

**KUKI CULTURE
IN
NORTH CACHAR HILLS**

BEFORE AND AFTER THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY

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THANGKIM HAOLAI

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IN
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OF CHRISTIANITY**

By

Thangkim Haolai

WITH A FOREWORD BY

Sri G. C. Kakati,
Joint Director, AIRT&SC, Guwahati

Gift

Kuki Culture in North Cachar Hills (Berore and after the advent of Christianity) : by Thangkim Haolai and published by the Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati-22

NORTH CACHAR HILLS
BEFORE AND AFTER THE ADVENT

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PREFACE
DIREKTOR

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati under the aegis of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India, have been providing grants-in-aid to authors for publication of books written on different aspects of tribals and scheduled castes. The scheme is basically known as Grants-in-Aid for Literary Works for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The scheme receives very good response from different authors. In fact, it is difficult to accommodate all the authors under the scheme. As a part of this popular scheme, the book on KUKI CULTURE IN NORTH CACHAR HILLS (Before and After the Advent of Christianity) by Thangkim Haolai has been published. My husband for inspiring me to write this Book.

Mrs. N. A. Hazarika
Director
Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes
Guwahati-22

Dated Guwahati
the 10th February, 2006

PREFACE

The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati under the aegis of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India, have been providing grants-in-aid to authors for publication of books written on different aspects of tribals and scheduled castes. The scheme is basically known as 'Grants-in-Aid for Literary Works for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes'. The scheme receives very good response from different authors. In fact, it is difficult to accommodate all the authors under the scheme. As a part of this popular scheme, the book on **KUKI CULTURE IN NORTH CACHAR HILLS (Before and after the Advent of Christianity)** by **Thangkim Haolai** has been sponsored by the Institute for publication. It is expected that the readers will receive the book with pleasure. We look forward for comments and suggestions from the readers.

I am thankful to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India for providing financial assistance for the scheme. I am also thankful to the Government of Assam, Department of WPT & BC for giving financial assistance for the scheme. Finally, I like to thank M/s. Bohniman Printers, Guwahati for their help and co-operation for bringing out the book.

Dated Guwahati
the 16th February, 2006

Mrs. N. A. Hazarika
Director
Assam Institute of Research for
Tribals and Scheduled Castes,
Guwahati-22

FOREWORD

North East India is often regarded as the Anthropologists paradise. But worthy published literature on the ethnic groups are very rare. The Kuki is one of the major tribes of Assam in particular and North East India in general. The Kuki tribe has 37 (Thirty seven) sub tribes or groups. However, published book on Kuki tribe is very few.

In such a perspective, it is indeed commendable that Mrs. Thangkim Haolai has written this book entitle "Kuki Culture in North Cachar Hills" on the life and culture of the Kuki tribe based on field data. Since it is one of the few books to be published on Kuki tribe, the book will be of immense help to the students, research scholars, anthropologists and sociologists.

I wish her all success in her endeavour and sincerely hope that the readers will appreciate the book.

(Ganesh Ch. Kakati)
Joint Director

Assam Institute of Research for
Tribals and Scheduled Castes,
Guwahati-22

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The conversion of Pu Songkhotindou Changsan to Christianity in a remote village called Ngente in 1921, ushered in a new era among the Kukis of North Cachar Hills in Assam. Over the years, they abandoned Animism—the faith of their forefathers and embraced Christianity. What occurred in the process was an evolution of a culture which jettisoned elements unsuitable to the doctrines of the new faith while retaining all the good elements of their age-old customs and traditions. While referring to the impact of missionary work and colonial hegemony in North east India, anthropologists and social scientists have raised a hue and cry over the consequential corroding of tribal heritage and culture. What I witnessed however, among the Kukis of North Cachar Hills is totally contrary to this affirmation. As tribal culture in the twentieth century face the threat of extinction mainly due to the influence of westernization and modernization in the form of cable T.V, western ethics, pop culture and similar alien and foreign cultures, the Kukis of North Cachar, far from abandoning their customs and traditions are continually making a concerted effort to preserve their rich cultural heritage. Fifteen years have I stood in amazement at the unique cultural tradition unfolding before my eyes. This book is a result of that fascination.

I would like to acknowledge the following authors

and their works which I consulted in the course of writing this book. S.J. Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation. Can the Many be one?* Jointly published by the Rev. Ashish Amos the Indian Society for promoting Christian knowledge for Vidyaajyoti Education and Welfare Society, 1998; John Butler, *Travels in Assam* F.P. 1855, Vivek Publishing Company 1978; B.N. Bordoloi, G.C. Sharmah Thakur, *Tribes of Assam*, published by B.N. Bordoloi 1988; Jayanta Bushan Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule in North East India*; New Delhi, Radiant Publisher 1977; Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, *Tribalism in India*, Vikash Publishing House 1978; F.S. Downs: *The Mighty Works of God*, C.L.C Gauhati 1971, ... *Essays on Christianity in North-East India*, ed. Milton S. Sangma and David R. Syiemlieh F.P. 1994, Indus Publishing Company New Delhi, ... *Christianity in North East India*, published by I.S.P.C.K., Delhi, in association with C.L.C Gauhati 1983; S.T. Das, *Assam at a glance*, Gauhati, Bani Prakash 1981; Rajat Kanti Das, *Manipur Tribal Scene, Studies in Society and Change*, F.P. Inter India Publications; Michael Edwardes, *British India, 1772-1947*, F.P. Rupa and Company 1994; C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, F.P., 1961, Revised edition, 1976; Tarun Goswami, *Kuki Life and Lore*, published by North Cachar Hills District Council; Haflong, Assam. F. P., 1985; M.E. Gibbs, *From Jerusalem to New Delhi, The Story of the Christian Church*, published for the Senate of Serampore College by The Christian Literature Society, 1964; P.S. Haokip, *Zalen-Gam. The Kuki Nation*. F.P., 1998 KNO Publication; Hrangkhuma. F., *An Introduction to Church History*,

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unpublished thesis namely, *A Historical Study of the Development of Christianity among the Kukis of North Cachar Hills District of Assam with special reference to Kuki Christian Church Synod, and its Missiological Implications-* A Thesis submitted to the Senate of Serampore University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of the Master of Theology, 1998 and *A Christian Approach to Animism with special reference to Tribe in Assam-* A Thesis submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Divinity of the Asia Graduate School of Theology, Bangalore 1994.

My thanks again are due to UGC for making my study on Kuki Culture possible and to the Directorate of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, for publishing this book for me. I owe more personal thanks to Avah for typing this manuscript and finally to my children David, Bambi, Chongchong and Lienkhup for being there for me when I needed them. A debt I can never hope to pay is acknowledged in my dedication.

I hope this book will initiate further research in the field of Kuki Culture.

Haflong
December 2004 S. Thangkim Haolai

“....This well documented monograph of the Kukis of N.C.Hills embraces their migration to the hill district, their material culture, family, marriage, kinship, clan, religious beliefs and practices, political system, customary laws, folk beliefs, rites and rituals and changes that occurred after their conversion to Christianity. In short any lay reader can get a holistic picture of the life of the Kukis.

The author while dealing with spread of Christianity among the Kukis amply demonstrates the truism that Christianity with its world view and human and humane approach touches their religious arena in whole and certain beliefs and practices, modes and morals in part, without much effecting the core of their culture...of late the Kukis are leaning towards revival of their traditional cultural traits due mainly to what the author mentions as ‘denominationalism’ of Christian churches bringing into focus the sectarian concept to the hitherto cohesive Kuki social life.”

Dr. Ganesh Chandra Sharma Thakur.