

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NORTHEAST INDIA

(A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN SOCIAL
CHANGE AMONG THE KHASI-JAINTIA HILL
TRIBES OF MEGHALAYA)



Dr. O. L. Snaitang

VENDRAME INSTITUTE, SHILLONG
FIRMA KLM PRIVATE LIMITED
CALCUTTA * * 1993

goy

Published by
Vendrame Institute
Shillong-793 008

AND

Firma KLM Private Limited
257-B, B. B. Ganguly Street
Calcutta-700 012
India

NE
261.834510954116
SNA;4

© Dr. O. L. Snaitang

DEDICATED
TO
MY PARENTS

Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

1. History of Khasi-Jaintia Tribe
2. Christian Missions and Churches
3. Tribal Identity

ISBN 81-85408-00-12 **NEHU LIBRARY**

Acc. No. 210300
 Acc. by
 Date
 Class by
 Sub Heading by
 Enter by
 Described by

Printed by
Sankar Kumar Dey
SREEMA MUDRAN
8B, Shibnarayan Das
Calcutta-700 006

FOREWORD

The scholarly study of the history of Christianity in Northeast India began only recently been begun. Earlier there were a number of books written about missionaries in the region, the purpose of which was to inform their constituencies in the West about the nature of their work and to encourage them to provide continuing support. Subsequently there began to appear a few histories of the churches of the region. Some of these were produced on the occasion of jubilees and centenaries—what might be called Jubilee History—while others were more scholarly studies but they were basically “internal” histories of the establishment and development of the church and its programmes. Unlike the earlier mission histories these were written for the enlightenment of the Christian people of the region. It was their history, not the history of foreign missionaries.

In recent years historians have begun to give attention to the relationship between Christianity and the socio-cultural context in which it was introduced and developed. While those who were primarily responsible for the initial proclamation of the Christian Gospel in the Northeast India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were foreigners, the distinctive nature of Christianity as it developed in the region arose out of the inter-action between that which was introduced from outside and the existing cultures which both shaped and were shaped by the new religion. Studies are being done on both aspects. Some historians are studying the way in which the traditional primal cultures of the hill people contributed to the development of distinctive forms of Christianity ; others are studying the way in which Christianity contributed to social change.

This study by O. L. Snaitang falls within the latter category. He has convincingly demonstrated that among Khasi-Jaintia people, Christianity played a significant acculturative role in helping them maintain their distinctive identity while at the same time preparing them to function effectively within the new order introduced by British administration. Christianity thus not only provided the people with the means of dealing with the modernisation of their society that followed the breakdown of its previous isola-

tion, but it also provided them with the means of preserving a distinctive identity in the process. In fact, he demonstrates that Christianity greatly strengthened, in a sense created, a Khasi-Jaintia identity through the creation of a standard written language, through its educational work, ideology, evangelism and church structures. While much of the old was destroyed in the process, the argument of the author is that the process remained fundamentally indigenous because it built upon the one element in the traditional Khasi-Jaintia culture that was common to all sections of the people—the social code known as *tipkur tipkha*.

It was my privilege to be associated with Dr. Snaitang, as his doctoral supervisor, in the research which produced this book. I am honoured to be asked to write this foreword to a book that makes an important contribution to the understanding of the impact of Christianity upon tribal societies in the North East. I hope that it will stimulate similar research among other tribal groups in the region.

Frederick S. Downs, *B.A.*,

26 Nov. 1991. *B.D., Ph.D.*

Prof. and Head of the
Dept. of the History and
Christianity,

The United Theological
College, Bangalore.

PREFACE

Christianity came into the Khasi-Jaintia area after the introduction of British rule in the 1820s. The Khasi-Jaintias of the present Meghalaya state were the first among the hill tribes of Northeast India to be brought under British colonial rule and the influences of Christian missions and churches over a period of more than 150 years.

There is a variety of sources on the interaction between Christianity and the Khasi-Jaintia society, published and unpublished, produced by a number of British officials, foreign Christian missionaries and the local Khasi-Jaintia Christians. Some of these are not only in English and Khasi languages but also in German, French, Spanish and Latin.

Many scholars in the recent past have made several studies on Christianity and the Khasi-Jaintia tribe. But they have not given sufficient attention to the missionary sources and the role of Christianity in social change. It is against this background that I have undertaken this study.

This book has grown out of a dissertation that was submitted to the Serampore University in 1990 for the degree of Doctor of Theology. In this connection, I am grateful to those who have helped and encouraged me in the original project. Prof. Dr. Frederick S. Downs, my guide, stands in the front rank. I record my deep sense of gratitude to him for his constant inspiration, guidance, openness, patience and for giving whole-heartedly of his time at every stage of the research. But for his supervision I would not have completed the writing of the dissertation in time. I am thankful also for his Foreword to this book.

My grateful thanks also go to my friends Fr. Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB, Fr. Dr. George Kottuppallil, SDB, Dr. David R. Syiemlieh, Dr. Milton S. Sangma and Dr. A. C. Sinha, who have read the manuscripts and given me their critical suggestions. Their comments have been incorporated into the book and sources updated.

My deep sense of appreciation and thanks also go to the librarians, archivists and staff at the West Bengal State Archives,

National Library, both located in Calcutta; Carey Library, Serampore; Otto Hopfenmueller Library of Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong; the United Theological College Library and Archives, Bangalore; NEHU Central Library, Shillong; Jeebon Roy Memorial Library, Shillong; Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Synod Office Library, Shillong; Mr. L. G. Shullai's "Shillong Collection Centre" and the personal libraries of Bah U Hipshon Roy Kharshiing and Rev. I. Kharkongor.

Dr. Henry Wilson, the former Director of the Board of Theological Education, Department of Research, Bangalore, deserves my special gratitude for his interest and encouragement at the initial period of my doctoral research. To the Director and Associate Director of the South Asia Theological Research Institute, Bangalore, the Governing Board and Principal of Cherra Theological College, Cherrapunji; the Pastors' Fellowship and the Business Association of the Church of God, Meghalaya and Assam, I owe a debt of gratitude, for their help and co-operation. Fr. Leguori, CMI, my mentor in learning the Latin language and Fr. Dr. A. Mathias Mundadan, CMI, of the Dharmaram College, Bangalore, deserve my deep gratitude. I am thankful also to Mr. Lohori Sawkmie, my father, Diana, my wife, my children and Mr. Shrolenson Marbaniang, my brother-in-law, for their support during the course of my research.

I am indebted to Fr. Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB, Director, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong and his staff for their understanding and keen interest shown in the publication of the book.

Shillong,
1 January 1992.

O. L. Snaitang

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| I. THE PROBLEM | 1 |
| II. DEFINITIONS | 3 |
| III. LIMITS OF THE STUDY | 5 |
| IV. PREVIOUS RESEARCH | 6 |
| (1) Studies which overlook the Christian Impact | 6 |
| (2) Studies in which Christianity is seen as Anti-national | 6 |
| (3) Institutional Mission Studies | 6 |
| (4) Writings on the Social Impact of Christianity | 7 |
| V. METHOD OF RESEARCH | 8 |
| VI. THE STRUCTURE | 8 |
| 2. Identity and change among the Khasi-Jaintia people in the pre-nineteenth century period | 10 |
| I. THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LAND | 10 |
| (1) Geographic Factors in Determining the nature of Khasi-Jaintia Social and Political Organization | 10 |
| (2) Political Organization | 12 |
| (3) Language | 22 |
| (4) Religion | 28 |
| (5) Traditional Social Structures : Matriliny | 33 |
| II. RESPONSE TO AGENCIES OF CHANGE | 37 |
| (1) Contact with Traders | 37 |
| (2) Inter-Marriage | 38 |
| (3) Contacts with Hinduism | 39 |
| 3. Agencies of change during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries | 41 |
| I. BRITISH ADMINISTRATION | 41 |
| (1) The Beginnings | 41 |

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| (2) The Annexation and Control of the Khasi-Jaintia hills | 43 |
| (3) The Impact of British Rule | 46 |
| (4) The British and Christian Missions | 49 |
| (5) The British Policy on the Hill Tribe | 53 |
| (6) The Role of Khasi-Jaintia Leaders in Pre-independent India | 54 |
| II. NEW CONTACTS WITH HINDUISM | 57 |
| III. CHRISTIAN MISSIONS | 61 |
| 4. The advent and growth of Christianity | 65 |
| I. CHRISTIAN MISSIONS | 65 |
| (1) Serampore Baptist Mission | 65 |
| (2) The Welsh Mission | 68 |
| (3) The Roman Catholic Mission | 78 |
| (4) The Anglican Church | 82 |
| (5) The Seventh Day Adventists | 83 |
| (6) Other Missions | 83 |
| II. CHURCHES OF INDIGENOUS ORIGIN | 83 |
| (1) Church of God | 84 |
| (2) Church of God-Ecclesia | 90 |
| (3) Christ National Church | 92 |
| (4) The Assembly Church of Jesus Christ (Full Gospel) | 93 |
| (5) All-one-in Christ Church Fellowship | 95 |
| (6) The Unitarian Church | 93 |
| III. THE GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY | 97 |
| (1) Cherrapunji-Shella Area | 97 |
| (2) Jaintia Area | 99 |
| (3) Shillong Area | 102 |
| (4) Ri Bhoi Area | 103 |
| (5) The Western Khasi Area | 104 |
| IV. CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS | 109 |
| (1) Ecclesiastical | 109 |
| (2) Education | 113 |
| (3) Medical Work | 117 |
| (4) Other Institutional Services | 120 |

| | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| 5. Christian attitude towards social change | 121 |
| I. THE MISSIONARY ATTITUDE | 121 |
| (1) The Background | 121 |
| (2) The Attitudes | 126 |
| (3) Summary | 132 |
| II. THE KHASI-JAINTIA ATTITUDE | 132 |
| (1) The Background | 132 |
| (2) Attitude Towards the Traditional Religion | 134 |
| (3) Summary | 139 |
| 6. The Christian impact on Khasi-Jaintia society | 140 |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 140 |
| II. THE INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE | 143 |
| (1) Creation of a Written Language | 143 |
| (2) The Basis of Khasi Literature | 145 |
| (3) One Language | 146 |
| (4) The Impact of Literature | 147 |
| III. EDUCATION | 148 |
| (1) Mission Responsibility of Entire Educational System | 150 |
| (2) Education of Women | 152 |
| (3) Provision of Tribal Leadership | 154 |
| (4) Education and Tribal Identity | 155 |
| IV. THE CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGY | 158 |
| (1) The Concept of God | 158 |
| (2) New Social Relationships | 159 |
| (3) Universal Community | 160 |
| (4) Freedom | 161 |
| V. LIFE STYLE | 164 |
| (1) Individual | 164 |
| (2) Social | 166 |
| (3) Material | 166 |
| VI. ECCLESIASTICAL STRUCTURES | 168 |
| VII. CONCLUSION | 176 |

1. INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Christian role in social change among the Khasi-Jaintia people of Meghalaya from 1841 to the present.

There are two main reasons for undertaking such a study. First, the role of Christianity in social change among the hill tribes of the North East has not been studied in depth by anyone. Second, those scholars who have touched upon the problem have disagreed concerning the nature of the role Christianity has played in relation to social change.

(Beginning from the advent of the British in the 1820s until the present, Khasi-Jaintia society has undergone significant transformation. Almost from the beginning Christianity was associated with this transformation.) And yet scholarly studies have either completely ignored or minimized the Christian role. For instance, in his study of the Khasi tribal solidarity movement, P.R.G. Mathur¹ argues that the (Seng Khasi was the primary agent in providing a religious basis for the Khasi tribal effort to establish solidarity in the face of change. The Seng Khasi, formed in 1899, is a revival movement of the Khasi traditional culture which rejected in theory all that was Christian.) Mathur is puzzled by the fact that despite his hypothesis of the central role of the Seng Khasi, the dominant role in many contemporary aspects of Khasi society has been played by Christians. The puzzle would have been solved if he had studied the role of Christianity with the same scholarly thoroughness with which he studied the role of the Seng Khasi. Mathur's study is typical of research done by many scholars in that it almost totally ignores Christian sources. The Christian role is mentioned in passing, but it has not been seriously studied. Thus, while the concern of scholars with the

1. *Khasi of Meghalaya : Study in Tribalism and Religion* (1979). pp. 140f. Hereinafter cited as Mathur, *Khasi*.

question of social change in the hill tribal societies is significant, their passing allusions to and ignorance of the Christian role in social transformation leaves an important gap to be filled.

In the second place, those few scholars who have given attention to the Christian role in social change have reached divergent conclusions. Chaube and Downs suggest that the role was essentially acculturative.² Natarajan,³ on the other hand, argues that Christianity was the principal agent in bringing about social change. The work of Chaube and Downs on this subject are macro-studies of the entire North East. The question needs to be raised as to whether a micro-study of one tribal area, the Khasi-Jaintia, would support their hypothesis. Natarajan's work is a micro-study of the Khasis, but her sources were limited and methodologically questionable. It is my intention to examine these conflicting views in light of the evidence in relation to the Khasi-Jaintia tribal society.

The proposed study of the role of Christianity in social change among the Khasi-Jaintia people over the past one hundred fifty years is important for the following reasons :—

First, it will make an important contribution to academic studies of social change in general, and particularly with relation to the hill tribes of the North East India. As indicated above, a number of scholarly studies have largely ignored the role played by Christianity in social change among the tribes. In part this is because they have ignored mission/ecclesiastical sources, relying largely on government sources. But the journals, reports and proceedings produced by the missionaries, ecclesiastical bodies and individual local Christians contain a wealth of information on the

2. S. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India* (1972), p. 42. Herein after cited as Chaube. F.S. Downs, "Christianity as a Tribal Response to Change in North East India", *Missiology*, VIII. 4 (October 1980), pp. 407-416. Hereinafter cited as Downs, "Tribal Response". See also Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives* (1983), pp. 172-278. Hereinafter cited as Downs, *Christianity*.

3. Nalini Natarajan, *The Missionary Among the Khasis* (1977), Hereinafter cited as Natarajan.

subject. Some of this material is, of course, only accessible to those with a knowledge of the Khasi language. This perspective and these sources will be brought to the attention of the academic community through this study.

Second, a full understanding of the several factors contributing to social change is highly relevant to the present situation where rapid change continues to take place.

Third, it will contribute to a clearer understanding of the Christian role in tribal societies. That role has often been misunderstood in India as an anti-national one. It is hoped that this study will help remove such misconceptions and help people understand its positive contribution.

Fourth, it will contribute to the self-understanding of the Christian people in the Khasi-Jaintia hills.

II. DEFINITIONS

"Christianity" refers to the religion of all those within the Khasi-Jaintia area who call themselves and are considered by others to be followers of Christ, irrespective of denomination. It includes both foreign missionaries and indigenous adherents of that faith.)

"Social Change" is a term used by social scientists, though not all define it in exactly the same way. B. Kuppaswamy defines it as,

a process in which (there) is discernible significant alteration in the structure and functioning of a particular social system. When we speak of social change we simply assert that there is some change in social behaviour, social structure and social and cultural values.⁴)

T.B. Bottomore defines it as

a change in social structure (including here changes in the

4. *Social Change in India* (1975), p. 43.

size of a society), or in particular social institutions or the relationships between institutions.⁵⁾

Another definition is proposed by Zaltmann and Duncan :

Change is defined as the relearning on the part of an individual or group (1) in response to newly perceived requirements of a given situation requiring action and (2) which results in a change in the structure and/or functioning of social system.⁶

The implication of all these definitions is that social change is a dynamic, progressive or evolutionary process which involves social, religious, cultural, political, economic and linguistic components. These various components are certainly all involved in tribal societies like that of the Khasi-Jaintias. In such societies they are also so closely interrelated that a change in one affects all. It will be noted that the study will be complicated further by the fact that Christians affirmed some and rejected other components of the society. Hence in some cases they were prominent exponents of social change in other cases they supported the status quo against change.

“Khasis” and “Jaintias” are one matrilineal tribe inhabiting the present East and West Khasi hills and Jaintia districts of Meghalaya, who are popularly known today as u Hynniew trep though without any Government constitutional sanctions. The name “Khasi” is shrouded in mystery. It is, however, believed to have been a combination of two words, kha meaning “born” and Si, the name of a particular mother. “Khasi” therefore literally means “born of the mother Si”.⁷ The names “Jaintia” and “Synteng” have sometimes been used interchangeably. On this subject B. Pakem writes :

5. *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature* (1975), p. 297.

6. *Strategies for Planned Change* (1977), p. 16.

7. During the early years of their contact with the area the British officials and missionaries wrongly spelt the name “Cossyah” instead of “Khasi”. This incorrect usage was rectified in 1868 and therefore the “Khasi” form was used by the British officials. Cf. *Proceedings of the Lieut. Governor of Bengal, General Department* (Date of Previous order B file October 1868, Nos. 106 and 107), p. 2.

The Jaintias thoroughly despised the word “Synteng” (a name formerly common) because the Khasis associated it with the word “Sahteng” which means either the people who were “left behind” on their westward migration, or simply a “backward” community. However, according to Dr. S. K. Chatterjee...the word Jaintia (Zantain or Zonten) was derived from the word “Synteng”. And I should like to add further, that the word Synteng, in its turn, was derived from the word “Sutnga” (Suteng), the ruling dynasty of the Jaintias. Or it may be derived from the word “Sohmynting” (Smynting or Synting), a village through which the Khasis used to come to Jaintia hills before the present road communication. So the two words can be used interchangeably.⁸

Though the Khasi-Jaintias can be identified as distinct and separate peoples, historically for over a hundred years both within the context of administration and church they have functioned as a single community. For this reason, they are treated as a single entity in this dissertation. In fact, in the dissertation it is demonstrated how Christianity contributed to the process, the creation of the Khasi-Jaintia identity.

III. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

While there was some work undertaken in the Khasi hills by the Serampore Baptist Mission in the late 1820s and 1830s, the first permanent mission work was started by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission (later the name was changed to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission) in 1841. Hence that is the year from which this study commences. Insofar as we will be studying a limited aspect of Christian history, and insofar as important changes have taken place in the recent past, the period of study continues until the present.

As already indicated, the study will take into account Christianity as a whole rather than a particular denomination because it would be impossible to isolate the impact of a single denomination

8. In S. K. Singh, ed., *Tribal Situation in India* (1972), p. 362. Hereinafter cited as Singh, *Tribal Situation*.

in bringing about social change among the Khasi-Jaintia peoples. The largest groups are the Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Churches, but there are a number of smaller groups that have also played a role in the changes that have taken place.

IV. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

We propose to classify a number of studies on the Khasi-Jaintia tribe into four general categories.

(1) Studies which overlook the Christian impact. There have been a good number of studies on the tribe produced by social scientists of various kinds—historians, political scientists and economists—which fall in this category. Mathur's *Khasi of Meghalaya: Study in Tribalism and Religion* (1979) which has already been mentioned is a good example. It is a scholarly study that deals with social change and reaction to it among the Khasis, but does not seriously study the contributions of Christianity.

(2) Studies in which Christianity is seen as anti-national. Some scholars who have studied the tribes have taken an a priori position against any positive role for Christianity. In his book, *A Tribe in Transition: The Jaintias of Meghalaya* (1981),⁹ H. L. Deb Roy not only disregards the impact of Christianity and ecclesiastical sources, but jumps to the unwarranted conclusion that Christianity was responsible for creating an anti-national spirit among the members of the tribe. Though speaking about the North East in general, rather than the Khasi-Jaintia area in particular, B. P. Sukhla's *What Ails India's North-East?* (1980) takes a similar position, seeking to perpetuate the idea that Christianity works against the interests of the country. In neither case is the charge carefully investigated nor documented.

(3) Institutional Mission Studies. There are a few good histories of Christianity among the Khasi-Jaintia. These include John Hugh Morris' *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission, to the end of the year 1904* (1910),¹⁰ and *The*

9. Hereinafter cited as Deb Roy.

10. Hereinafter cited as Morris, *Welsh Mission*.

Story of our Foreign Mission (1930),¹¹ C. Becker's *Early History of the Catholic Missions in North-East India* (English ed. 1989)¹² and *History of the Catholic Mission in Northeast India, 1890-1915* (English ed. 1980).¹³ These institutional histories were written by foreign missionaries from the perspective of the sending side of their respective Missions. They are traditional Mission histories. J. Fortis Jyrwa's *The Wondrous Works of God: A Study on the Growth and Development of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church in the 20th Century* (1980)¹⁴ is essentially a denominational history, though written by a Khasi. None of these deal with social change as such.

(4) Writings on the Social Impact of Christianity. Natarajan's *The Missionary Among the Khasis*, which has already been indicated, does deal with the role of Christianity in social change, but is inadequate methodologically. In any event that subject is not its main focus. Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel's *Albizuri Among the Lyngams: A Brief History of the Catholic Mission among the Lyngams of Northeast India* (1985)¹⁵ is a good study of the Christian impact upon its subject people, but they constitute a single sub-ethnic group not the entire Khasi-Jaintia tribe. Downs has done several studies on the social impact of Christianity in the Northeast in general,¹⁶ but has not done specific study on the Khasi-Jaintia people and has not utilized sources in the Khasi language.

11. Hereinafter cited as Morris, *Foreign Mission*.

12. Hereinafter cited as Becker, *Early History*.

13. Hereinafter cited as Becker, *History*.

14. Hereinafter cited as Jyrwa.

15. Hereinafter cited as Karotemprel, *Lyngams*.

16. Cf. Downs, "Tribal Response", pp. 407ff; Downs, *Christianity; Frederick S. Downs, "Christianity and Cultural Change in North East India", in Somen Das, ed., *Christian Faith and Multiform Culture in India*, (1987), pp. 85-101. Hereinafter cited as Downs, "Cultural Change". F.S. Downs, "Tribal Ecumenism in North East India: The Christian Role in Solidarity Movements", *ETC Journal*, 2.2 (January-May, 1989), pp. 4-66. Hereinafter cited as Downs, "Solidarity". F.S. Downs, "Christian Conversion Movements among the Hill Tribes of North East India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Unpublished MS. 1987). Hereinafter cited as Downs, "Conversion".*

V. METHOD OF RESEARCH

The study consists of an historical analysis of the subject, based on the government, academic and ecclesiastical sources. The focus will be upon the impact of Christianity in relation to the Khasi-Jaintia people. While this is a study in social history rather than in sociology or sociology of religion, it certainly utilizes the research done by scholars in those fields as well as the other social sciences.

In addition to the study of government proceedings, census reports, statistical accounts and the general works on social change on the Khasi-Jaintias and on the history of Christianity in North-east India, records available in the Khasi language have been examined, most of which have been passed over by many scholars (because they did not know the language). Some of these are *U Khasi Mynta*, *U Nongialam Katholik*, *U Nongialam Khris-tan*, *Ka Pateng Kristan*, *Ka Iing Kristan*, *Ka Jingshai Ka Gospel*, *U Lurshai*, *Ka Juk*, *U Nongpynim* and *U Nongphira*.

VI. THE STRUCTURE

The structure of this study is designed to establish the thesis that, from the perspective of the people and in the context of the changes that were taking place in Khasi-Jaintia society, Christianity provided a means through which they could accommodate themselves to the changes that were imposed through British administration and the process of modernization it brought with it.

Chapter 2 examines the history of the tribe prior to the nineteenth century for the purpose of determining the nature of tribal identity and social change. It notes that there was, in fact, no strong sense of common identity in a tribe that was fragmented politically, religiously and linguistically. The only elements that brought them together were geographical proximity and a common kinship code. We also examine the reasons why the Khasi-Jaintia peoples had been able to successfully resist outside agencies of changes prior to the advent of the British.

Chapter 3 studies the changes that began to take place following the imposition of British administration and seeks to identify

Introduction

their causes, especially in light of the fact that they had hitherto successfully resisted such radical changes. The agencies that were involved in bringing about change were the British administration and the contacts that is fostered with outsiders in the form of Hindus and Christian missions. In this chapter it is the first two, i.e., the British administration and contacts with Hinduism, that are studied with the third, i.e., Christian Missions, being introduced.

Chapter 4 deals with the introduction and growth, both numerically and geographically, of Christianity among the Khasi-Jaintias. It describes how it was well into the twentieth century before its numbers were sufficient to represent a major influence, but that subsequently it was to become dominant. It describes the geographical expansion of Christianity and the institutions and programmes it introduced that were to have a role in relation to social change. This chapter is essentially descriptive.

Chapter 5 discusses the Christian, both missionary and Khasi-Jaintia, attitudes towards the traditional culture and, consequently, their attitude towards the changes that were taking place in that culture. It seeks to demonstrate that the Christian position was ambiguous on this subject. The Christians opposed those elements in the traditional culture that were thought to be religious in nature and thus strongly advocating social change where they were concerned, on the other hand they supported those elements of the traditional culture of which they believed to be purely social in nature, the most important being the kinship code, and became their guardians against those who sought to bring about changes in that area.

Chapter 6 examines the impact of Christianity on Khasi-Jaintia society. It seeks to demonstrate how the combination of advocacy of change in some areas and conservative resistance of change in other areas created a unique synthesis, a cultural synthesis which provided the people with a new sense of inclusive tribal identity or solidarity. It shows how this new tribal identity was fostered through literature, education, ideology and ecclesiastical structures.