

A.D. and the Ahoms were again defeated and pushed beyond the Dikhow river which became the natural boundary between the two principalities for some years.

On the Ahoms kept on consolidating their army, the king, emboldened by previous successes, became arrogant and neglected the security affairs of their country.

In advantage of this, the Ahoms again broke their peace with the Kacharis and set up a fort at Morangi. Another king ensued, and the Kacharis were finally defeated due to the superior strength of the Ahom army. A folk tale among the Kacharis says that the Ahom soldiers rode on cows during the battle which completely shocked the Kacharis who refrained from attacking because it could result in the killing of the cows.

The Kacharis thought that killing of cows would result in the demoralisation of their fighters. It may be noted here that the Kacharis, particularly the Dimasas, at that time considered cows as 'kushu' or impure. It was only later on, after they adopted Brahmanical Hinduism, that they came to believe that a cow was a sacred animal.

After defeating the Kachari monarch Khunkradao Raja, the Ahoms installed Dahtsura, the king's brother as king at

NESRC Peace Studies Series-4

## Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution

in

Three Tribal Societies of North East India

Editor

Alphonsus D'Souza

Social conflict is found wherever individual groups engage themselves in antagonistic or hostile relationships. Conflict can arise because of such inter-relationships as differences in personal preferences, group interests and aims. It can take different forms like quarrels and disputes, feuds and armed fights. It is generally recognised that social conflict is destructive in itself therefore whenever a conflict emerges, efforts

Alphonsus Associates  
North Eastern Social Research Centre,

# Introduction

NESRC Peace Studies Series - 4

## Additional Methods of Conflict Resolution in Three Tribal Societies of North East India

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ADDITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The three essays presented here are the work of persons. They are not experienced "researchers", have personally experienced conflict situations in their communities. Hence they provide an insider's view in understanding the traditions of their communities. They hope that their work will help younger persons to appreciate the wisdom imparted in their traditions and to use it in dealing with conflicts in their own communities.

DIMASA CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Jor Pukhuri survive to this day. It is said in a folktale that during the invasion of the Ahoms, the Kachari king dumped other precious metals in some of these tanks. He is believed to have told his subjects that long after he left, a day would come when a male mithun would come from the hills and dig up gold by its horn which would weigh a maund (about 35 kg) and it would be the time when the Kacharis would rise and prosper.

The Dimapur kingdom of the thirteenth century was situated along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River, from the Dikhow River in the east to Kalang in the west and the Jor Pukhuri valley. Historians are not in a position to tell us the exact date of the establishment of the Kachari capital at Dimapur. According to a Kachari tradition, the Muli bamboo, which flowers once in fifty years, had flowered nine times during the reign of the Kachari kings at Dimapur. This means that the Kacharis ruled for about 450 years at Dimapur. Since the Kacharis moved their capital to Maibang in 1536 A.D, it can be estimated that the Kacharis had established Dimapur approximately in 1086. This seems to be a fair estimate because when the Ahom invasion took place in this region, Dimapur was said to be a well-developed town.

The Dimasa is one of the major tribes living in the of Assam in North East India. In the past the Dim been described as a peaceful and peace loving community during the first decade of the third millennium they involved in three major conflicts with other tribal communities were: the Dimasa-Hmar conflict in 2003, Dimas conflict in 2005, and Dimasa-Zeme Naga conflict

## Introduction

Padmini Lamsang  
Jitendra Baruah  
Karbi Anglong District

# Traditional Methods of Conflict Management among the Dimas

## TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

ances to the 'foothill dwellers' or 'Kiratas' of the Eastern as. The term 'Kirata' stands for Mongoloid racial ies, but some historians believe that it indicates the

earliest Kachari settlements were in the foothills of ilayas. From there they moved to the Brahmaputra with their capital at Kamruli (Kamrupa). Sir Edward his *History of Assam* (1906), says that the Kacharis aborigines or earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra After hundreds of years of stay in the Brahmaputra he bulk of this race, due to socio-political turmoil, eved to have crossed the mighty river and settled in s of the present Sadiya of Assam. This section of the is now known as 'Dimasa', meaning 'the children of river' (di = water, ma = big, sa = children) (Bordoloi it 1906).

course of time, facing Ahom aggression, they further towards the south, on to the Dhansiri valley. They ad their capital at Dimapur, presently in the state of after a short stint at Kasorari about forty kilometres

## Acknowledgements

This booklet is the aspirations for peace of many from Northeast India. The study was done by the three under the guidance of Prof. Alphonsus D'Souza. In the research fellows were supported by C. P. Anto in and Tom M. in Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills district Assam. NESRC received financial support for these studies Cordaid and Misereor through NED Social Forum grateful to all of them for their support. Above all we

in the following pages.

geographical area of the study included the Dimasa and parts of the districts of Karbi Anglong and North hills, now known as Dima Hasao District. However, the Karbi-Dimasa conflict of 2005 took place in those areas mainly a concentration on Manja and Dimaasri. Constraints of time and difficulties of travel imposed limitations on this study. Major findings of the study are

ADDITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

DIMASA CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

of the name 'Dimasa' most probably stands for the 'the big river', perhaps the Brahmaputra. In actual practice Dimasa like to live on the banks of rivers. According to Gait (1906), the Dimasa were called 'Timasa' by the British which is a corruption of the term 'Dimasa'.

Scholars have put forward different theories about the origin of the term 'Dimasa'. According to Sonaram Thouser coming to Dimapur the Dimasa called themselves 'Dimapur'. They came to be known as 'Dimasa' only after arriving in Dimapur. According to another view proposed by M. Högjer, it is a common practice among the Dimasa to identify themselves by adding 'Sa' to the name of the place of their origin. This old tradition is prevalent even today, and that is why people living in Dimapur refer to themselves as Dimapursas. In the course of time, Dimapursa changed to Dimasa.

Present Habitat

According to the Census of India, in 2001 the total number of the Dimasa in Assam was 110,976. Their present habitat is Dima Hasao district, till recently known as Chchar Hills district. In 2001, 64,881 of them were

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the past conflicts with other communities did not exist, there were any such conflicts, they were settled through negotiations. In my childhood I have heard from my elders that there was a war with the Nagas. This war is narrated in traditional dances".

This incident is narrated in greater detail by another elder. He said that the conflict was resolved through negotiations in which the Dimasa king took the initiative. The elder gives us the following information in the following words:

There was also a communal clash during the reign of King Chandra Hasnu. At that time the king would identify the location for the establishment of a Dimasa village by shooting an arrow. It was understood that the Dimasa would settle where the arrow fell. Once when the king shot the arrow, it fell in a village near Maibang. So, a Dimasa village was established there. After a few years there was a conflict between the Nagas and the Dimasa. But it was peacefully solved through negotiations because at that time the king was ruling. This incident is still narrated in a Dimasa traditional Dance".

A more recent case of inter-tribal conflict is narrated by a Dimasa elder who was working as a teacher in a school. He said:

As noted above, according to Danda (1978: 581-583) traditional village council with all the office bearers exist in Sankhor, the oldest and most conservative Dimasa village. Danda provides details about the structure of the village council as reproduced in the table below.

Designation of Officers	Number of positions
Khunang or gaobura	1
Dilek or assistant gaobura	1
Daulathurao	15
Habaisago	2
Pharat	2
Wantri	8
Hangseobukhu	25
Unlimited	

In keeping with the tradition, the Dimasa village has two main functions, namely, executive and judicial. Executive functions are related to development work or activity for the improvement of the community. Functions related to the maintenance of law and order and conflict resolution are related to the maintenance of law and order.

### The British Period

In 1832 the British East India Company annexed Cachar, consisting of the plains of the Barak valley, which was a part of the princely state of Cachar. The hills division of the North Cachar Hills, parts of the Diyang valley, the Diyang valley and the Dhansiri valley, including the ancient kingdom of Dimapur, the 'Brick city' of the Dimasa Kachari kingdom. The hills division was finally annexed by the British in 1838. After the death of Senapati Tularran, the Dimasa chieftain, the British took sway over that area. But instead of tagging the North Cachar (North Cachar Division) with South Cachar the British added the territory to the Assam district of Nowgong. The territory was then placed under the charge of a Junior Political Officer with headquarters at Asalu. Subsequently in 1866, this territory was split up and distributed among the neighbouring districts of Jaintia and the Naga Hills. Thus, parts of the Diyang valley, the Diyang valley and the Kopili valley were given to the district of Nowgong. A portion was joined with the newly created district of Naga Hills. The rest formed the territory of the North Cachar Hills, comprising exclusively the hilly region.

The land settlement procedure adopted by the British was based on the following principles:

Traditional organisation of a Dimasa village had various functions and functionalaries. These were: Khunang (village headman), Dilek (assistant village headman), Daulathurao (elders), Habaisago, Pharat, Wantri, Habaisago, Daulathurao and Talathurao. According to Danda (1978: 98-99) traditional organisation has become obsolete in most villages. Changes have taken place mainly due to the introduction of various District Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

According to tradition the oldest member of the village council is Khunang. This made his selection unanimous. Dilek is next in seniority by age. Daulathurao were the elders next in seniority depending on the size of the village. Dilek's position was only seniority in age. Habaisago were the oldest males in the village. The Pharat were next in seniority by age. A Wantri belonged to the younger batch of the village and was selected on the basis of merit, not seniority. The lowest rank was reserved for the youngest members of the village.

## dependence

er India's independence there were several changes in 1951 a new district was created in the name of United North Cachar Hills. The Mikir Hills sub-division of district was formed by carving out some areas from the hills of Nowgong and Sibsagar. The North Cachar Hills division was separated from Cachar and tagged on to Mikir form the new district. Dimapur area was attached to Hills district. In 1970 the North Cachar Hills sub-division was separated from Mikir Hills district and formed a full-fledged district. The Mikir Hills district was later as Karbi Anglong district. In 2010, the North Cachar district was renamed as Dima Hasao.

in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district ed, two Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth of the Constitution of India were established, one in the sub-divisions. When the North Cachar Hills district ed in 1970, its boundaries coincided with those of the Autonomous District Council. Thus the North Cachar district, the present Dima Hasao has a distinct system of administration in the form of the Autonomous District

between villages are clearly marked. On the other hand of the villages are small, there is a considerable amount of cooperation between neighbouring villages. Sometimes they come together for the celebration of ceremonies like marriages and funerals. However, inter-village dispute can always arise.

Inter-village disputes can arise mainly because of land. There are occasions when people from a village need to use the territory of another village for cultivation. In such a case, the village concerned seeks the permission of the other village. If a real dispute arises when buffaloes or cattle from a village enter the jum fields of another village. In such a case, the owners of the two villages come together and settle the dispute. They may impose a fine on the owners of the animals. If the owners are not identified, a fine is imposed on the entire village. All such efforts are made to settle the dispute at that level. In former times there was no possibility of appeal.

## Inter-Tribal Disputes and Conflicts

In the past, though the Dimasa lived close together and surrounded by, villages and settlements of other tribes and communities, inter-tribal conflict was rare. The reasons

## Traditional Organisations and Settlement Disputes and Crimes

was various ornaments made of silver, beads and shells ceremonial or formal dress of the Dimasa is colourful. As in the case of other tribal communities, the traditional forms of settlement disputes and crimes are

monotonous, but there are variations for different forms. The dance forms are complex in character and the instrumental music, not songs. The important instrument is 'murti'. Music from a murti appears to be a form of settlement disputes and crimes are

### Cultural Life

Court. In former times such restrictions did not exist

Disputes were settled within the village.

Dimasa are basically peace-loving and law-abiding. They do not easily violate traditional laws. From early times they are trained to respect traditions and customs. As a result, there are always some quarrels and disputes. Sometimes there are quarrels in a family, between and sisters or between husband and wife. But they are settled within the family. In the past, family quarrels were settled by the elders in such a way that the dispute was not taken to the village council. However, if a dispute was taken to the village council, both the complainant and the respondent were heard and witnesses were examined. Finally a majority decision was reached. The punishment was settled by a majority decision. In extreme cases, banishment from the village would be shared by the members of the court. The headman received a greater share.

es and Crimes

There were no witnesses or satisfactory evidence, the court would resort to the tradition of oath taking. The oath was taken by the members of the court. The headman received a greater share.



While the tribe endogamy is the normal practice, performance at different levels. that this double descent system is strengthened also follow the double descent system. It is important Daughters belong to the mother's clan. Rules of inheritance to the father's clan and use the clan name as their considered important. There are 42 female clans. The titular deities of the 12 important clans, of which 12 are important. Each clan has a female clans (matri-clans). Male clans are known as double descent. There are both male clans (patri-clans) and the female clans are called julu or jaddi. ) Female clans (matri-clans). Male clans are known as double descent. There are both male clans (patri-clans) and the female clans are called julu or jaddi. )

### Kinship Organization

A unique feature of the Dimasa is their kinship organization. Each clan has a male clans, of which 12 are important. Each clan has a female clans (matri-clans). Male clans are known as double descent. There are both male clans (patri-clans) and the female clans are called julu or jaddi. )

use that it is inhabited only by the Dimasa people. If any outsiders, they are temporary employees of the village like teachers.

Agriculture is the principal occupation and the main source of livelihood. Those who live in the hills practise shifting cultivation or jhuming, though they also have some permanent cultivation fields wherever possible. Those who live in the plains practise wet cultivation. Paddy (rice) is the main crop. Other crops include maize and various types of vegetables. Some fruits like oranges and pineapples. Domestic animals include buffaloes, pigs, goats and fowls.

In general, the Dimasa are economically backward. This is seen from the situation of the Dima Hasao district. In the literacy rate among the Dimasa in Assam was 59.6% (69.4% for males and 49.3% for females). A large number of villages in the district do not have access roads and other facilities.

Additional methods of conflict resolution in the Dimasa villages. There have been disputes at different levels: within the family, between families in the village, between villages and with other tribal communities. Information about how they were resolved is presented below. This information is based on data from both secondary sources and the responses given by the respondents who were interviewed. The names of the respondents are given here for reasons of confidentiality and prudence.

Disputes in the Family

According to an elder, "sometimes there are quarrels within the family, between brothers and sisters or between husband and wife. But they are settled within the family". Thus quarrels within the family are usually settled by the elders of the family. The method of settlement would be to listen to the parties and to reach an amicable settlement. In the Dimasa society, the elders of the family are respected and obeyed.

Disputes within the Village

There can be various types of disputes between the members of a village. Some of them can be offences against the community, others offences with regard to property. In such cases, the village council or the village headman usually intervenes to settle the dispute. The method of settlement would be to listen to the parties and to reach an amicable settlement. In the Dimasa society, the elders of the village are respected and obeyed.

### Disputes within the Village

There can be various types of disputes between the members of a village. Some of them can be offences against the community, others offences with regard to property. In such cases, the village council or the village headman usually intervenes to settle the dispute. The method of settlement would be to listen to the parties and to reach an amicable settlement. In the Dimasa society, the elders of the village are respected and obeyed.



47? Even if we get one, we do not know how to  
 not or fire at innocent people" (A Garbura).

can be seen from the above views that the ordinary persons  
 wondering why the recent conflicts took place. They blame  
 agents and politicians. Perhaps they do not understand  
 reasons or factors that have led to the outbreak of conflicts.  
 At the same time, they think that all the problems, including  
 tribal conflicts, can be solved through negotiations and  
 processes in which the leaders play their part for the welfare  
 of the people.

### Conclusion

Karbis think of themselves as peace-loving people. They  
 live in peace especially with other villages and  
 tribal communities. But they also accept that there can be disputes at  
 different levels, namely, within the family and within the village,  
 between villages and even between tribal communities.

This is a summary presentation of the traditional methods of  
 conflict resolution and handling conflicts.

woman retains the clan name of her birth. She has  
 responsibilities in the family and village of her birth.  
 The status of a woman is clearly determined by tradition. Her status is  
 lower than that of a man in religious matters and in the  
 decision-making processes within the village. She can never be  
 a member of the village council.

### Economy

Agriculture is the main economic activity of the Karbi people.  
 Those who live in the hilly areas practise shifting cultivation  
 and those in the plains have settled wet cultivation. Rice  
 is the main food crop. But they also grow maize and vegetables  
 for domestic consumption and also for the market. At present  
 rubber is grown in some parts of the district.

In recent times many cash crops have been introduced  
 among them are sugar cane, ginger, mustard and  
 various vegetables like chillies, yam, brinjal, radish and cabbage.  
 These changes have brought about significant changes in the agricultural  
 economy of the district.

Karbi Anglong is known for various handicrafts  
 such as skilled in bamboo, cane and various woodcrafts.

### Objectives of this Study

This study is an attempt to understand why these  
 conflicts took place. In this effort, this study looks at the conflict  
 from the viewpoint of the Karbi people because they are  
 affected community. Thus the objectives of this study  
 are as follows:

There have been many reports and analyses  
 of conflicts in the media. But most of them have been  
 in nature because they have dealt with the descriptive  
 conflicts and their immediate causes and consequences  
 there is a need to look at these conflicts within the  
 context of the situation found in the district and to  
 them from the perspectives of the tribal communities  
 in the conflicts.

### Composition

According to the Census of India, in 2001 the Scheduled  
 population consisted of 452,963 persons, constituting  
 percent of the total population. The Scheduled Caste  
 was 29,520, that is, 3.63 percent of the total. Thus  
 of the population was tribal. But there were several  
 communities in the district.  
 as the common form.

Very rare indicates, the district is hilly in terrain.  
 As a whole is socially and economically backward.  
 The villages are in remote areas and lack basic facilities.  
 as many as 78.4 percent of the houses were kutcha,  
 mud walls and thatched roof. The literacy rate was  
 percent, with 67.22 for males and 47.30 for females.  
 economic activity is agriculture, with shifting

001, the largest tribal community was that of the Karbi  
 population of 345,540, constituting 76.28 percent of the  
 population. Next came the Dimasas with a population  
 5, forming 10.18 percent of the tribal population. The  
 the Garo tribes with a population of 20,604 or 4.55  
 of the district. Report of other

Origin

rest were in some adjoining areas of other districts of were 345,540 Karbis living in Karbi Anglong district constituted 10.7 percent of the tribal population of Assam (Witkar) tribe consisted of 353,513 persons living in Assam. According to the Census of India, in 2001 North East India. At present they are a major tribe or the Karbi linguistically between the Kuki and Naga part of Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. Anthropologists The Karbi belong to the Mongoloid racial stock sometimes as Areleng, which literally means 'a man'. Tribes. But they never call themselves Witkar but Karbi. Government of India that listed them among the Scheduled documents, including the Constitution Order. The Karbi were known in the past as Mitkars in

### The Karbi and their Organisation

peace and harmony. the past all these communities have been, in general, and multi-cultural character of the district makes it un

THE KARBI COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

ans

There are five clans called 'kur'. They are: 1. Ingti, 2. Terang, 4. Tinung, and 5. Ingchi (Enghee). There is some sort of hierarchy among them, and the above order is usually followed. The Ingti clan has the highest position because it is a dominant clan. At the same time, all the clans or kurs are socially equal. They have no scruples as to eating together or intermarriage. The five clans are strictly exogamous. A person must marry from another kur. A man of the Ingti clan may marry from any other clan. Violation of this rule known as 'kur-gany' leads to severe punishment which is usually capital punishment.

Following are some of the common personal names of males: Sardoka, Mon. Dili, There, Kangther, Taimoi, Mura, Pator, Long and Bi. Some of the common names of females are: Kareng, Kache, Kaban. Kamang, Kaet, Kajir, Mre, Kasang, Kadom, Dimi and Sotera.

ly

Karbi family is patriarchal in structure. The authority of the family is accepted by all the members. A family usually

tion

This was true even when there were violent conflicts in Karbi Anglong district in Assam is very rich in diversities of languages, cultures, languages and religions. The district has different ethnic groups, people of different ethnic groups have been living in peace and harmony with one another.

Sunil Terang Dilli  
Jirsong Asong, Diphu  
Karbi Anglong DC., Assam

### Karbi Community and Conflict

DIMASA CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

In the course of their history, the Dimasa seem to have avoided conflicts with other communities. They seem to have moved away when they were attacked by others. In the cases of disputes and conflicts that are reported, the Dimasa leaders were concerned about the welfare of their subjects and followers. Therefore, the methods adopted to settle a dispute and to resolve conflicts were negotiation and compromise.

\*\*\*\*\*

### List of Persons interviewed

1. Anirudh Jidung
2. Nibash Jidung
3. Gohendra Jidung
4. Upendra Johorisa
5. Rajendra Nunisa
6. Jomendra Hojai
7. Jonon Langthasa

am thankful to Fr. Anul S. and Fr. Nilesh Pamar for their help during my field visit and interviews in N.C. Hills, Assam. I am also thankful to Sr. Teresa, Sr. Proti, and Sr. Lesi for their kindness and help during my stay at Diyungra.

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**Padmini Langthasa**

Manja, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2010

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the point of view of habitation, the Karbi who live in the hills are divided into three groups, namely, Chinthong, M. and Amri. These are geographic divisions, not clan names. It is common to distinguish between the Karbi who live in the hills and those who live in the plains.

In West Karbi Anglong, the Karbi are sandwiched between the Khasi of Ri-Bhoi district in Meghalaya and the plains of Assam. It is interesting to note that some of the Bhoi Karbi have Karbi clan names, but follow the matrilineal system. At the same time, there are some Karbi who have typical Khasi names, but speak Karbi and follow the patrilineal system. Hamren in West Karbi Anglong may be considered as a part of Karbi culture because it is the base of the Karbi kinship system, namely, the Lyndok Hobe system, which resembles the kinship system of the Jaintias in many ways.

In the plains of the Kamrup district of Assam, the Karbi are considered one of the sub-castes of Assamese society. In Karbi villages in this area, women take the clan name of their husband after marriage. In North Cachar Hills, the Karbi consider the leopard as equivalent to tiger because the leopard is more common there. It may be mentioned that the tiger is an



(U). There are differences between them not in objectives but in their ideologies.

Karbi Students' and Youth Forum (KSYF) was formed in 1983, when leaders of the three factions of the KSA came together to stand united in protest against Clause 8 of the Bodo Territorial Council Accord. This clause made a provision for the grant of Scheduled Tribe (Hills) status to the members of Bodo community settled in Karbi Anglong and NC. Another reason for the formation of KSYF was to bring together young people from different political backgrounds together so that they could stand together on behalf of all the students and youth of Karbi Anglong and to fight for their rights. It was the first time a youth organisation without any political leanings was formed, bringing youth together irrespective of their political affiliations.

United Christian Youth Forum (UCYF) was formed in 1983 to provide a platform for Christian Youth belonging to different denominations to be united in spreading the message of Christianity. The UCYF brought Christian youth from different denominations and denominational backgrounds together. It holds regular meetings to discuss and work on common problems.

### Inter-Village and Inter-Tribal Conflicts

Most of the disputes and violations of traditional laws have been explained above as cases and problems within the village. Inter-village conflicts probably never existed in the past, population was low and the nature of the villages was such that land was easily available for shifting cultivation.

The Karbi have never been a warlike tribe. When an attack from outsiders, they preferred to move to another place. They did not have the practice of head-hunting in Karbi. It seems to have been victims of head-hunting in the neighbourhood surrounding Angami Nagas. For example, in 1886, in the month of January, the Nagas of the village of Razapara and destroyed a Karbi village in the North Cadher Hill.

same year, in the month of June, they raided the village of Sergramtha of the Karbi community. They killed two Karbi on this raid. Again in the following winter, the Karbi from Razapara burnt down a whole village of the Karbi. Karbi did not retaliate.

A 24-hour bandh is called but ends in 10 hours.

Rockybul Hussain, Assam State Home Minister visited

Anglong. UCF delegation meets him and submits a Memorandum to him urging him to restore normalcy.

**5<sup>th</sup> October:** 10 hour bandh called off. The *Jathika Hasom*, which is the apex organisation of the Dimasas and the DHD blame the UPDS for the killings. The UPDS, which has a ceasefire agreement with Delhi and Jathika refutes the allegation and accuses the DHD of trying to sabotage the ongoing peace process by killing innocent people and blaming others. The common factor in all these incidents is that firearms were not used.

**6<sup>th</sup> October:** UCF meets with North East Joint Peace

**7<sup>th</sup> October:** Peace rally is organised by UCF and SKA. Karbi Amei (SKA), the apex body of the Dimasas. Memorandum is submitted to the Deputy Commissioner by the SKA. *Jatikhe Naaisho Hasom* (JNH), apex body of the Dimasa and Karbi decide to find a solution to the problem through peace talks. SKA spokesman, Ujir states that a preliminary investigation into the killings has proved that neither the UPDS nor the DHD was

### The Conflict

-Dimasa conflict.

Then came a period of tension between the Karbis and Khasis. In August 2005, there was an incident involving the Bilharis and Adivasis. In August 2005, there was the Karbi-Kuki conflict. In early 2005, there were some inter-tribal and inter-community conflicts. Then at the beginning of this decade, there was another. Different communities continued to live more or less peacefully and the DHD, especially DHD-J. However, the situation became more complicated with the emergence of the armed groups in 1990s. Chief among them were the KILNLF and the DHD, especially DHD-J. During these Autonomous District Councils. During these years ethnic consciousness grew among both the Karbi and Khasis. The situation became more complicated with the emergence of the armed groups in 1990s. Chief among them were the KILNLF and the DHD, especially DHD-J. However, the situation became more complicated with the emergence of the armed groups in 1990s. Chief among them were the KILNLF and the DHD, especially DHD-J.

## Conclusion

Leaders and youth organisations. Even in the midst of killings and burning of villages and houses, the leaders and community members appealed for peace. They also met and worked for peace. Youth organisations too were promoting peace and helping the victims of violence. Peace processes must continue to restore the traditional

to the chief, who would then study the case and also tries about the case. After knowing the case fully, parties (complainants and defendants) were called for hearing. The main idea of the chief was to make them see on the case. The guilty party had to pay a fine for peace. They could not come to a conclusion, the next step was Weipi or the Great Council consisting of headmen of villages. If the case was not solved even at this stage, a person was brought about through oath taking. The person who claimed to be innocent had to take At the stipulated time, the oath taker had to say: "If I am turn to dust and die with fire". In another type of oath taking was usually conducted the oath taking. The person who claimed to be innocent had to take to the jungle. People believed that taking a false oath to serious consequences, including the death of family members. Oaths are considered a serious matter even though many of the customs have been changed.

## Appendix

### Chronology of the Karbi-Dimasa Conflict (2006-06)

(Source: Mangattuthaze 2008: 57-62)

**September:** Three Dimasa auto drivers aged 22, 23 and 24 belonging to Mohendi jua Dimasa village near Manja (10 km from Diphu) are abducted and murdered. Their bodies are found at the Karbi majority Ransapather village. The other two autos are recovered and the third is reportedly burnt. Names or identity of killers are not known.

**October:** Dimasa organisations call a 10 hour bandh in Diphu in protest against the killings. The bandh is supported by the Dimasa Organisations.

**November:** 5 Karbi males are hacked to death at Phonlangso. The victims are from another village, but 15 masked gunmen reportedly take them to Phonlangso village, 8 km from Diphu and kill them there.

The Team and Diphu Citizens' Peace Forum convene a meeting with the Fellowship to celebrate Gandhi Jayanti by involving the religious and political leaders in and around Diphu.

## Traditional Institutions for Conflict Resolution

Like other tribes, the Karbis too have various traditional institutions. While some of them are socio-political in nature, others are economic in character. Some of these institutions have proved outdated in the modern context and others have survived with modified functions.

### Karbi King or Chief

The traditional Karbi chief or king, with his seat at Rongkhang was known as 'Lingdokpo'. He was selected by a parliament called 'Pinpomar'. In the erstwhile Karbi kingdom, a village was headed by a village headman called 'Rong'. Several contiguous Karbi villages constituted one 'Longri'. The administrative officer of a Longri was called 'Habai'. The kingdom had 12 such Longris, and these were constituted into 4 'Artu', and each Artu was governed by an officer called Lingdok. At the apex of the 4 Longris was the chief called 'Recho' or 'Lingdokpo'. The Karbi king still exercises his traditional authority in respect of socio-political matters.

With regard to the resolution of disputes and criminal... headed by the Hobe and the Lingbok headed by the Li...

Processes of Conflict Resolution

The Great Council is called 'Meipi', it consists... headed by the Hobe and the Lingbok headed by the Li...

le to allow the attackers to come to him. Tongklong... his soldiers reached the peak with a golden sword... and the king confronted them. Realising his inevitable... the king requested a last wish, namely, to have 'ingtat'...

me. I am grateful to Mr. Binjal Terang, District Co-... I am thankful to my family for the faith they... about my parents' support this work would not have... advised me during my field work.

Acknowledgements

\*\*\*\*\*

on and compromise in view of the common good... resolution based on traditional practices of dialogue... However, it is possible to develop new methods of...

also thankful to all those who answered my question... the interviews and shared their opinions without any co... I am also grateful to Miss Padmini Langthasa who... research partner and helped me during the study. And... thank the Teron family who were my hosts and feo... good food during my research in West Karbi Anglong

Sunil Ter

Abbreviations Used

- ASDC (P) Autonomous State Demand Com... (Progressive).
ASDC (U) Autonomous State Demand (United).
ASDC Autonomous State Demand Committee.
CPI (ML) Communist Party of India (Marxist-Lenin...
DDYC Diphu Diocesan Youth Commission.
DHD Dima Halam Daogah
DHD-J Dima Halam Daogah - Jewel Garlossa Fac...
KAAC Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.
KJNF Karbi Jomri North Chokbar Hills Liberat...



Barak Valley, visits the affected areas. The number of relief camps increase to 37 with 20,280 people.

**Incident:** 16 houses burnt down. 3 men are feared killed. In the attack, 2 women and 2 men injured and 8 persons including 5 women are reported missing. The number of relief camps grows to 42 with 22,111 persons.

**Incident:** 69 houses in 3 Karbi villages and 54 houses in 3 Jaintia villages are burnt down.

As communal strife takes a turn for the worse with the Bodo community being sucked into it after a Bodo young man dies. Various Bodo organisations react angrily to the incident and blame the Government's lackadaisical attitude to the strife.

Anglong DC complains of a shortage of security personnel.

Hussain visits Karbi Anglong for the second time and meets various officials to take stock of the situation.

Police pick up 38 persons for interrogation. The Karbi

body, SKA appeals to all organisations in the state to

come forward to find a solution to the ongoing violence

and promises them full co-operation. SKA also appeals to

the state to shift the militant DHD designated camp from

meetings (Venuh 2005: 18). He also had no real power to collect revenue. The village was controlled and administered by a group of people like the warriors, the oldest men and the priests, who met with the representatives from the clans. Among the Konyak, the chief known as the "Angh" was the most powerful man in the village. Among the Sara, the chief was the founder of the village, or a descendent of the chief. The chieftainship was hereditary. This is why when a person with outstanding abilities wanted to establish his authority, he had a difference with the chief of his village, he went away to another village and established a new village. Among the Karbi, the Angh was the supreme head of the community and held all the political power to rule the people. As among the Sara, the chieftainship among the Konyaks was hereditary and inter-marriage was possible only between the clans of the Anghs. It was the responsibility of the Angh to keep his territory in peace, to administer justice, initiate war or conclude a peace treaty with his neighbours. His word was final in case of disputes of any nature. The system was highly autocratic.

Name of Tribe	Pop
1. Angami	124,696
2. Ao	231,823
3. Chakhesang	134,646
4. Chang	60,885
5. Chir	19
6. Khimunggan	38,137
7. Konyak	243,758
8. Lotha	148,210
9. Phom	115,389
10. Podhary	15,908
11. Rengma	50,966

Table 1. Population of Naga Tribes in Nagaland (

According to the Census of India, in 2001 the total population of Naga living in Nagaland was 1,741,692. They belong to different tribes as given in Table 1.

#### LOTHA CONFLICT RESOLUTION

#### TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

phenomena and through their faith in the power of magic (Sema 1986: 35).

According to J. P. Mills (1973: 176), the real political units of Naga tribes are the villages. In the past, each village was self-governing and had its own administrative system or village council that dealt with all the aspects of community life such as social customs, economy and even religion. The village council was self-governing under the village council. The council of elders had representatives of different clans, and the number of representatives depended on the population of the village. This representative character of the council and the role of the chief is a proof of the democracy practised by the Naga tribes. The village council dealt with all matters including the settlement of disputes in the village. For this reason J. P. Mills considers the Naga tribes as republican by nature (Shimray 1985: 240).

Though democratic and republican by nature, in the past the form of administration and chieftainship differed between different Naga tribes. For the Ao and Lotha the warrior became the chief. It was neither through appointment nor election, but on the basis of his capability of being powerful and influential. The chief's ability to collect the largest number of human beings

resolution used by the Lotha Negas. The third part deals with the traditional methods of conflict resolution in the Nega family and presents a general picture of the Lotha family. The second part situates the Lotha tribe in the context of the Naga family and presents a general picture of the Lotha Negas to solve social conflicts of various types. The essay is an effort to identify the traditional methods

Yanlumo Ezung  
Peace Channel  
Dimapur, Nagaland

## Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution Adopted by the Lotha Nega Tribe

#### THE KARBI COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT

The Christians forum of Dimapur requested all churches to observe 23rd October as a 'day of Prayer'.

The relief camps increase to 45 with 26,429 persons.

**18<sup>th</sup> October:** 71 Dimasa houses burnt down.

CPI (ML) representatives submit a memorandum to the Minister of India.

The number of relief camps reaches 46 with 26,842 persons.

**19<sup>th</sup> October:** Villagers from 14 Karbi villages in the district take shelter in relief camps at Kheroni.

7 Karbis are feared killed in NC Hills district and several houses in Karbi Anglong are burnt down.

The Assam governor visits the affected areas and sets up relief camps. The number of relief camps grows to 45 with 26,870 persons.

**20<sup>th</sup> October:** About 50 Dimasa houses and 19 Karbi houses are burnt down.

The number of relief camps increases to 49 with 42,627 persons.

**21<sup>st</sup> October:** Bodies of 9 unidentified persons are recovered from the Hojai area.

An All Party Delegation visits the district and meets representatives of both the communities. Conflicts

**ber:** More than 400 Karbi houses burnt down near Ungbra in NC Hills. The NC Hills Autonomous Council condemns the killings and violence in Karbi long. The DC of NC Hills has been providing food, water and healthcare to about 3,215 inmates, both Karbi Dimasas at relief camps in the district.

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for Naga languages. But unfortunately, there was no  
 from the people.

### Distinctive Features of Naga Tribes

Each Naga tribes has its own established no  
 traditions, has its own colourful dresses, dances and fest  
 the past Naga society was basically rural in character.   
 lived in villages and thus remained isolated from the re  
 world. Therefore, they kept their culture intact until th  
 of the British and of Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup>  
 Community spirit was the bond that knit together th  
 social life of the Nagas. It was a society with high sta  
 honesty, sincerity and truthfulness.

The main occupation of the Nagas is agricultu  
 practise two methods of cultivation, namely, wet  
 cultivation and jhuming or shifting cultivation. Their  
 crop is rice. But they also grow crops like potato, swee  
 garlic, sugarcane, barley, cotton, beans, maize, millet  
 and different spices. Though rice is their staple food,  
 are generally non-vegetarian in their food habits.

The traditional religion of the Nagas is said to be

ly Naga tribe has its own language, though some of  
 often classified as dialects. Ethnologists categorise the  
 Nages as belonging to the Tibeto-Burman Linguistic  
 the Sino-Tibetan language family. All the Naga tribes  
 own language or established dialect. There are however  
 tations to be found even within a tribe. For example,  
 nage has four dialects, namely, Mongsen, Chungli,  
 and Merimaku, though Chungli is their official  
 . The multiplicity of Naga languages is mainly because  
 living conditions of the past when villages were isolated,  
 was little friendly communication between them. The  
 Nages within Nagaland are divided into three groups:  
 the Western sub-group which comprises Angami, Sama,  
 and Chakhesang language.

### ns and Dialects

and dialects.

the differences in dress and culture, and especially in  
 e of others tribes. Apart from such physical differences,  
 es it is possible to distinguish the people of one tribe  
 es in minute details between the tribes. Because of such  
 ough all the Nagas have Mongoloid features there are

s. This is usually done by the head of the family to love and care for his daughter(s). But this act is not nal and hence cannot be taken as a part of the Lotha n and customs

**Conflicts Based on Land**

Conflicts based on land and natural resources are more than any other type of conflicts. We shall study some here conflicts broke out over land and other natural s and see how they were resolved.

**Case 1**

In a village, a man had a plot of land bordered by two streams. A dispute broke out between him and his neighbor when an approach road was being constructed. While the road, loose soil filled up the small streams and the natural boundary was obliterated. This led to confusion between the owners of the two plots about the demarcation of the boundary. Both sides marked their own boundaries and each claimed that his boundary was the actual one. Thus a conflict arose between the two neighbors.

parts of the district; 2) Sanis Range or Middle Range covers the middle part of the district; 3) Bhandari Lower Range. It is the outermost part of the district and extends from the Japukong range of Mkokchung district and gradually slopes down to the Assam plains in the north western part. The most fertile valleys are in this range and they are the Tchiying and Tchiying valleys.

**Demographic features**

The total population of the district in 2001 was 1,14,000 of whom 83,670 were males and 77,553 females. The sex ratio was 927. The literacy rate was 80.55, with 80.55 for males and 75.32 for females. However, educational level was not very high as only 5,988 or 5.34 percent of the population were graduates.

The entire district is classified as rural, having 107 inhabited villages with VDB, though according to the Census Commission there were 128 inhabited villages. The rural population was 1,12,587 (76.66% of the total). The only urban center was Wokha Town, the district Headquarters.

153,983 persons or 95.51 percent of the total population

went away for no fault of her husband, she would have the cost of the marriage to her erstwhile husband. If she went back to her parents, they would have to make the husband as divorcee cost, but the husband would get a small amount of money, then she would get only a small amount of money. If the husband would bear the cost, however, in some cases of those traditional practices, the husband would be recognized by her erstwhile wife. It was not mandatory for the erstwhile husband to recognize the second marriage of his wife. But the fact that such an authority was not to him in cases where a woman went away with a man, even after making the payment of the costs of the marriage, the erstwhile husband was seen as the wronged party.

was indeed guilty of infidelity, it imposed a suitable penalty on the guilty woman in the form of a fine on her family. Extramarital relations on the part of a man could be taken as a married man indulging in extramarital relations with an unmarried girl. If the relationship does not have a child, nothing really happens except disputes and some social scorn. But if a child or children are born, the woman may take the woman into her family and give her a second wife, or the girl may live as an unmarried woman and claim the cost of bringing up the child. In some villages, if an unmarried girl gives birth to a child, she is blamed for the irregularities and infamously treated. Cases of unmarried mothers or widows giving birth to a child are found in the Lotha society, though they are common. Unmarried mothers and illegitimate children are looked down upon by the Lotha society.

ally slim and moderately tall, and women, as usual, are shorter than men.

language that the Lothas speak among themselves is also known as "Kyonyi". This language has no dialectal differences, except for minor differences between the Upper Lotha and Lower Lotha. This is not the case with Ao, which has many variations between regions. With other Lothas speak Assamese, which is a simplified form of Assamese. Many Lothas studied Hindi at school also use Hindi for communicating with outsiders. The educated class can converse fluently.

There are some cultural differences between the Lothas of the three ranges but such internal differences are not significant. In general, the lifestyle of the Lotha Nagas is very fascinating. It is simple because of their simple mode of living, fascinating because their traditions are not changing due to modernisation and westernisation. The diet of the Lothas consists of rice, bamboo-shoots of various types, fermented or dried fish, yam, vegetables, and meat, and a delicacy. Food is mostly boiled and spices are rarely

land, either snatching land from others or defending themselves from aggressors because land and other natural resources are their very existence.

As noted earlier, among the Lotha there are four types of land with regard to ownership: 1) village land which is owned by the village, 2) khel land owned by a khel of a particular village, 3) family land owned by a family which is passed from father to son and so on, and, 4) individual land owned by an individual.

Village land is owned by the village as a whole, and the products and things produced from the village land are shared by the villagers. House building materials and things which are of general use of the villagers are taken from the village land. In most cases, the Village Council takes care of the village land.

Clan land is owned by a clan. In almost all the villages of the Lotha Nagas, every clan has its own land controlled by a few representatives from among the members of the clan or by the head of the particular clan. The products of the land is for the use of the members of that particular clan. Any one may use the products of this land but only with due permission from the head or whoever is not in charge to look after

Efforts were made to settle within the community. First at the level of the families concerned, and then at the level of the council of elders. Traditions of the village and local customary laws were followed.

Factors have brought about changes. The first is the introduction of Christianity. The second factor of change is the introduction of new systems of administration after the independence of Nagaland. At present most Lothas are Christians and do not easily go in for divorce. Divorce is disapproved by the Church, and for that reason their society as a whole. It is treated as a social evil resulting in ex-communication from the Church. Civil law including the customary laws, tend to prevail over the traditional legal institutions. Thus, in practice conflicts are now not common and when they do occur, they are resolved through traditional institutions and processes.

of the village.

There may be cases when a family conflict is reported to the elders. In such cases, the elders listen to the parties in the conflict. They also investigate matters. Then the decision which is binding. Such decisions usually vary according to the times and times. The times vary according to the matter.

of a family seldom report such conflicts to the elders or outsiders for a bad name to the family. Hence the members of family members because exposing such conflicts without any question. Besides, family quarrels are kept by the members of the family. Therefore his decision is expected to be for the members of the family. He is expected to be for the head of the family is revered, feared and the family deals with them. The Lothas have the patrilineal system. Among the Lothas when such conflicts arise, the children and between siblings. They are found everywhere.

jealousy, quarrels, verbal exchanges and physical fights can exist between husband and wife, parents and children and between siblings. They are found everywhere.

excommunication and expulsion from the village or  
 ity is a very serious matter. This kind of penalty evolved  
 idea that if one is banished from one's own village or  
 she will have no protection whatsoever. In former times,  
 al warfare was continuous, an exiled person became  
 target for hostile head hunters. There was also the danger  
 exposed to wild animals. Thus expulsion was, in practice,  
 nt to the capital punishment of the present day. It was  
 ndirect elimination of the guilty for the offence  
 d by him/her.

s very hard for a person to become a member of another  
 illage. A person cannot be simply admitted or welcomed  
 r clan or village. In former times, it was believed that  
 s or things would befall the clan or the village. In case a  
 illage decided to welcome a newcomer, they would  
 perform various rituals. One such ritual was passing  
 he fire. The host clansmen would gather at a place and  
 ge fire and the person to be welcomed into the clan  
 ve to strip off all his/her belongings and jump above  
 ing fire from one side to the other. This would be  
 by other rituals and chants. Only then the host clan or

which is passed from father to son and so on, and, 4) in  
 land owned by an individual.

**Social Organisation**

Every Lotha village is an independent unit, but lo  
 villages were formed in the past for purposes of war. In  
 each village was ruled by the village chief known as the  
 with the assistance of the village elders. Mills (1922: 96)  
 that in some villages the chiefs had the privilege of fr  
 of the villagers for cultivating their fields. The chief  
 was hereditary in the family of the man who originally  
 the village. But chieftainship had practically ceased  
 during the British period and the village care to be r  
 group of elders (Mills 1922: 96).

Among the Lothas, there are no specified hier  
 divisions and no caste-like system of social stratifica  
 community is divided into phratries and clans. They  
 divided into two territorial divisions, the Northern L  
 the Southern Lothas. Some minor dialectical and c  
 differences are observed between them. Among the d  
 clan groups, no specific economic and religious relat

**Legal Institutions**

cesses of modernisation and recent developments.  
 the changes that have taken place in these methods due  
 of conflict resolution. But an effort has been made to  
 laws. Basically this study deals with the traditional  
 aymen, and even those who were convicted under  
 able persons, elders, those who knew about customary

or to the coming of the British and the establishment  
 dministration, the Lothas had an efficient village-centred  
 ration of their own. In every village, there was a body  
 known as "longt" representing every khal in the village.  
 e also known as "Ephyo-o-Esan" (spokesmen) of the  
 They were responsible for the maintenance of law and  
 n the dispensing of justice. Any problem or dispute in  
 ge or with other villages was settled by these elders.

When a victim of robbery approached the elders  
 ytsos khal, the elders summoned the offender to appear  
 them within seven days. At the hearing, the victim w  
 the first chance to place or submit his/her grievances to  
 elders of the ytsos khal. The members of the ytsos khal  
 and every detail of the aggrieved. They tried to find ou  
 there was any other animosity between the two parties  
 the situation took place and for which the victim  
 complaint against the offender. After this, the offender  
 due time to present his/her standpoint and justify his  
 action(s). If the offender was found to be guilty, the  
 was made to pay the victim the value of the articles  
 Besides, some fines were also imposed. The amount of  
 depended on the gravity of the offence. Also the amount  
 laws and norms. The present study covers only limited  
 ed mainly to understand the traditional practices and

... were established during their stay in the Morung. This ... has changed and modern educational institutions have ... place of the Morung.

**... e, Family and Status of Women**

Lotha follow monogamy and clan exogamy. Rules ... marriage are strictly followed. In the past there seems to ... n the practice of marriage by service in which a boy ... e family of his prospective bride before marriage took ... (Singh 1994: 113-114). ... nuclear family is the norm. The older sons establish ... tent households when they marry. The youngest son ... s to stay with the parents even after his marriage and ... a major portion of the property. The head of the family ... ted, feared and obeyed. Thus the system was patrilineal ... gly patriarchal.

... position of women was high. Women had almost ... atus with men in society because in every field of ... and domestic work, their work was of equal value. In ... women worked more than men. There was no ... nation against women at home. But in matters of

background that we examine the conflict situation ... traditional methods and institutions for conflict resolu

**4 Conflict Situations and Remedial Meas the Past**

Conflict is universal and is found wherever peopl ... groups: in the family, neighborhood, community and ... Conflicts take different forms like disagreements, c ... quarrels and clashes, with or without violence. Whate ... form, conflicts are harmful because they lead to dis ... tension and even destruction. Therefore, like conflicts ... or mechanisms for resolving conflicts are also unive ... modern societies important mechanisms for dealing with ... are law enforcing agencies like the police and the co ... before the establishment of modern courts of law, most s ... especially tribal communities, had their own mechan ... institutions for resolving conflicts. We shall loo ... traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the Lo ... the

victim's family might or might not report the matte ... elders of the Yitso ki for action to be taken against the cu ... It was possible for the matter to be solved amicably by ... parties. However, more often than not, the matter was ... to the Yitso ki for justice.

If the crime was committed intentionally, the pu ... was very high. The offender, and in some cases, the enti ... of the offender, was asked to leave the locality and th ... for a specific period or even permanently. The gui ... condemned by the entire society and no mercy was ... him/her. He/she became unwelcome in the entire soci ... person was killed inadvertently, for example in the c ... hunting, fishing, playing, etc, the matters could be s ... the families of both the parties (the victim's and the offi ... As far as possible, the members of both families tried ... the whole affair between themselves. But if they were not ... with the settlement, they proceeded to the Yitso ki for ... In some villages like Longsa, whether one was ... intentionally or not, the matter was referred to the Y ... The Yitso ki in this case consisted of the elders of the ... who were either selected or came from the hereditary

... d be doubled. Further, because of his failure to answer ... ions, he/she would be made to pay a fine for the ... of the Yitso ki.

... person got into the habit of stealing even after being ... several times, he/she was dealt with more severely. Some ... punished the culprit from the village, other villages ... a very high fine, and in some village, a special ritual ... order to make him/her give up

... of stealing.

... This ritual or ceremony is known as "Pungrum". This ... was not found in all the Lotha villages. Where it existed ... formed according to the "Yanthi" of the village. It was ... ceremony and was performed by the elders of the village.

... any began by selecting a huge pig. It was slaughtered ... Then the pig was cut into pieces ... removing the hair. The pieces were distributed among ... of the village. Children and youngsters were forbidden ... meet out of fear that they might inherit the bad habit

... Secondly, it was to scare him so that he would mend his ... place, it was to condemn the wrongdoings of the ... This ceremony was performed for various reasons.

## Conclusion

This brief study has shown that in the Lotha Nagas there were well established traditional methods for dealing with disputes and conflicts of all types. At the end of the study it was possible to present the following conclusions.

### Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution

The salient features of the traditional processes of resolution can be summarised as follows.

1. In the traditional system, the council of elders

as a court in disputes within the village. The elders also

decisive role in inter-village and even inter-tribal dis-

conflicts. The assumption was that the elders

knowledgeable, wise and impartial and that they were

about the common good and welfare of all.

2. All the parties involved in a dispute were

opportunity to explain their case. Not responsible

summons issued by the council of elders was treated as

of the council and was dealt with by imposing fines.

3. In deciding a case, the council of elders exercised

evidence carefully. They also examined carefully the

verdict of the Council, bites a sacred object and swears that his position is the correct one. Among the Lotha Nagas, the sacred object in this case is the tooth of a tiger. Like other tribes, the Lothas hunt wild animals, including tigers. When they hunt a tiger they extract the tooth to be preserved as a prized sacred object. In the oath taking ceremony, the person taking the oath holds the object between his teeth, invokes the spirits of his ancestors, and asserts that his position is correct and that his implication is that if he makes a false claim, he will be killed like a tiger. It is believed that if he makes a false claim, he and his family will, sooner or later, suffer various types of misfortunes like sickness and even death. This ceremony is so serious that young people, especially children, are not permitted to come anywhere close to the place where the ceremony is taking place. An oath taking or swearing ceremony is the final and irrevocable step in the settlement of a dispute, and the disputing parties dare to take such an oath.

### Case study 2

In a village, there was a dispute between two persons over the boundary of their land. After many attempts to

