

## **Title of the Thesis: Patterns of Naga-Kuki Conflict in Manipur**

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### **Abstract**

Conflict as a subject of study and inquiry has been complex, it is the universality of this recurring phenomenon that the study tries to locate the Naga-Kuki conflict from a socio-historical perspective. It examines the causes and major changes in patterns and intensity that the conflict between the two ethnic groups underwent. Conflicts are not static they wax and wane - becoming less peaceful and more peaceful as they move through various stages in the evolution of their history. Each stage varies in duration from one conflict to another - it may endure for a long period and in some case it may be brief.

In analyzing the Naga-Kuki conflict it traces the various phases and stages whereby the conflict is explained in terms of the specificity of the events in the given condition and context examining their socio-historical and cultural context. The aboriginal condition of warfare in these tribal societies such as the Nagas and the Kukis was frequently marked by blood feuds and revenge hostilities but does not usually entail large scale campaign of genocidal warfare against the enemy. Conflict or occasional raids were at large at the clan or village level only and not an ethnic line. Their ethnic identities were fluid and loyalty was only to the clan or the village. War at its best was a blind struggle guided by their individual impulse those marred by revenge complex and the urge for status of bravery but never an organized one. However, the expansion of the British Empire in the region changed this whole pattern of tribal warfare. Their (British) policy of 'ethnic soldering' whereby natives were used to pit against each other to further their interest led to the development of animosity and antagonism among them. Through such interaction of conflict fosters a sense of identity consciousness coupled with a host

of other – their grievances relating to encroachment of their habitat by the other. This ultimately led to the polarization of their ethnic identities, each advancing their own ethnic philosophy which creates a dialectical contradiction over values and resources. Loosely speaking would be the idea of the superstructure that influence the infrastructure, or say at the latent level there's the assumption/attitude (a hidden cognition) theoretically infused which is empirically observed at the manifested level which then produces the contradiction.

The situation in Northeast India after emergence of 'Post-Colonial Indian State' saw various forms of resistance movements, characterized by two binary trends; a pan Indian sentiment seeking its culmination in the form of an integrated independent India and the other was separatist tendency seeking its independent existence. Formation of rebel consciousness in the ethnic line was an obvious corollary of this subversion and dominance through governance. An unfortunate and promiscuous consequence of this formation was power acquisition game among different ethnic groups yielding inter-ethnic violence.

The formation of Arm groups like the NNC (Naga National Council), NSCN (Nationalist Socialist Councils of Nagaland), KNA (Kuki National Army), and KDF (Kuki Defense Force), reinforce their collective and community values by way of a 'looped counterclaim to the dominant identity that includes it from a distance and from a position of strength'. And began to postulate and articulate their demand in terms of sovereignty for the Nagas and a state union for the Kukis creates disjunction and contradiction. Thus when the conflict broke out in the early 90s, it was highly ethnicized, communalized and organized in terms of intensity and violence. The conflict was mobilized on ethnic lines each projecting their own narratives, taking tools of human lives and uprooted many villages. Though various factors were involved, the ethnic factors sense of fraternity feeling, revenge complex, and the question of landownership came to the forefront.