differently, the problem in the region today is that state policies of recognition and rights in the North East have propelled greater ethnic-tribal demands and complexity, but without significant change in the overall state structure and policy, one that remains modelled on colonial lines.

Who belongs? Who doesn't?

What has complicated contemporary claims on the state further is the relatively recent insertion, in this political playground, of the language of indigeneity.

While the category of 'indigenous' is formally rejected by the Indian state as irrelevant in the Indian context, communities in the North East themselves have long since appropriated the term and apply it to stake claims on the state. They invoke indigeneity both to distinguish themselves from later settlers and migrants, and to pursue a privileged state-society sociality.

> Questions of who belongs and who does not, and claims and contests over ethnic tribal and territorial recognition, reservations, rights, and political autonomy have become the stuff of existential passion.

What stands out, here, is that contrary to powerful global discourses in which the state is presented as inherently antagonistic, oppressive, and positioned against the interests of indigenous peoples, across the North East indigenous assertion usually situates itself not in opposition to the state but in pursuit of privileged control and access to it.

The upshot, of all the above, is a contemporary politics of ethnicity, indigeneity, and belonging in the North East that breeds alarming volatility and violence. Questions of who belongs and who does not, and claims and contests over ethnic tribal and territorial recognition, reservations, rights, and political autonomy have become the stuff of existential passion, and, in their absence, of intolerable anxiety. The result of this is a body politic that is constantly gripped by aggressive agitations, constant protests, existential anxiety, and outbursts of violence (Wouters 2022).

When seen in the long haul, as in this essay, this current obsession with state recognition, rights, and territorial exclusivity is reflective of a historical narrowing of political possibilities, the refusal of independent India to decolonise this region, and post-colonial policies of territorial recognition, rights, and reservations. They now offer a heady cocktail of often competing claims and contests over belonging, indigeneity, and ethnic-tribal exclusivity, spiked with shots of terrifying violence.

Jelle J.P. Wouters teaches at Royal Thimphu College, Bhutan. He is the author of In the Shadows of Naga Insurgency: Tribes, State, and Violence in Northeast India *(Oxford University Press, 2018).*

References:

Franke, M. (2006). "Wars without End: The Case of the Naga Hills." *Diogenes* 53(4): 69-84.

Moon-Little, Edward (2022). "The Shade of the Kangla: Kingship and Revivalism in Northeast India." PhD thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge.

Pemberton, R.B. (1835). *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India.* Calcutta: Government of India.

Ramirez, Philippe. (2014). *People of the Margins: Across Ethnic Boundaries in North-East India*. Guwahati: Spectrum.

Watt, George (1969)[1887]. "The Nagas of Manipur", in *Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Verier Elwin, pp. 447-472. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wouters, Jelle J.P. (ed.) 2022. *Vernacular Politics in Northeast India: Democracy, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.