

## 10

**EXPLORING CIVIL SOCIETY IN  
NAGALAND***Zhoto Tunyi*

This chapter explores the emergence and role of Naga civil society organisations. I contend that civil society organisations in Nagaland have a historical and cultural set-up of their own and that, consequently, the workings of Naga civil society organisations and the political positions they take must not be framed in terms of universalistic, or 'western', concepts of civil society, but ought to be situated in a local historical context, one blemished by protracted political conflict. Naga civil society organisations, to begin with, did not emerge in times of peace and societal harmony, but in an atmosphere of political uncertainty and armed conflict. Consequently, most Naga civil society organisations function in relation to the Indo-Naga conflict. What further sets them apart is that, in their functioning, they are shaped by Naga traditions and sentiments of tribal belonging. As such, most, though not all, Naga civil societies bodies are 'closed' rather than 'open' organisations. This, for one, seemingly contravenes liberal political projections of the public sphere as an inclusive and open space.

Modern democracy was introduced in Nagaland comparatively late as the first participatory elections were held in 1964, a year after the enactment of Nagaland state. Ever since, however, democratic institutions and elections