

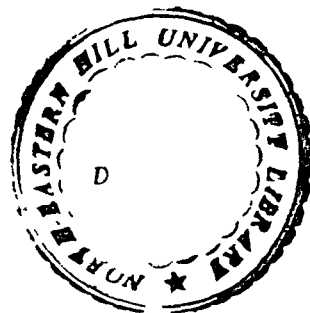
SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE HILL TRIBES OF MANIPUR

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M. PHIL)

BY

T. NGULKHOMANG HAOKIP



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DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL
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Generalities

Study of social groups in their spatial context is attracting increasing attention in geographical studies as more and more geographers try to understand the interplay between human society and their physical surrounding.

The need for the study of social problem arising out of the distribution of social phenomena has been the emphasis of Indian social geographers. However, researches in the area are largely inadequate. It is needless to emphasize that an understanding of the social milieu of a region is essential for geographers to analyze the processes of development and change in any region. It is truer in the case of the tribal areas of Manipur. Most of the tribal groups have lived in social and physical isolation for ages and have developed distinct socio-cultural traits in due course of time. It is in this context that, the present study has been selected. It will provide an opportunity to understand socio-cultural evolution of smaller groups living within the same ecological setting.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to examine the growth of Christianity and its diffusion among the tribal communities of Manipur from 1894 to the present times. The year 1894 marks the beginning of missionary activity in Manipur that plays a crucial role in the diffusion of Christian faith among the tribal people of Manipur.

Manipur state presents a variegated combination of the hills and the plains. These diverse ecological setting set the geographical limits for the two distinct socio-cultural group i.e, the tribal and non-tribal. Interestingly, the missionary effort in spreading the Christian faith met with spectacular success only among the tribal segment. The tribal communities ethnically may be divided into two broad groups- the Kukis-Chin -Mizo and the Nagas. The Non-tribal segment inhabiting the central plain consists of the Hindu Meiteis, the Lois and the Pangal Muslims.

In this research, we attempt to study the traditional religion of the hill tribes and the proliferation of Christian faith among them. How was the traditional religion practiced by the tribal community replaced by Christianity? Prior to the appearance of Christianity, they professed animism, which within a short span of time following colonial intrusion into the

state was suddenly found to have been replaced by Christianity. Many have not studied this social transformation in depth. Moreover, the geographical importance of the need to describe and analyze the consequence of these institutional and structural changes need an elaboration, as religion and ethnicity have provided enduring symbols of identity to various groups of people in the region.

Overview of Relevant Literature

Geography of religion is a recently developed academic substantial. It is fortunate that many literatures are now available. But only a few of them are related and available in India, while majority of them are only experiences and implications drawn from other disciplines. Religion, which has different sets have socio-economic and socio-political influences that has been clearly seen in the study area. Some of the relevant and available literatures are discussed below.

Fielding J. Gordon (1978) studied that the religious behaviour is an element of social geography which facilitates interaction between some people within social groups and avoidance of other groups. He discussed the effects of religious system upon the development of cultural landscapes that is apparent in many areas. He discusses that religion produces distinct spatial patterns which are pronounced in those areas where religious faith determines society's moral value system and cultural landscape becomes an expression of religious belief. Aijazuddin Ahmad (1999) studied the differences in religious ideologies lead to sect formation even within the same religion and emergence of regional nuances in religious practices. He describes the differences in religious sects within one religion led to emergence of new faiths as a protest movements or reformation of the existing one. It also discussed how religion acted as social expression of religious identity. Goh Cheng Leong and Gillian C. Morgan's (1997) stated that religions have originally grown as responses to the way of a group. They describe that different religions have their own practices and attitudes and create conflicts between religious groups. Conflicts occur within the same religion too. On the other hand, it also acts as a unifying force as well as may cause diversity or conflict.

Das (1985) studied the valley and hill cultural phenomena of Manipur. He discusses the socio-cultural background of the tribal people where religion plays the determining role of

assertion of tribal identity. He describes the change of religion and trends of socio-economic outlook among the tribes. Singh (1997) in his study of the problem of change in North East mentions that study of religions and religious values and percepts is important in understanding most societies as religion played a prominent role of human activities and social institutions. Singh (1991) deals with the activities of the Christian missionaries in Manipur and Neighbouring areas in the later half of the 19th century that led to the conversion of a large number of the hill people into Christian faith. He describes the early conflicts as well as the final triumph of the efforts of the missionaries. Ansari (1991) studied the tribes of Manipur; their demography, economy, social set up and economic development. He discusses that conversion to Christianity brought about a great change in social and economic development among the tribal people. Pioneer work on the study of beliefs and practice of the Meiteis was done by Singh (1988). He gave detail description of the major social-religious movements among the Meiteis in the valley and the impact of Christianity among the tribal people. Laldena (1988) made a significant study on the evaluation of the Christian missionary movement in North east India. His work analyses the broad framework of the various modes of interactions between Christian missions and colonial powers, the varying attitudes and relationships between Christian missionaries and the British administration in Manipur and Lushai Hills.

Thus, the above review of the literature reveals that religion has influenced human activities and behaviour, which while promoting social interactions, has also been responsible for socio-economic and political conflicts within a society. Religion plays a crucial role in developing cultural landscape as it determines the interaction and avoidance of social groups within the same ecological setting. This is apparent in the study area. The review also makes it clear that there is a general lack of a geographical perspective on the problem as much of the work is historical in nature.

Objectives

The proposed study includes the following broad objectives;

- 1 to study the diffusion and growth of Christianity in Manipur with a special reference to the tribal communities living in the hill areas,

2. to identify the factors responsible for the diffusion and growth of Christianity in the hill region and its influence on the socio-economic structure of the region.

Selection of the Study Area

Manipur has been selected for the present study for its unique geographical and ethnic situation. The physical differentiation in this region clearly marks a cultural differentiation in this state as evident from the distribution of ethnic groups in the hills and plains. A second reason for selection of the study area is the overwhelming change that was noticed in the religious composition of the state, more specifically among the ethnic tribes living in the Hills

The two regions set the geographic limits for the two types of culture groups, i.e., the non-tribal and the tribal. There are 29 different tribal communities in Manipur, who are by now dominantly Christian distributed in the hill districts. The Hindu Meiteis, Lois and the Pangal Muslim inhabit the central valley. In 1991, 57.61 percent of the population returned their religion as Hindu, 7.27 percent as Muslim, 34.11 percent as Christian, 0.07 percent as Sikh, 0.04 percent as Buddhist, 0.07 percent as Jain and 0.77 percent and negligible number as followers of other religion and persuasions

Research Questions

Given the spatial dichotomy in the distribution of social categories in Manipur, it may be interesting to study the religious dimension of the social composition of the population with a special emphasis on the tribal segment of the population. It may be worthwhile to find answers to these broad research questions as listed below.

- 1) How has Christianity managed to percolate down to the hilly areas only and among the tribal segments while the people of the plains have remained immune to any such changes?
- 2) Even among the tribes, what were the forces that led to the sudden change in the religious affiliation?
- 3) Are there inter-tribal differences in responses to Christianity?
- 4) What has been the implications of the religious changes for the tribal communities both from within and without?

Data Base and Methodology

The study has been based on data collected from secondary sources that includes successive Census Reports and Statistical handbooks, published and unpublished literatures, Newspapers, Journals and Magazines. The study has been conducted with a time frame beginning with 1894 till the recent times during which the changing religious composition of the population shall be examined and analysed. For this purpose Census data on religion has been obtained from successive Census reports from 1891 onwards. Help have been sought from gazetteers also for those periods when Census data may be inadequate or unavailable. The data obtained on religious composition have been disaggregated for the hilly and the plain areas and for the individual tribes to get an insight into the inter-tribal differences in the response to Christianity. Since the tribes are distributed with knife edged boundaries between them, this has also provided insight into the nature of spatial diffusion in the spread of Christianity over time and over space.

The diffusion of Christianity among the tribal communities have been analyzed by mapping the proportion of Christian population in the total population for each of the district and for individual tribes in successive census counts beginning with 1901. This has provided a spatio-temporal pattern in the spread of Christianity.

The growths in the proportion of Christian population in each decade for individual tribes have been analyzed to ascertain the trend in the degree and intensity of conversion to Christian faith.

1.8 Organisation of the manuscript

The proposed study includes the following broad chapters.

Chapter I provides the research design including the statement of the problem, objectives, selection of the study area, major research questions, database and methodology. The chapter also includes an overview of the available relevant literature.

An account of the regional setting is presented in chapter II This chapter discusses the land, people and social life of the Hill tribes before the advent of Christian Missionaries. Religious Composition of the Population prior to the coming of the Christian Missionaries is analysed in chapter IV. In this Chapter, the religious composition of Manipuri population

has been analysed as it existed at the time of the arrival of Christian Missionaries. The composition has been examined for the valley and hilly districts as well as for the individual tribes. Spatial Patterns in the growth and spread of the Church is the main theme of the chapter-IV. This chapter makes an effort to understand the pattern in the diffusion of Christianity in Manipur since 1894 till the present times.

Inter-tribal Differences in responses to Christianity has been analysed in chapter-V. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to explain the divergent responses to Christianity among different tribes located in different parts of the state and in different time period. Chapter VI discusses the impact of Christianity on the tribal Society especially on literacy and health standards of the tribal people. The concluding chapter provides a summary and conclusions of all the major findings of the research.

Summary and Conclusions

It is observed that Christianity had made a significant impact in the social transformation of the tribal communities inhabiting the hilly region in Manipur. For centuries the tribal areas of Manipur (Presently the district of Churachandpur, Chandel, Senapati, Tamenglong, and Ukhrul) was a neglected region. The tribal people lived in isolated in the hilly region and they had also little inter-tribal contact. During the rule of Meitei Maharaja, there has been some sort of relationship with the hill people. However, the hill tribal areas were left alone to lead a life according to their own, following their own customary laws in all matters of their socio-economic and village administration. The advent of British rule in the last decade of the 19th century however, brought significant changes in their social life, the most prominent being a change in their religion.

The present research placed before itself the following broad objectives: to study the diffusion and growth of Christianity in Manipur with a special reference to the Hill tribal communities and to identify the factors responsible for the diffusion and growth of

Christianity in the hill region and its influence on the socio-economic structure of the region. The important research questions which the dissertation aimed at answering are. i) how has Christianity managed to percolate down to the hilly areas only and among the tribal segments while the people of the plains have remained immune to any such changes; ii) even among the tribes, what were the forces that led to the sudden change in the religious affiliation; iii) are there inter-tribal differences in responses to Christianity and iv) what are the social implications of the changes for the tribal communities both within and without?

Based on historical evidences on the pattern of spread of Christianity and geographical methods of interpretation of the historical evidences, the study has tried to answer the research questions posed before itself within the scope of the study as defined by the specific objectives. The major findings of the study are outlined below.

Physiographically, the state of Manipur has two major landforms namely; the plain and the hills. While the plain areas are inhabited by the peasant communities, the hills have provided an ideal habitat for a number of ethnically differentiated tribes who inhabit these areas for centuries. The tribes inhabiting the hills in Manipur are broadly divided into two main groups; viz. the Kukis and the Nagas and they consist of 34.41 percent of the total population of the state.

The social life of the tribal society does not vary much from tribe to tribe or from village to village. All the hill tribes of Manipur are patriarchal in lineage and inheritance. They have a well-set customs of marriage, bride price, divorce, child-name giving ceremony and many indigenous festivals. The traditional social system is built up around the clan system and the village administration is based on a chieftainship. One of the interesting

aspects of social life of the hill tribes of Manipur is the Youth dormitory, which serves as the learning center for the un-married boys and girls.

The pre-Hindu Vaishnavism religion of the Meiteis was not much varied from animism. The Meitei believed in four supreme gods and demi-gods and goddess. The study reveals that traditionally the Meiteis also practiced ancestor worship, head-hunting and buried their dead. In the first quarter of the 18th century, the Vaishnava missionary Santidas Goswami came to Manipur and spread Vaishnavism throughout the valley under the royal patronage and he was successful in converting the king and his subjects to Hinduism.

The traditional religion of the hill tribes was animism. All the hill tribes had belief in one supreme God. They had vague concept of heaven and hell as well as life after death. They believed that all sickness and calamities were due to the wrath of the evil spirits. Sacrifice was the main mode of worships to propitiate the evil spirits. Omens, dreams, signs and superstitions determined their life. They were savage and practiced headhunting.

Manipur was an independent state before the Anglo-Manipuri war in 1891. The capture of power in Manipur by the British in 1891 paved the way for Christian missionaries to enter Manipur. William Pettigrew was the first Christian missionary to work in Manipur. However, he was not allowed evangelistic work among the Hindu Meiteis. So he went to Ukhrul in the Northeastern part of Manipur and started his mission work by starting schools. In the southern hills of Manipur Watkin Roberts and his native associate came to Sanvon in 1910 and started the missionary work.

The Manipur missionary field till 1950 is considered as the mission period and the main efforts were directed towards the people inhabiting the hill areas. Christianity was first introduced and established to one major tribe before spreading into other tribes. Initially

Christianity was mainly confined to the Tangkhul tribes inhabiting the Northeastern part of Manipur and then to the Kuki in the Northwestern hills of Manipur.

The spread of Christianity in the initial stage was rather slow. Contrary to popular belief the hill tribes accepted Christian faith not so much during the British period, but after India achieved Independence. In fact the period after 1951 has witnessed a phenomenal increase in the proportion of Christian population largely due to conversion of the tribal animists. The method adopted by the missionary for spreading of the new faith was through education and health care. The spread of Christianity was through the converted students who have attended those schools run by the missionaries. The mission work especially through education proved to be the base for the future expansion of the mission work. The introduction of medical facilities too helped in discarding their old traditional belief and practices, thus encouraging the people to accept the new faith.

The mission field in the beginning was divided on geographical basis but after the Second World War and with the rise in national feeling, each ethnic group was then looking to form their own association leading to the establishment of tribe base association.

The Tangkhul inhabiting the Northeastern hill areas were the first to receive Christianity. The missionary through imparting education and medical care won the confidence of the people and they began to respond favorably. The spread of Christianity was through the student converts. The spread was slow in the beginning. The Manipur Revival in 1923 stimulated extensive evangelistic work among the Tangkhuls and since then they became an active Christians. The Kuki-Chin were the second major tribe to respond to Christianity. Since the Kuki-Chin were scattered all over the state, Christianity came to them

from two missions. The spread of Christianity among the Kuki was impeded by the Kuki Rising, School strike in 1924.

The Zeliangrong inhabiting the Western Hills of Manipur were the third tribal group to receive Christianity. The spread of Christianity was impeded by the Kampai Cult considered as the custodian of the old way of life. The Mao Naga inhabiting the Northern part of Manipur were the fourth major group to embrace Christianity. The late advent of Christianity among Mao was due to the antagonistic view about Christianity and the government prohibition for evangelistic activity in the areas.

Inter tribal differences in acceptance of the Christian faith had minimized after 1961 and that a great uniformity had come in the religious composition of the tribal population. Interestingly, the tribes, in spite of differences in the degree of their acceptance of Christian faith had resisted intrusion of any other religion including that of Hinduism which was dominant in the plains.

The advent of Christianity brought about far reaching effects on the tribal society of Manipur, pervading all spheres of activities, outlook, ways of life, cultures and customs. It also brought a new awareness and concern leading the society to move toward modernism. The factors responsible for the changes and development of tribal people with the advent of Christianity are mainly through education and health care.

Education, through the coming of Christianity, was truly a crusade against the old animistic way of life. The wild and rough people were tamed by the new teaching of love and the spirit of headhunting disappeared. Education also played a more effective role in making the tribal people to participate in the mainstream of life in the state.

The Christian missionaries were the pioneers in introducing modern medicine to the hill tribes in Manipur. The missionary in bringing the medical work thereby accelerated the breakdown of the traditional animistic worldview and has become one of the major impacts in the social transformation of the hill tribal people

It is significant to note that the literacy performance in the tribal dominated hill areas have shown a much faster increase in the last couple of decades, particularly after Independence- a fact of considerable change under the impact of Christianity. As compared to the progress made in areas located in the valley and considering the fact that the hilly areas consisted of totally non-literate population prior to the Christian impact, the progress of literacy is considered to be profound in the tribal areas. The difference in literacy rate between the valley and the Hills is declining sharply and it is remarkable that some of the hill districts now have a literacy rate comparable or even better than the literacy rate attained by a few of the districts located in the valley.

A heartening feature of literacy development in the Hill areas and among the tribal people refers to the lack of a significant male female disparity in literacy attainment unlike their counterparts living in the plain areas. The tribal values of egalitarianism coupled with Christian values has produced a more balanced literacy attainment among the two sexes- something missing among the people living in the valleys which seem to have discriminated against females in attaining a comparable literacy standard.

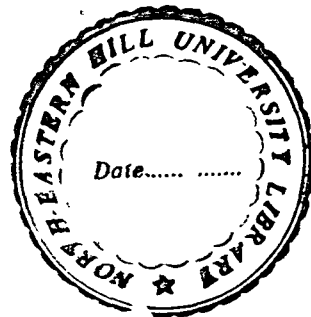
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DECLARATION

I, T. Ngulkhomang Haokip, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of a bonafide research work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of my previous degree or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else. I have also, not submitted the dissertation for any research degree in any other University or Institute.

This dissertation is being submitted to the North-Eastern Hill University for the degree of Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) in Geography.


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My sincere thanks are due to my other teachers in the Department of Geography, N.E.H.U. for their valuable suggestion, help and encouragement in completion of my study, in spite of their tight schedules.

I have the pleasure to place on record my deep sense of gratitude to all other faculty members and the non-teaching staff members of my department for helping me in various ways. The helps rendered by my close friends Mr. Soilalsiam, Mr. Mangminlun Khongsai, Mr. Khupzakhai Suante, Mr P.C. Tuboi, Thangboi and Henkai are duly acknowledged with thanks, for their supports and companionships they extended to me during the preparation and completion of this work. Thanks are also due to the Census Department, Meghalaya for their cooperation during collection of data I shall be failing in my duty if I did not mention my nephew Haominlien, who have shared me his computer.

My humble gratitude also goes to my family members for their moral and unstinted encouragement and also for their ungrudging sacrifice in the completion of my studies. To my parents, to whom I shall forever remain indebt, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude.

Finally, I want to thank God for all His countless benevolence bliss bestowed upon me in everything I do.

The 24th May, 2004
Shillong.


(T Ngulkhomang Haokip)

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CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introductory Statement

The study of social groups in their spatial context is attracting increasing attention in geographical studies as more and more geographers try to understand the interplay between human society and their physical surrounding. The need for the study of social problems arising out of the distribution of social phenomena has been the emphasis of Indian social geographers. However, researches in the area are largely inadequate. It is needless to emphasize that an understanding of the social milieu of a region is essential for geographers to analyze the processes of development and change in any region. It is truer in the case of the tribal areas of Manipur, which is a small state in the North-Eastern part of the country located in a hilly terrain. Most of the tribal groups in this state have lived in social and physical isolation for thousands of years and have developed distinct socio-cultural traits in due course of time. It is in this context that the present study has been selected. It will provide an opportunity to understand socio-cultural evolution of smaller groups living within the same ecological setting.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to examine the growth of Christianity and its diffusion among the tribal communities of Manipur from 1894 to the present times. The year 1894 marks the beginning of missionary activity in Manipur that plays a crucial role in the diffusion of Christian faith among the tribal people of Manipur.

Manipur state presents a variegated combination of the hills and the plains. These diverse ecological settings set the geographical limits for the two distinct socio-cultural groups, i.e., the tribal and the non-tribal. Interestingly, the missionary effort in spreading the Christian faith met



with spectacular success only among the tribal segment. The tribal communities ethnically may be divided into two broad groups- the Kuki-Chin and the Nagas. The Non-tribal segment inhabiting the central plain consists of the Hindu Meiteis, the Lois and the Pangal Muslims.

In this research, we attempt to study the traditional religion of the hill tribes and the proliferation of Christian faith among them. How was the traditional religion practiced by the tribal community replaced by Christianity? Prior to the appearance of Christianity, they professed animism, which within a short span of time, following colonial intrusion into the state, was suddenly found to have been replaced by Christianity. Many have not studied this social transformation in depth. Moreover, the geographical importance of the need to describe and analyze the consequence of these institutional and structural changes need an elaboration, as religion and ethnicity have provided enduring symbols of identity to various groups of people in the region.¹

It has been often stated that the beginning of the advent of Christianity in 1894 to the present among the tribal society of Manipur has brought forth significant changes in the society. It turned the 'violent' tribal people into 'peace loving' Christian. Outlook of the people also broadened. The adoption of new religion led to the inculcation of new cultural values and identity. However, some traits of the old culture can still be traced in the life of the people. The Christian missionary introduced evangelism, western education, modern medicine and health consciousness, etc among the tribal communities and acted as a modernizing force in the cultural development.² On the other hand, while the tribal people wanted to take advantage of the modern culture failed to find suitable substitution for basic premises, values and goals of their traditional culture. Therefore, this led to tribal nationalism based on traditionalism,

¹ Das, Rajat Kanti. (1985) "Manipur Tribal Scene, Studies in Societies and Change" Inter India, New Delhu. pp 19-20

² Laldena. (1988) "Christian Mission and Colonialism: A study of Missionary Movement in N E I with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894 – 1947" Vendrame Institute, Shillong, pp 110-112

synonymous with social freedom and socio-economic liberalization with interest attached to local and regional significance. This gave rise to ethno-centrism and at times even created a condition of disequilibrium among different ethnic communities and within the same community.³ This situation is an unexplored area and an attempt is made to throw light on it to answer the hitherto unanswered question.

1.3 Overview of Relevant Literature

Geography of religion is a recently developed academic substantial. It is fortunate that many literatures are now available. But only a few of them are related and available in India, while majority of them are only experiences and implications drawn from other disciplines. Religion, which has different sets have socio-economic and socio-political influences that has been clearly seen in the study area. Some of the relevant and available literatures are discussed below.

Fielding J. Gordon (1978) studied that the religious behaviour is an element of social geography which facilitates interaction between some people within social groups and avoidance of other groups. He discussed the effects of religious system upon the development of cultural landscapes that is apparent in many areas. He discusses that religion produces distinct spatial patterns which are pronounced in those areas where religious faith determines society's moral value system and cultural landscape becomes an expression of religious belief.⁴ Aijazuddin Ahmad (1999) studied the differences in religious ideologies lead to sect formation even within the same religion and emergence of regional nuances in religious practices. He describes the differences in religious sects within one religion led to emergence of new faiths as a protest movements or reformation of the existing one. It also discussed how religion acted as

³ Op cit , pp 22-23

⁴ Fielding, J Gordon, (1974): "Geography as Social Science", University of California, Irvine

social expression of religious identity⁵ Goh Cheng Leong and Gillian C Morgan's (1997) stated that religions have originally grown as responses to the way of a group They describe that different religions have their own practices and attitudes and create conflicts between religious groups Conflicts occur within the same religion too On the other hand, it also acts as a unifying force as well as may cause diversity or conflict⁶

Das (1985) studied the valley and hill cultural phenomena of Manipur- He discusses the socio-cultural background of the tribal people where religion plays the determining role of assertion of tribal identity He describes the change of religion and trends of socio-economic outlook among the tribes⁷ Singh (1997) in his study of the problem of change in North East mentions that study of religions and religious values and percepts is important in understanding most societies as religion played a prominent role of human activities and social institutions Singh (1991) deals with the activities of the Christian missionaries in Manipur and Neighbouring areas in the later half of the 19th century that led to the conversion of a large number of the hill people into Christian faith He describes the early conflicts as well as the final triumph of the efforts of the missionaries⁸ Ansari (1991) studied the tribes of Manipur, their demography, economy, social set up and economic development He discusses that conversion to Christianity brought about a great change in social and economic development among the tribal people⁹ Pioneer work on the study of beliefs and practice of the Meiteis was done by Singh (1988) He gave detail description of the major social-religious movements among the Meiteis in the valley and the impact of Christianity among the tribal people¹⁰

⁵ Ahmad, Aijazuddin (1999) "Social Geography", Rawat Publications Jaipur and New Delhi p 327

⁶ Leong, Goh Cheng and Morgan, Gillian C (1997) 'Human and Economic Geography' Oxford, Hongkong, pp 27-28

⁷ Das, Rajat Kanti, (1985) *Op cit*

⁸ Singh, K M, (1991) "History of Christian Mission in Manipur and Other Neighbouring States" Mittal, New Delhi

⁹ Ansari, S, A ,(1991) "Manipur Tribal Demography and Socio-Economic Development", Daya, Delhi

¹⁰ Singh, M Kirti, (1988) "Religion and Culture in Mampur", Mana, Delhi

Laldena (1988) made a significant study on the evaluation of the Christian missionary movement in North east India. His work analyses the broad framework of the various modes of interactions between Christian missions and colonial powers, the varying attitudes and relationships between Christian missionaries and the British administration in Manipur and Lushai Hills.¹¹

Thus, the above review of the literature reveals that religion has influenced human activities and behaviour, which while promoting social interactions, has also been responsible for socio-economic and political conflicts within a society. Religion plays a crucial role in developing cultural landscape as it determines the interaction and avoidance of social groups within the same ecological setting. This is apparent in the study area. The review also makes it clear that there is a general lack of a geographical perspective on the problem as much of the work is historical in nature.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The proposed study has the following broad objectives;

- 1 to study the diffusion and growth of Christianity in Manipur with a special reference to the Hill tribal communities.
2. to identify the factors responsible for the diffusion and growth of Christianity in the hill region and its influence on the socio-economic structure of the region

1.5 The Study Area

Manipur is situated in the North Eastern corner of India bounded by Myanmar in the east and south-east, in the north by Nagaland, in the south by Mizoram and Cachar district of Assam in the West. Out of 854 Km of boundary line, Manipur shares 353 km. of international

¹¹ Laldena, (1988). "Christian Mission and Colonialism A study of Missionary Movement in N.E I with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894 – 1947" Vendrame Institute, Shillong

boundary line with Myanmar. Location of Manipur in space and time is of considerable geopolitical importance. It is the melting point of south-east Asia, not only in geographical sense but also in historical and cultural sense too.

The geographical area of Manipur is of 22,327 sq. Kms. Mountain range of about 20,089 sq. km surrounds the oval shaped valley of 2238 sq. km. looking like a flat alluvial lake. The population of Manipur in 1991 was 1837149 of whom 37105 (2.02 percent) were Scheduled Castes and 632173 (34.4 percent) were Scheduled Tribes. A paradox about Manipur is that whereas nine tenth of the territory is constituted by the Hills and only one tenth by the Valley, only one-third of the population lives in the hills and two-thirds in the valley. Overwhelming majority of the hill dwellers belong to the Scheduled Tribe communities and only an insignificant number of people of non-tribal origin live in the hills, mostly in connection with trade or government employees.

The two regions set the geographic limits for the two types of culture groups, i.e., the non-tribal and the tribal. There are 29 different tribal communities (see chapter-II) in Manipur, who are by now dominantly Christian distributed in the hill districts. The Hindu Meiteis and the Pangal Muslim inhabit the central valley. In 1991, 57.61 percent of the population returned their religion as Hindu, 7.27 percent as Muslim, 34.11 percent as Christian, 0.07 percent as Sikh, 0.04 percent as Buddhist, 0.07 percent as Jain and 0.77 percent and negligible number as followers of other religion and persuasions.

1.6 Research Questions

Given the spatial dichotomy in the distribution of social categories in Manipur, it may be interesting to study the religious dimension of the social composition of the population with special emphasis on the tribal segment of the population. It may be worthwhile to find answers to these broad research questions as listed below.

- 1) How has Christianity managed to percolate down to the hilly areas only and among the tribal segments while the people of the plains have remained immune to any such changes?
- 2) Even among the tribes, what were the forces that led to the sudden change in the religious affiliation?
- 3) Are there inter-tribal differences in responses to Christianity?
- 4) What are the social implications of the changes for the tribal communities both within and without?

1.7 Data Base and Methodology

The study has been based on data collected from secondary sources that includes successive Census Reports and Statistical handbooks, published and unpublished literatures, Newspapers, Journals and Magazines. The study has been conducted with a time frame beginning with 1894 till the recent times during which the changing religious composition of the population has been examined and analysed. For this purpose Census data on religion has been obtained from successive Census reports from 1891 onwards. Help have been sought from gazetteers also for those periods when Census data may be inadequate or unavailable. The data obtained on religious composition have been disaggregated for the hilly and the plain areas and for the individual tribes to get an insight into the inter-tribal differences in the response to Christianity. Since the tribes are distributed with knife edged boundaries between them, this has also provided insight into the nature of spatial diffusion in the spread of Christianity over time and over space.

The diffusion of Christianity among the tribal communities have been analyzed by mapping the proportion of Christian population in the total population for each of the district and for individual tribes. This has provided a spatio-temporal pattern in the spread of Christianity. The growth in the proportion of Christian population in each decade for individual

tribes has been analyzed to ascertain the trend in the degree and intensity of conversion to Christian faith.

1.8 Organisation of the manuscript

The proposed study includes the following broad chapters.

Chapter I provides the research design including the statement of the problem, objectives, selection of the study area, major research questions, database and methodology. The chapter also includes an overview of the available relevant literature.

An account of the regional setting is presented in chapter II. This chapter discusses the land, people and social life of the Hill tribes before the advent of Christian Missionaries. Religious Composition of the Population prior to the coming of the Christian Missionaries is analysed in chapter IV. In this Chapter, the religious composition of Manipuri population has been analysed as it existed at the time of the arrival of Christian Missionaries. The composition has been examined for the valley and hilly districts as well as for the individual tribes.

Spatial Patterns in the growth and spread of the Church is the main theme of the chapter-IV. This chapter makes an effort to understand the pattern in the diffusion of Christianity in Manipur since 1894 till the present times.

Inter-tribal Differences in responses to Christianity has been analysed in chapter-V. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to explain the divergent responses to Christianity among different tribes located in different parts of the state and in different time period. Chapter VI discusses the impact of Christianity on the tribal Society especially on literacy and health standards of the tribal people. The concluding chapter provides a summary and conclusions of all the major findings of the research.

CHAPTER-II

REGIONAL SETTING

2.1 The land

Manipur literally meaning “A jewel land”, is one of the seven sisters state of North East India It is aesthically described by many as “Land of Gems”, “Jewel of India”, “A flower on lofty Height” and “Switzerland of India”.¹² Manipur was known by different names in the ancient period. The Myanmar(Burmese) call it *Kathe*, the Shan *Kase*, the Ahom *Makeli*, the Bengali *Maglai*, the Cachari *Magali* and Mogalan by the old Assemese. The original name of the seven city state or land of seven *kanglas* or *Kangleipak* was renamed as Manipur (Land of Gems) by Hindu Guru during the reign of Pamheiba, 1709-1748.¹³

Manipur having a varied history from the earliest time came under the British rule as a princely state after the defeat in the Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891. After Independence in 1947, the princely state of Manipur was merged with the Indian union on October 15, 1949 and became a full-fledged state of India on the 21st January 1972.

2.2 Location

Manipur situated in the North Eastern corner of India lies between 23°51”N and 25°41”N Latitudes and 93°02” E and 94°47”E Longitudes. The Manipur state is bounded by Myanmar in the East and South-east, in the North by Nagaland, in the South by Mizoram and North Cachar and Cachar District of Assam in the West. (see fig.2.1)

Manipur state has an area of 22,327 sq. kms, Out of 845 km. of boundary line, Manipur shares 352 km. of international boundary line with Myanmar.¹⁴ Out of the total area, nine-tenth (9/10) of its areas is covered by hills and only one-tenth (1/10) area consists of oval shaped

1 B K Ahluwalia and Shashi Ahluwalia,(1984) “SocialChange in Manipur”, Delhi, p.1

¹³ Laiba, M.T (1992), “The Geography of Manipur”, N Bjoykumar Singh, Imphal, p. 44

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p 44

LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

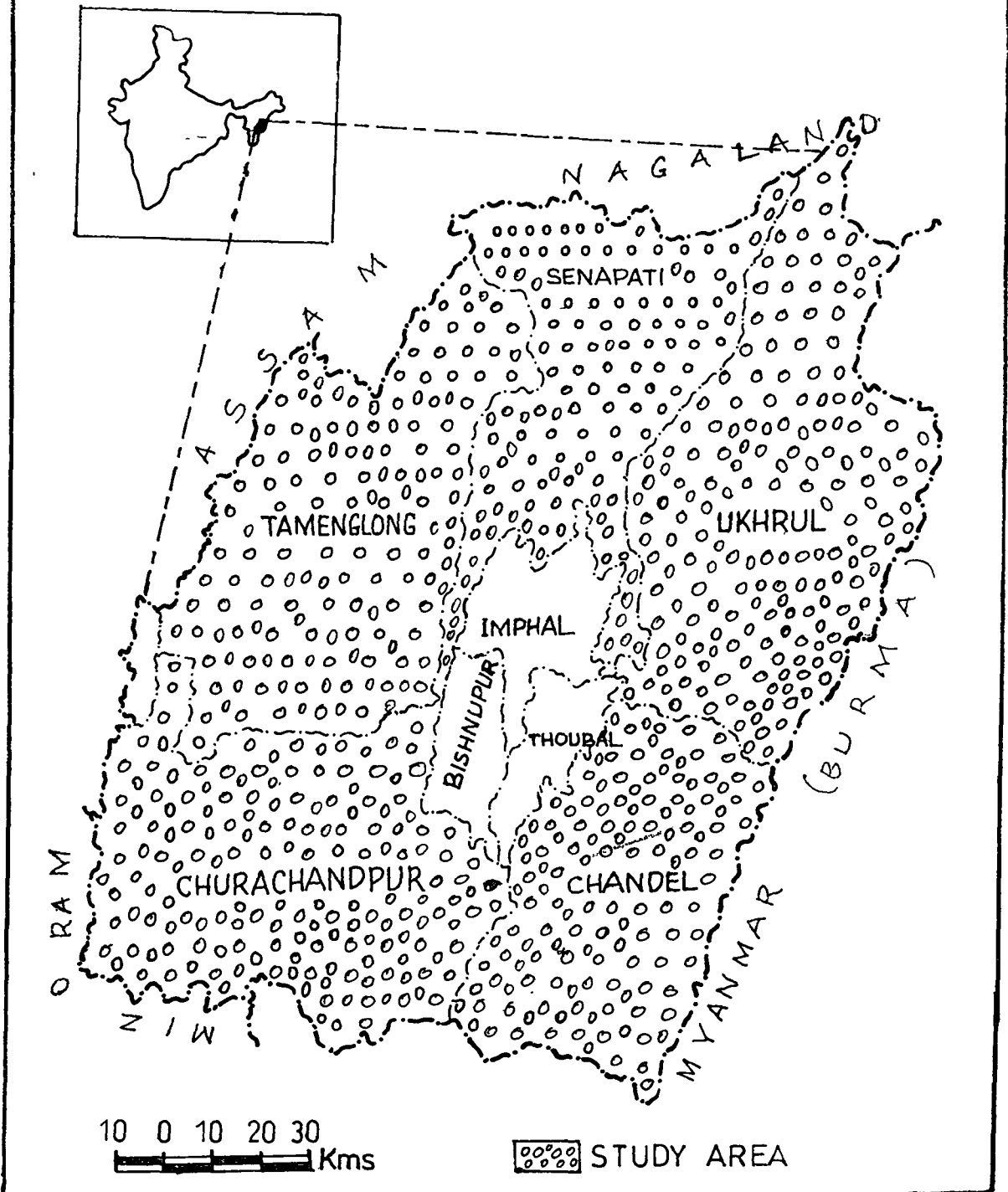


Fig. 2.1

valley. For administrative convenience, the state has been divided into nine districts. Out of the nine districts, five districts are in the hills and four are in the Valley.

2.3 Surface configuration:

According to surface configuration the state can be divided into two broad divisions, viz, a) The Valley region and b) The Hilly region. The valley lies in the central part of the state and hills surround the oval shaped valley that looks like a flat alluvial lake. (see fig.2.2)

2.3.1 The Valley Region

The Valley Region is also known as the Imphal Valley. It comprises an area of 1,843 sq. km. It is an extensive basin extending for about 60 km from north to south and 32 km. in east-west direction. It has an elevation of about 746 metres to 850 metres above the mean sea level.¹⁵

The valley is a flat basin surrounded by the eastern and the western hills of Manipur, where the slopes change with an inclination from north to south. The basin has been formed at the site of an ancient lake, which was gradually filled up with the river-borne sediments. The saucer like Loktak lake occupying the southern part of the valley is said to be remnants of the original lake that occupied the whole of the present central plain. The area of Loktak lake is about 200 sq. km.¹⁶

2.3.2 The Hilly Region:

The Hilly region of Manipur occupies an area of about 20,571 sq. km. It has an elevation of about 900 metres to 3000 metres above the mean sea level.¹⁷ They are the offshoots of the mighty Himalayas and constitute the central part of the Indo-Burmese Mountain system. They are the southward extension of the Naga Hills and consist of a series of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 100

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102

MANIPUR PHYSIOGRAPHY

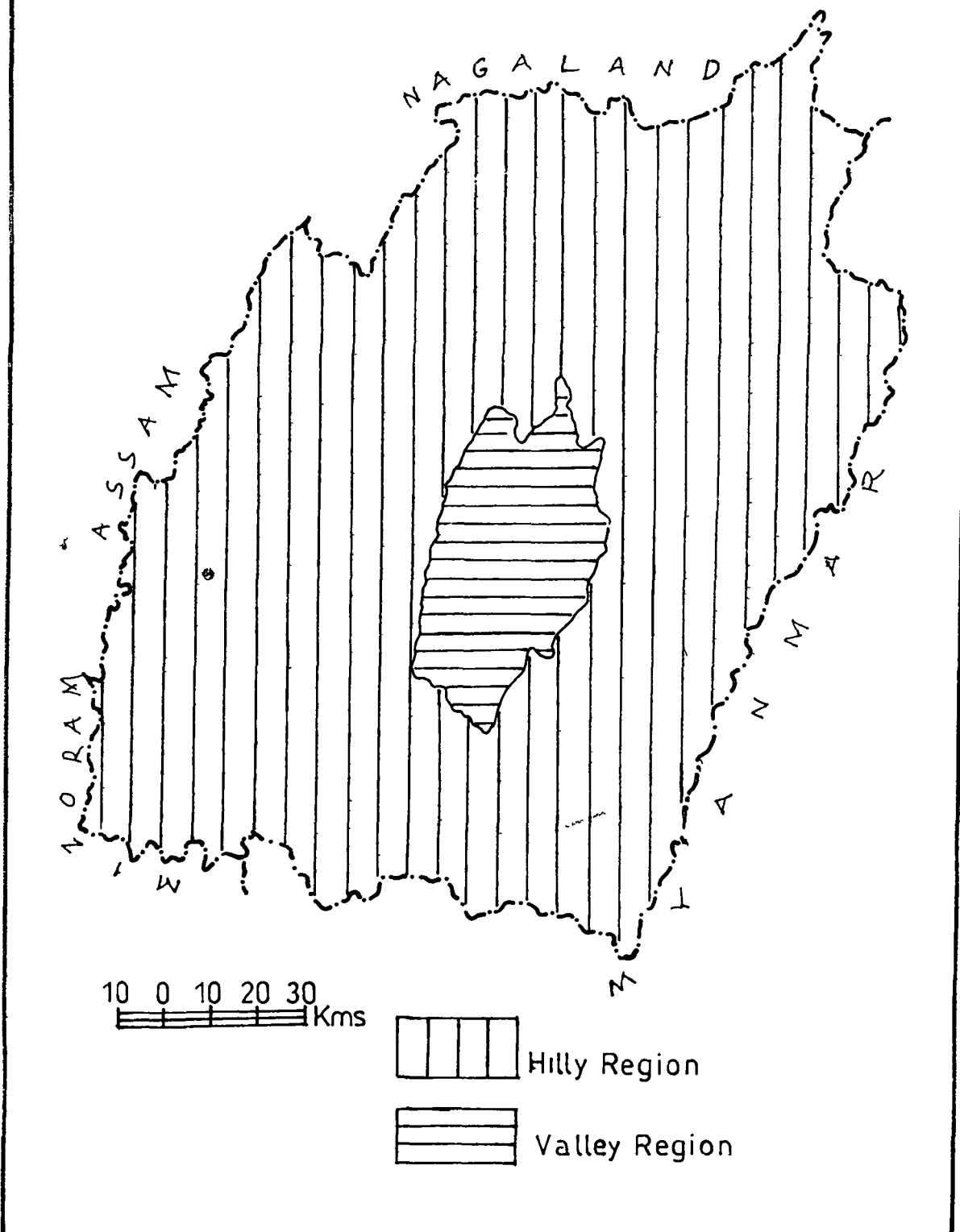


Fig:2.2

parallel young fold ranges. They extend from the Naga Hills in the North to nearly 24° North parallel in the south where they join the Chin and Mizo Hills.¹⁸ The Hill ranges fall into two groups- The Manipur Eastern Hills and the Manipur Western Hills.

The Manipur Eastern Hills forms compact and continuous mountain chains which run along the Indo-Myanmar border for about 200 km. and 50 km. wide in the Northern part and 30 km. wide in the southern part. Important ranges of the eastern hills are Mapithel, Chingnagai, Mulein etc. and their important peaks are Khayangbung (2,833m); Siroi (2,567m); Kachaobung (2,498m) etc. The average heights of these hills are about 1,500m above mean sea level.¹⁹

The Manipur Western Hills consists of parallel ridges and valley and occupy the whole western part of the state, running north to south direction is about 180 km. long. It is about 50 km wide in the northern part and 70 km. wide in southern part. The hills are relatively higher in the north and west. Its important ranges are Yangpugilong, Daimikilong, Uningthou, Koubru, Khoupum, Nungba, Kala Naga etc.²⁰ Their important peaks are Tenipu (2,994m); Koubru (2,652m); Iso (2660), Tamphaba (2,664m) etc²¹

2.4 Drainage

Manipur is drained by two important rivers systems, viz, the Imphal river system and the Barak River system (see fig 2.3). The Hill Ranges of Western Manipur constitute the water divide between the two rivers system, whereas, the ranges of Manipur Eastern Hills act as the water divide between the Imphal river system and the Chin win river system of Myanmar.²²

¹⁸ G.P Bhakta,(1992) "Geography of North-East India," Akashu Book Store, Shullong, p 137

¹⁹ Laiba M.T , *op. cit* , p 103

²⁰ *Ibid* , p 104

²¹ Bhakta, G P , *Op cit* , p.137

²² Bhakta, G P., *Op cit.*,p 138

MANIPUR DRAINAGE PATTERN

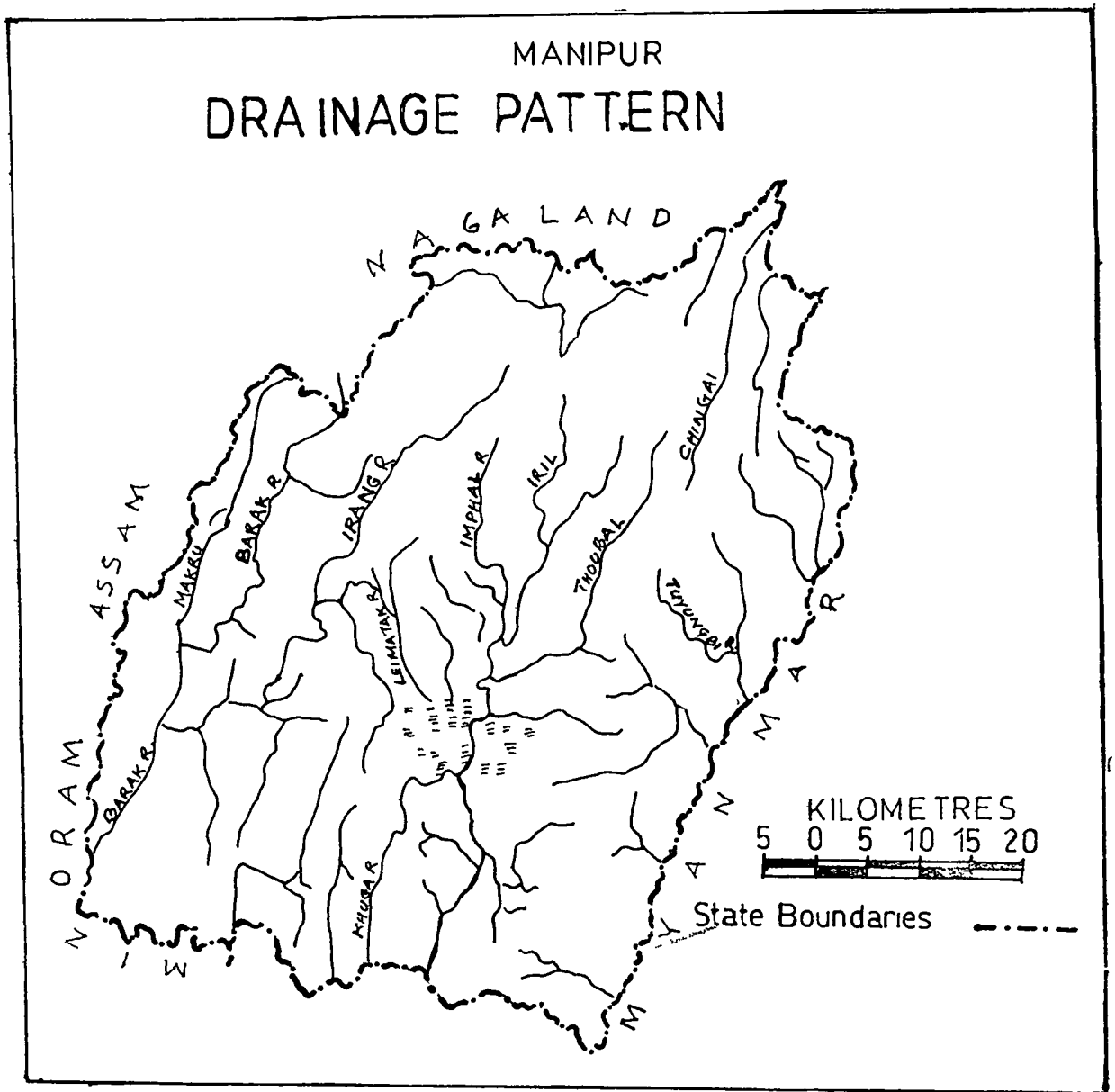


Fig. 2.3

The Imphal River and its tributaries-Iril, Thoubal and Nambol, drain all the eastern half of Manipur including the central plain through the Chindwin into the Irrawadi drainage system of Myanmar. These rivers originate in the Hills to the North-West, North and North-East of the central valley of Manipur. All these rivers run from North to South except the Khuga river that originates in the hilly region of Manipur South and falls into Imphal river at Ithai, to the South of Loktak lake. Moreover, some of the important rivers like Nambol, Moirang, Sekmai, Thongjaolok etc and large number of rills and gullies are running down into the Loktak Lake.²³

The Barak river and its tributaries – Irang, Makhru, Twivai, Jiri river from the Barak system and drained the western Hill tract of the state. Leimatak and Ijaeshi rivers are two important branches of the Irang River, the major left bank tributaries of Barak River and originate in the hills to the south of the Barial range. This river flows through a southwest course and forms part of Ganga-Bramaputra drainages system, which falls into the Bay of Bengal.²⁴

Beside these two major drainages systems a large number of small size east flowing rivers near Indo-Myanmar border drain the eastern hilly region of Manipur. Some of the important rivers are – Lockchao, Latin Lok, Thuidam, Tuyangbi, Taret, which form the tributaries of Yu river. These rivers originate in the Manipur eastern hills and fall through the eastern part of the Manipur into the Chindwin River of the Myanmar.²⁵

2.5 Climate

Manipur has a sub tropical monsoon climate as it is just near the tropic of cancer (23 ½ N Latitude). But the state has tropical to temperate climate depending upon elevation. Rain fall varies from 110 cms to 350 cms and average annual rainfall is about 207.77 cms. Rainfall

²³ Laiba, M.T., *Op. cit.*, p 108

²⁴ Bhakta, G.P., *Op. cit.*, p. 138

²⁵ Laiba, M.T., *Op. cit.*, p. 109

starts from mid April and continued upto October. Temperature varies from 0° C to 40° C. The hottest Manipur is located at Jiribam and highest rainfall areas are situated at Ukhrul and Tamenglong district.²⁶ Climate of the state varies from one part to the other – six main factors such as Physiography, the alternating and sub continental pressure cells of north west of India and the Bay of Bengal, the predominance of moist maritime tropical air-masses, the periodic western disturbances, the local mountain and valley winds, forest cover and the water bodies particularly the Loktak lake and marshes.²⁷

2.6 Forest

The forests of Manipur are grouped into four types viz., (1) Tropical wet evergreen (2) Tropical moist deciduous (3) Sub-tropical pine and (4) Montane wet temperate forests.

Tropical wet evergreen forests are usually found in the north and southwestern parts of Manipur, where the annual rainfall is about 2,500mm. Heavy rainfall has produced evergreen luxuriant types of forest in the region. Canes and bamboo are abundantly found in this region.

Tropical moist deciduous forests are found in the hilly areas of Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Ukhrul and along the Indo-Myanmar border. The hills covered by such types of forests are confined to limited areas. The warm climate and moderate rainfall prevailing in this region is helpful for the growth of valuable teak trees.

Sub-tropical pine forests are found in northeastern part of Ukhrul, southeastern part of Tamenglong and some portion of Churachandpur districts. Pine trees with important species of orchids including Siroilily are available in the region.

Montane wet temperate forests cover the northern-most part of Senapati district, where oak trees are grown very widely.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p 110

²⁷ Bhakta, G P., *Op. cit.*, p. 140

2.7 The People

The People of Manipur belong to Indo-Mongoloid stock mainly but there is a great diversity of feature among them, some of them show resemblance with the Aryans. They can be broadly divided into three groups, the Meiteis, the Lois, the Manipuri Muslims or Pangans, and the hill tribes. With the exception of the Manipuri Muslims the other Three are indigenous people of Manipur.

Racially majority of them belong to Mongoloid stock and linguistically, affiliated to Tibeto-Burman and Kuki-chin groups of language.²⁸ The Meiteis, the Lois and Manipuri Muslims live in the valley, whereas the hill tribes settled throughout the entire surrounding hill areas of the state. A paradox about Manipur is that nine-tenth of the territory is constituted by the Hill and only one-tenth by the valley. Only one-third of the population lives in the hills and the remaining two thirds live in the valley. The Meiteis form the majority group of the population of Manipur. Majority of the hill dwellers belong to the 29 different recognized scheduled tribes' communities.

The total population of Manipur according to 2001 census is 238854 and the density of population is 107 persons per sq km. The percentage of scheduled tribe population is 34.41 and the scheduled caste population is 2.02 per cent to the total population of the state (1991 Census).

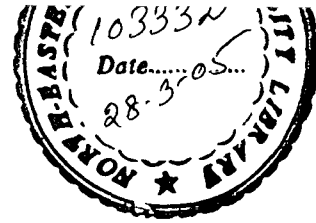
2.8 The Meiteis

The valley is the homeland of the Meiteis (having originally 7 clans, now integrated with Meitei community). They speak a language belonging to the Kuki-chin people of the Tibeto-Burman groups.²⁹ They are supposed to have come down from south-west of china.³⁰

²⁸ B. B. Kumar (ed) "Dialogue", January-March 2000, vol. 1 No. 3 Astha Bharati, p. 34

²⁹ Singh Joykumar N., (1992) "Social Movements in Manipur (1917-1951)", Mittal, N. Delhi, p. 19

³⁰ B. B. Kumar (ed) "Dialogue", July-September 1999, vol. 1 No. 1 Astha Bharati, New Delhi, p. 52



The Meiteis are the largest community in Manipur in term of population. They are concentrated in the central valley and Barak valley in the western part of the state. Majority of the Meiteis follows Hindu religion Although they are genetically Mongoloid and speak a Tibeto-Burman language, they differ culturally from the surrounding hill tribes mainly due to the Hindu influence in their life and culture.

2.9 The Lois

The Lois living in the valley formed the Scheduled Castes communities in Manipur. The Lois population according to 1991 Census is 37,105 persons constituting 2.02 percent of the total population of the state. They are mostly found in Sekmai areas in Imphal West district and Kakching areas in Thoubal districts

2.10 The Manipuri-Muslim or Pangan

The Manipuri Muslim or Pangan form another valley community They are not an indigenous group but are the progeny of the immigrants from Sylhet (Bangladesh), Tripura and Assam (Cachar). They have mixed characters of Mongoloid and Aryan in their features, quite distinct from Meiteis and the hill tribes and are darker in complexion.

They possibly came to Manipur in early part of the 17th century. Since then they have adopted Manipuri way of life and speak Manipuri language as their own They have completely absorbed themselves in course of time into the Meitei society They have no Masjid in Manipur, but their own traditional dress and customs are still followed by them according to Islamic standard.³¹ They are concentrated in places like Mayang Imphal, Yaripok, Lilong in Imphal District and Thoubal District.

³¹ Sen Sipa ,(1992) "Tribe and Castes of Manipur(Descriptions & Select Bibliography, " Mittal, New Delhu, , p 70

2.11 The Hill People

Manipur Hills are inhabited by about 29 recognized scheduled tribes (see fig.2.4 for the distribution of these tribal groups). Ethnically this tribe can be broadly classified into two groups i.e. The Nagas and The Kuki-Chin-Mizo. Both are of Mongoloid origin but belong to different stock. Majority of them are scheduled as tribes and follow Christianity. Fig. 2.5 presents the distribution of scheduled tribes in Manipur for the year 1991. The striking correspondence between the hills and tribes is abundantly clear from the figure.

2.11.1 The Naga Tribe

Ethnically, The Naga is the Tibeto-Burman of the Sino-Tibetan groups of the Mongoloid stock.³² The Naga tribes of Manipur have many sub-tribes. Notable among them are Liangmeis (Kacha Naga), Maos, Marams, Moyons, Paumeis, Rongmeis (Kabui), Thangals, Tangkhuls.

The main concentration of the Nagas is in Tamenglong District, Senapati and Ukhrul district. The Liangmeis and Rongmeis live in Tamenglong District, The Maos, Marams, Thangals and Paumeis in Senapati District and the Tangkhul in Ukhrul District.

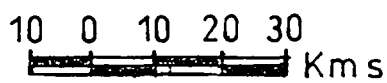
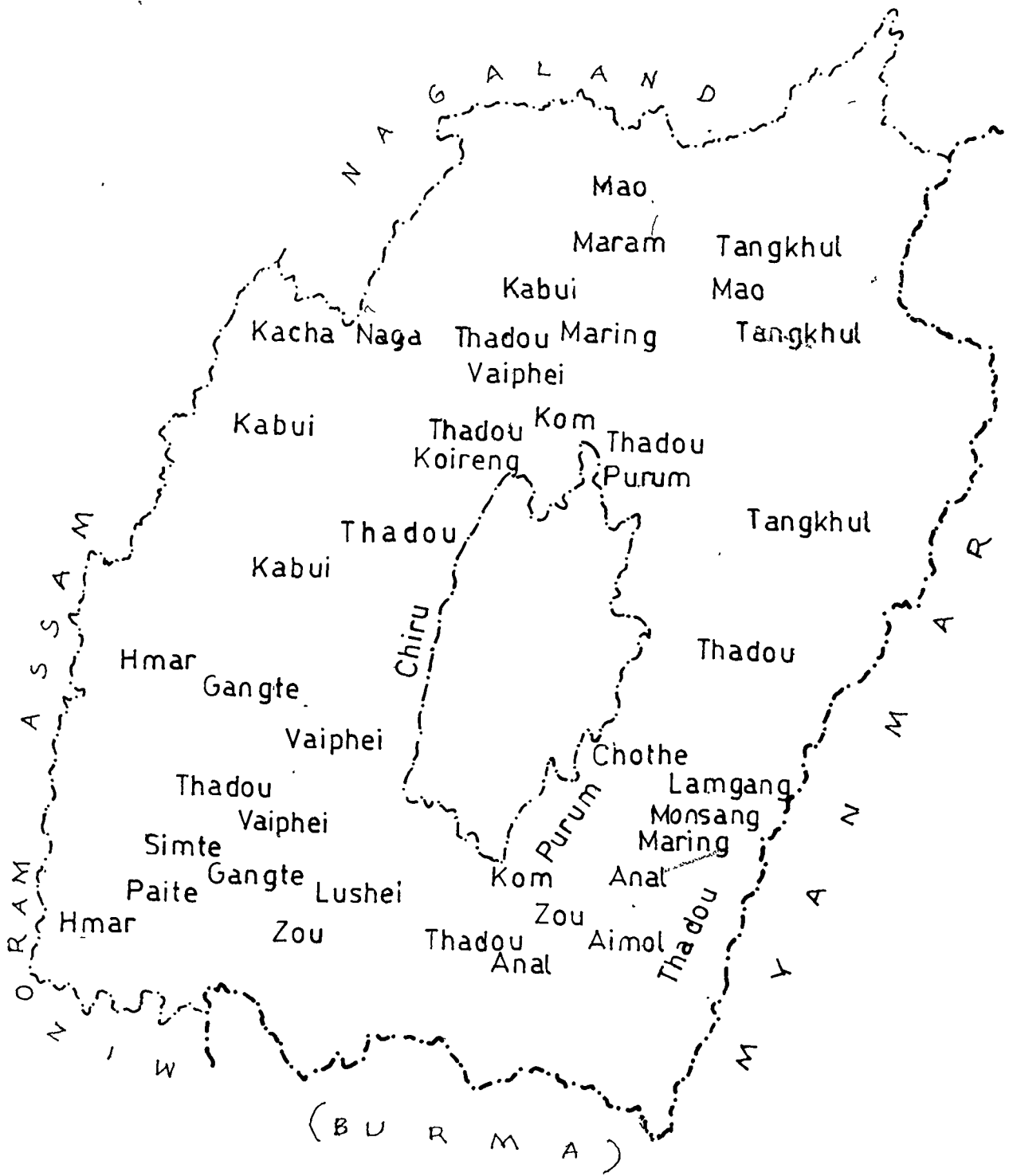
2.11.2 The Kuki-Chin Tribes

The Kuki-Chin is important hills tribes in Manipur. The term Kuki-Chin is both a linguistic group and an ethno-cultural entity. Linguistically, the Kuki-Chin is a sub-family of the Tibeto-Burman speakers.³³ P.S. Vaiphei used the term Kuki-Chins to mean all the non-Naga tribes in Manipur. The Kuki-Chin who live in Manipur are Aimols, Anals, Purums,

³² Kabui, Gangmumei, (1995).“ Genesis of the Ethnoses of Manipur” in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed); Manipur: Past and Present(The Heritages and Ordeals of a civilization) Vol.3. New Delhi, p 28

³³ *Ibid*, p 34

TRIBE DISTRIBUTION



Boundaries:
 International
 State

Fig. 2.4

MANIPUR SCHEDULED TRIBES POPULATION 1991

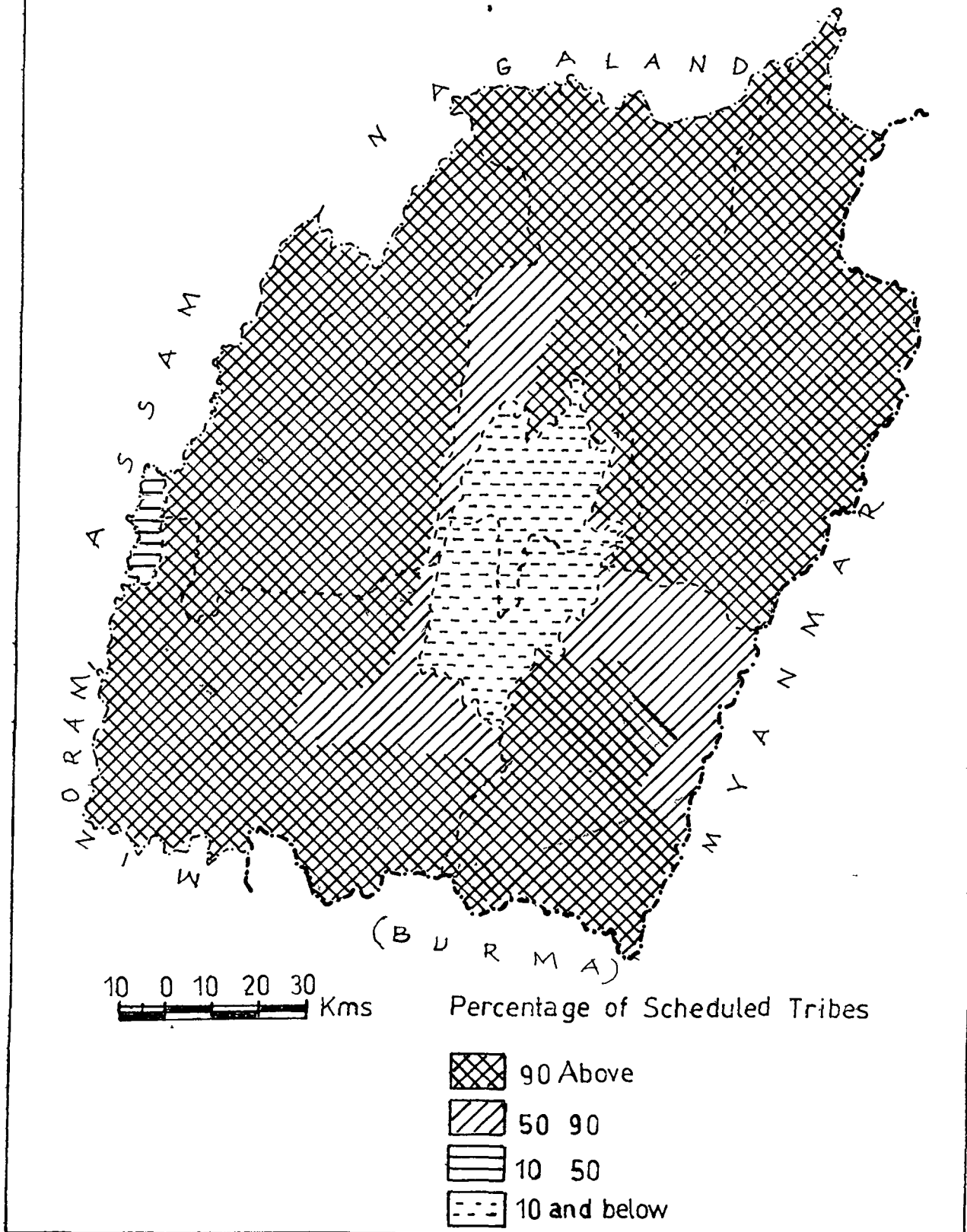


Fig. 2.5

Gangtes, Paites, Simtes, Hmars, Raltes, Thadous, Suktes (Tiddim chin) Vaipheis, Zous and other Mizo tribes.³⁴

The Kuki-Chin are the most scattered people in Manipur. They are concentrated mostly in Churachandpur District, Sadar Hills Areas in Senapati District, Jiribam area and Tamenglong District in the west, Chandel District and Southeast area in Ukhrul District.

2.12 Social life

The picture of tribal society does not vary much from tribe to tribe or from village to village. The Kuki-Chin as well as the Nagas society is strictly patriarchal in lineage and inheritance.

The social life begins with the family, consisting of the parent and their unmarried children. The family structure is breached by the marriage of its members. i.e. as soon as a son marries they establish independent households with exceptions of the eldest son who inherits the properties and lives with the parents along with all the unmarried children.³⁵ In the family father is the head and as such have certain duties and rights. He looks after the maintenance of the family and its relations with other families. He represents the families to the clan meetings and courts.³⁶

Next to the family comes the clan, which is a composite of several families i.e. group of agnatic kins. The traditional social system is built up around the clan system. It is the skeleton of their social structure, the bony framework that shapes their body politics, guides their socio-economic problem and moulds their socio-cultural ideas and values.³⁷

³⁴ Roy, Joytirmoy, (1973): "History of Manipur," East Light, Imphal , p. 189

³⁵ Ruivah, Khasim, (1995): "The Tangkhul Nagas " in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed), Manipur, Past and Present, Vol. 3 Mittal, N. Delhi, p-339

³⁶ Ansari, S.A., Manipur (1991): "Tribal Demography and Socio-economic Development." Daya, Delhi, p.126.

³⁷ Shangkham Gina, (1995): "A brief Account of the Moyons" in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed) , Op.cit, p. 343

Both the Kuki-Chin and the Nagas are embedded into many clans and sub-clans. Each clan has its chief head-the senior most male members among the clan units. Great respect is shown to him by all his clan living in different places by virtue of his being the head of the clan.³⁸ Succession in the clan chief is a hereditary and continuous process. Family disputes involving succession, inheritance, the chief of that particular clan decided civil or criminal matters with his council.³⁹ Though, the family is the basic unit of the tribal society, it is the clan which is really the binding factor in the social affairs. In traditional tribal custom, an individual must obey the clan elders and put up with all curbs on his activities by them. It is the clan duty to see that all their member's welfare and settle many difficult and complicated problems that requires legal proceedings without referring the cases to the law court. Thus, the clan acts as a symbol of unity and security in the midst of diversity and confusion of modern society.

2.12.1 The Village Administration

The villages of the Hill tribes whether small or large have been governed by village chief. It varies from tribe to tribes. For instance the Tangkhuls have limited power of chieftainship. The Kuki-Chin have more or less despotic and absolute power in their realms. The chief is usually the head male of the clan and hereditary. The Mao Nagas have a democratic type of village government. The chief is assisted by twenty elderly persons from each and every clan. Chieftainship is hereditary. The Zeliangrong Nagas has semi-republican gerontocracy. *Pikai* is a common term of the village court of the *Zeliangrongs* where in elderly people from each clan will exercise their authority. The village used to conducts a general

³⁸ Capvung S, Dolian, (1995). "The Social Institutions of the Vaipheis" in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed) *Ibid*, p. 247

³⁹ Primila M , (1995): "Tangkhul Naga Customs", in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed), *Ibid*, p. 362

meeting at open-air place inside the village, where all young and old may participate in the discussions of the problems of the village.⁴⁰

The tribal village is generally situated at the top of the hills. They prefer to select the site where there are steep rock mountains making it difficult for the enemy to invade or attack the village. This is of mainly for defense purpose as in those days the prevalence of head-hunting was in practice and the villages were at constant war with each other. The chief is the head of the village. The village council, who reported all activities to him, assists the chief and he passed instruction for follow-up action. The chief administered justice to the people. He was the protector of the village, life and property of the people inhabiting the village.

2.12.2 Houses

Houses are built above the ground on long pieces of wooden pillars and there is always a sitting platform at the backside of the house. Normally houses are built on silts of wooden posts. The floor and the walls are made of spilt bamboo, and the roof is thatched. There houses generally face eastward and usually human and animal skulls were displayed in front of the house as decoration. Chickens are usually kept in the front porch, which is partially enclosed and pigs and cows are usually kept beneath the floor of the house. This practice gives the house an unwholesome smell.

2.12.3 Youth Dormitory

In olden times, every tribal village, the unmarried young boys had their separate sleeping house or dormitory. Among the Naga tribes the unmarried girls also had a house or dormitory for sleeping together. The Thadous, Vaipheis called it '*Sawm* or '*som*'; the Hmars '*Buonzawl*'; the Rongmei '*Khangchiu*' for boys and '*Liuchiu*' or '*Kailiu*' for girls;⁴¹ the Maos

⁴⁰ Kamei Namthomang , (1995): "The Zeliangrong Nagas" in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed), *Ibid*, p. 522

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 412

'*Khruchi*' for boys and '*Lochi*' for girls and the Tangkhuls '*Longshim*'. The dormitory is a kind of school where the young folk are trained in various arts and crafts, dances music, the art of tribal wars, wrestling, code of conduct and etiquette, customary laws and practices.⁴² The dormitory also acts as a guardhouse and recreation club. In short, youth dormitory prepared youth of the village to lead the best possible life that the tribal could conceive of

There were two remarkable social institutions in the Thadou-Kukis social system, namely '*som*' and '*lom*'. '*Som*' was an institution of physical, educational and martial arts and handicrafts. Unlike some of the Nagas tribe dormitory, Thadou-Kukis had no separate dormitory building. They chose any house in the village that had at least a girl inmate. In a village, there were many such dormitories.⁴³ '*Lom*' was mainly meant of agriculture purpose, by the youth of the village used to work in their field in rotation. In '*som*' or '*sawm*' among the Kuki-Chin the girl whose house all the Youngman slept had to serve them all, looking after garment, washing, mending if torn and had to comb their hair. She regarded it as her privileges; her parent also regarded it as such for their daughter⁴⁴

The '*Buonzawl*' of the Hmars was built and operated by the whole village community. A single entrance made access to the building. A large fire was kept day and night. Right by the fire was an open space use for recreation such as wrestling, dances, songs, cracked jokes with other and learnt whatever was going on other parts of the country. All unmarried Young men above fifteen years of age were required to sleep there. Discipline was maintained by the '*valupa*' (Youth commander), who was elected by the people or elders. They were ever ready for

⁴² Pakhuongte Rev Roulneikhum, Rev (1983) "The Power of the Gospel, Among the Hmar tribe", Shillong, p 10

⁴³ Kaikhotinthang Kipgen, (1982) "The Thadou Kukis," Imphal, p 4

⁴⁴ Vaiphei, Prim Suantak, (1986) "Growth Among the Hill Tribes in Manipur, North East India Church," Imphal, p 28

any emergency such as fire or war. Their influence was so great that even the chief and elders were often subjected to the will of the youth.⁴⁵

The Rongmeis dormitory ('*Khangchui*' for boys and '*Luichiu*' for girls) is the life vein of their social and cultural activities to discipline and promote the promising life of the young people. They don't have separate house for dormitories but are attached to one well-to-do family so that the husband and wife of the house may play the role of adviser.⁴⁶

The Tangkhuls '*Longshim*' is divided into two; namely, '*Maryarlong*' for boys and '*Ngadalong*' for girls. These two dormitories were of different set up and housed in different house. They did not have a special structure but used their chief's house as *Longshim* for boys. In case the village was too big to accommodate all the boys of the community, they might with the permission of the village headman and his council, install as many '*Longshims*' as they required in the village. In the '*Longshims*' all the unmarried boys and girls members were compulsory. They were admitted to the '*Longshim*' at about 12 or 13 of age for boys and girls at younger age than the boys. Boy's dormitory was strictly tabooed for women, as it is a belief that if girls entered in their dormitories freely will bring ill luck on them while performing any manly activities like hunting, fishing, trapping and waging war etc. Here in the dormitory they learn different kinds of trades, handicrafts, weapon making, trapping and so on.⁴⁷

2.12.4 Marriage

The tribal society is patriarchal and patrilineal. Marriage was both exogamous and endogamous. Marriage within the clan was forbidden among the Nagas, but among the Kuki-Chin there were no such restrictions, except that the boy and the girl should not be too closely related. Both the Nagas and the Kuki-Chin do not encourage marriages outside the tribe.

⁴⁵ Pudiate, Rouchung, (1963): "The Education of Hmar People," *Sielmat*, pp. 35-36

⁴⁶ Kahmei N., "The Zeliangrong Naga," *Op.cit.*, p.412

⁴⁷ Ruivah, Khasim, "The Tangkhul Naga", *Op.cit.*, p. 348

Among the Thadou-Kuki, a young man is supposed to marry the daughter of his maternal uncle.⁴⁸ The Nagas and the Kuki-Chin practice monogamy, cases of polygamy are there, but very rare.

There are various methods of arranging marriage alliances, the most common amongst them are by way of negotiation, by elopements and by services.

The most common method of marriage in traditional tribal society is that done through negotiation by the parent. When a boy or girl falls in love, asks their parent to give consent to their nuptials. Such a situation resulted into formal negotiations of parents and relatives of the boys and girls. In negotiation of marriages either boy's parent or their agent starts negotiation with the girl's parent. This may continue for a year in case of the Kabuis, the Mao but the Tangkhuls settle their negotiation within a short time.⁴⁹ Among the Thadou-Kuki young man is supposed or bound to marry the daughter of his maternal uncle. When the parent of a boy are determined that their son should marry no other than his mother's brother daughter called 'Neimu', the marriage negotiation is initiated by the boys parents during the childhood of the boy and the girl. This earmarking is called '*kikhao khi*' meaning that the girl has been reserved for her '*Neipa*' (i.e. to be married with her) and that no one should set his eye on her either for marriage or for love.⁵⁰ This type of marriage is called in local dialect '*Chongmou*'. In olden times, this kind of practice was strictly followed, but now a day such a customary usage has been liberalized and considered as optional.

The second common marriage alliance is elopement. It is generally, a love-marriage, when either their parents was against their marriage. So marriage by elopement is resorted. The

⁴⁸ Vaiphei Prim Suantak, *Op.cit.*, p. 26

⁴⁹ Sen Sipra, *Op.cit.*, p. 30

⁵⁰ Gangte, T S, (1993). "The Kukis of Manipur: A Historical Analysis." Gyan, New Delhi, p 79.

society does not view elopement unkindly. But in any case, the marriage has to be regularized by performing it in the traditional way.⁵¹

The Anals, Aimols, Chirus, Chothes and Paumeis may marry by service. In this case the groom has to live, before his marriage, in the bride's house for three years like a son of his would be father-in law to attend various duties of that house. But this system is now almost on the verge of abolition.⁵²

In the traditional tribal society, marriage ceremony is administered by the family priest by performing all the necessary rite and rituals and blessed the couple. The rite and rituals of marriage varies from tribe to tribe.

2.12.5 Bride Price

A common feature in the marriage system of the tribes was the bride price, a token offered by the bridegroom's father or family to the bride's parents. The bride price varies from tribe to tribe. The bride price offered by a Tangkhuls consist of two dogs and two *daos*, Spear and pig for a Mao; a pig and a hoe for the Anals and the Purums; two to ten *mithun* for Vaipheis; three to seven *mithuns*, one hoe, a pair of cloth and a jar of rice beer for Hmars; Three pigs or buffaloes or cattles, a necklace of couch shells, one bracelet and a black or blue cloth for Lamgangs; agong for Chirus. The price of a Thadou girl is the highest. It is generally fixed between two to ten *mithuns*, two large gongs, two ordinary gongs and two beads⁵³. However, now days, this bride price is allowed to be paid in fixed cash price, according to the negotiations of both the parties. The custom of bride price has slackened in its rigidity but has not been done away with.

⁵¹Ansari, S A., *Op. cit.*, p. 134

⁵²Sen,Sipra , *Op. cit.*, p. 30

⁵³Roy Joytirmoy , *Op.cit.*, p.196

2.12.6 Divorce

Divorce is allowed among the tribal society but is usually a rare thing because most of the marriage follows the consent of the boys and girls. If a wife desires divorce, she is to refund the bride price to the husband. But if it is sought by a husband for the reason other than barrenness, adultery, sickness due to the incurable diseases, he must pay a fine to the village elders as well as to his wife. This used to be settling after mutual discussion between the parties concerned. This custom varies from tribe to tribe.⁵⁴ Widow Remarriage is allowed but widow with sons who are heir do not prefer remarriage.⁵⁵

2.12.7 Child Birth and Name-Giving Ceremony

The rite connected with the birth of child varies from tribe to tribe. In case of Kabuis tribe after delivery the mother will remain confined to the house for five days. The newly born baby of Tangkhuls child is given a hot water bath. This treatment is to render the child hardy and the mother is also made to sweat profusely by being wrapped in hot water blankets until faintness ensues two to three times and on the third day the women is allowed to go out about as usual.⁵⁶

In olden days, name-giving ceremony was performed with a grand feast by inviting relatives, friends and neighbours. The ceremony is celebrated by killing pigs or hen and 'Zu' (rice-beer) is drunk. On this day, the name of the infant was given. It was considered necessary to perform the name giving ceremony as soon as possible, because the older members of the society believed that the evil spirits might have a name of their own choice, which might mean the death of the child.

⁵⁴ Sen, Sipra, *Op. cit.*, p. 30

⁵⁵ Roy Joytirmoy, *Op. cit.*, p. 197

⁵⁶ Ansari, S. A., *Op. cit.*, p. 135

Child naming among the Kuki-Chin is peculiar –unique in its system. The system is such that the first-born son of a family is necessarily named after his parental grandfather and that of a girl her grandmother. The third or fourth children go after the name of the maternal grand parent of the child or other close to the family. This shows a continuity of relationship that can be termed as “alternate generation naming system” and also in order to show love, respect and affection and to establish better social relationship.⁵⁷ When the child is named, the last syllable of the grandfather or grandmother or any other persons’ name is taken as the first syllable of the name of the child. If the grandfather’s name was *Mangthong*, the suffix ‘Thong’ was added before the name of the child, and the child’s name would be ‘*Thonglun*’ or ‘*Thongpao*’.

2.12.8 Festivals

The tribal people had many indigenous festivals mostly agriculture oriented and were associated with prayers of offering to gods. Celebration of different festivals related to particular season or stage of agriculture operations becomes part and parcel of the tribal lives. In tribal festival dancing, singing, eating and drinking of rice-beer were the four main highlights. Genna is also observed in this festival.

The ‘*Gan-ngai*’ and ‘*Chakan-ngai*,’⁵⁸ were the two most important post harvest festival of the Zaiengrongs living in the western hills of Manipur. ‘*Chithoni*’ (post-cultivation), ‘*Saleni*’ (post-sowing) and ‘*Odomi*’⁵⁹ post- harvest festival of the Maos. The Tangkhuls has ‘*Mankhap*’ as post cultivation festival. Among the Kukis ‘*Mim Kut*’ is celebrated as post-cultivation and ‘*Chavang Kut*’ as post harvest festival. The festival were the best means of amusement and celebrated them with great enthusiasms as it was looked upon to delight their hearts and relaxed their otherwise monotonous lives.

⁵⁷ Gangte, T S, *Op cit*, pp 102-103

⁵⁸ Kahmei, N Kahmei, “The Zehangrong Naga, in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed), *Op cit*, p 414

⁵⁹ Baneer, Benjamin, K S, “The Mao Naga” *Ibid*, p 432

2.12.9 Drinks

Rice-beer or 'Zu' was the most nourishing drinks of the hill men. It was prepared in large quantity and served liberally in all festivals, ceremonies, social gatherings and in entertaining guests. It was their customs that the guests or visitor were offered rice-beer. Indeed drinking is also part of their rituals and sacrifices. It was also taken individually for refreshment after hard work and often for the enjoyment.

Each tribe and people variance in its preparations and they were variously flavoured. Nagas used jungle herbs for flavouring and the Kuki-Chin often used the leaves of the datura plant, stramonium, which accounted for the strength of their brew. Hill-women took special care about the preparation of rice-beer to see that their husband's drinks in proper quantity and show them in quality too.⁶⁰

Based on the above study of the Regional Setting, the following remarks may be highlighted.

2.13 Concluding Statement

The following broad points emerge from the description of the regional setting of the study area:

First, Physiographically, the state of Manipur has two major landforms namely; the plain and the hills. While the plain areas are inhabited by the peasant communities, the hills have provided an ideal habitat for a number of ethnically differentiated tribes who inhabit these areas for centuries.

⁶⁰ Hudson, T. C.,(1982): "The Naga Tribes of Manipur," Manipuri Seiber Sons, N. Delhi, p 40

Second, the tribes inhabiting the hills in Manipur are broadly divided into two main groups; viz. the Kukis and the Nagas and they consist of 34.41 percent of the total population of the state.

Third, the social life of the tribal society does not vary much from tribe to tribe or from village to village. All the hill tribes of Manipur are patriarchal in lineage and inheritance. They have a well-set customs of marriage, bride price, divorce, child-name giving ceremony and many indigenous festivals. The traditional social system is built up around the clan system and the village administration is based on a chieftainship. One of the interesting aspects of social life of the hill tribes of Manipur is the Youth dormitory, which serves as the learning center for the un-married boys and girls.

CHAPTER- III

RELIGION OF MANIPUR PRIOR TO THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY**3.1. Introductory Statement**

Tucked away in the eastern corner of India, right at the frontier of Myanmar, Manipur was completely untouched with any religion of outside world. Except animist form of worship even Hinduism and Christianity were absolutely unheard of. However in about 1707, during the reign of Maharaja Charai Rongba, Hindu preachers appeared in Manipur and converted the king to Vaishnava Hindu. Then during the reign of Garib Niwaz a Royal Edict was issued and thus Hinduism became the state religion. The hill tribes' religion however, remained animistic in nature. Therefore, the religious composition of the people of Manipur prior to the coming of Christianity may be broadly divided into two categories; The Meiteis Religion and the Tribal Religion.

3.2. The Meitei Religion

The Meiteis had their own religion before their conversion to Hindu Vaishnavas. The traditional religious rites and offering and their national prayers to gods and goddess for the welfare were almost the same for the hills and the plain people. The Meiteis used to worship four supreme Gods viz, '*Sidaba Mapu*', '*Ema Leimalel*', '*Lainingthou Sanamahi*', and '*Eputhou Pakhangba*'. The first three are worshipped daily at their houses but '*Eputhou Pakhangba*' is worshipped occasionally and specially at sacred place known as 'Kangla' altars. Besides, there are 364 '*Umanglai*' (demi-god and goddess) worshipped as household deity⁶¹. These '*Umanglai*' gods and goddess consists of ancestors of each tribe and also spirits of the

⁶¹Laiba, M T., (1984) "The Geography of Manipur," N Bjoykumar Singh, , Imphal P 7

mountain passes, spirits of the lakes, rivers, vampires etc. The creator deity is identified both with the chief of the gods and either the snake ancestor of the royal family.⁶²

Traditionally, the Meiteis practice ancestor worship, head-hunting and buried their dead.⁶³ They also believed that all human suffering and illness are sent by evil spirits of demi-gods and goddess. The *Maiba* (Priest) and *Maibi* (Priestess) practiced occultisms and made sacrifice and offering for healing the patient⁶⁴ Moreover, there is a belief that by worshipping the four supreme gods with *Lainingthou* will protect them from evil spirit.

In olden days, Meiteis never worshipped an idol. It was king Khagemba, who introduced the idol of *Lainingthou Sanamahi* for the first time in Meiteis culture. Many kings after him used to worship the idols of Hindu gods and goddess by adopting Hindu religion and began to construct many temples of Hindu gods and goddess in around sacred altars of Meiteis and cremated their dead bodies.⁶⁵

In the first quarter of the 18th century during the reign of Maharaja Garib Niwaz, the Vaishnava missionary Shantidas Goswami came to Manipur and converted the king to Hinduism. The king issued a Royal Edict and thus Hinduism became the state religion.⁶⁶ Vaishnavism spread throughout the state under the royal patronage. However, the champion of the old faith, Khongnangthaba, along with his followers strongly opposed the new faith. As a consequence, the king and his *guru* collected all the sacred *pujas* of Meitei old religion and burnt it in 1729 known as '*Puya Meithaba numit*', as seen according to some unpublished puyas like '*Bhayachandra-Larei-Lathup*', '*Pamheiba-Larei-Lathup*' etc.⁶⁷ Hence, The Meitei

⁶² Hudson, T. C., (1958). "Manipur in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics", New York, Charles Scribers Son, p-402

⁶³ *Op.cit.*, p.22

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p-10

⁶⁵ *Ibid*,

⁶⁶ Roy, Jyotirmoy ,(1 973) " History of Manipur", Imphal east light, p.38

⁶⁷ Laiba, M.T., *Op.cit.*, p 10

under the compulsion of the Maharajah became Hindu Vaishnavas. However, the ritual practices of the Hindu religion, animistic beliefs and practices are still strong. The *Amaiba* and *Amaibi* are numerous and popular. Prof. J. Roy rightly depicts that the ancient gods' ancestors are also being duly attended to side by side with Vaishnavism. The temples of Thanging at Moirang and Sanamahi at Imphal show that the old faith is not completely dead.⁶⁸

All the religious rites and festivals connected with Vaishnavism are performed by Meiteis with necessary ceremonies. The most important festival is 'Yaosang' (Doljatra). Other Hindu festivals like Durga puja and Diwali are observed and traditional festival like '*Lai-Haraoba*', '*Cheiraoba*', *Chingkaba* are also still observed and are very popular.

3.3 Tribal Religion

The pre-Christian religion of the hill tribes of Manipur is analysed on the basis of the writings of the early scholars, based on their personal observations and their folklores and hence, they called the tribal religion as pagans, heathen and animists. The hill tribes as was the case in those days had many superstitious beliefs and worships which were handed down to them by tradition. They did not have any fixed place to worship and never worshipped idols. They remained animist in their acts of worship without any established form.

It is interesting and surprising, however, to note that neither Hinduism nor Buddhism could influence the hill tribes of Manipur even though the religion was followed and practiced in Imphal valley and neighbouring Myanmar respectively. Whatever may have been the reason, it is clear that there was little socio-cultural interaction between the people living in the valley or in Myanmar that possibly explains why animism survived in the little tribal worlds of Manipur while it did not in the valley or in Myanmar.

⁶⁸ Roy, Joytirmoy Roy, *Op.cit* , p.39

3.3.1 Concept of God:

All the hill tribes of Manipur believed in the existence of a Supreme Being or God, who is in control of all events, a divine power who is the maker of the world though their idea about him was faint and confused.⁶⁹ The name of this Supreme Being varied from tribe to tribe. The Kuki-Chin-Mizo call it '*Pathian*', the Mao call it '*Oramai*', the Kabuis call it '*Ragung*', the scall it '*Varivara*', the Marams call it '*Pumpu*'. They believed that a good person after death goes to heaven but the bad ones are punished by God to get their rebirth in the lower position of life. Thus, they worship him to find a place in heaven after death.⁷⁰ They considered him to be a beneficent being who dwell high above in heaven, loving and kind who blessed people and punished wrong doer. He is well disposed towards men and so, there is no need for offering sacrifices for propitiating.

3.3.2 Spirits and Demons:

Besides the Supreme Being the tribal people believed in the existence of a number of friendly and evil spirits who are capable of helping and harming human being. These spirits, Demon and ghosts are known by different names among different tribes. In short, the tribal people believed in the plurality of Gods and evil spirits, which constantly harmed them, and they directed their prayer and offering accordingly.⁷¹

The hill tribes lived in terrible fear always afraid to anger the evil spirits, which are responsible for their illness, death, droughts, storms, bad crops etc. The evil spirits abode in big trees, hills, stones, rivers etc. so, to appease these spirits, they chose to offered sacrifice through the instrumentality of priests. Offering and sacrifices are made in the house, on the road, under the tree, upon a rock, by the riverside, at the paddy field and other places where spirits are

⁶⁹ Vaiphei, Th Lamboi, 1997): "Advent of Christian Mission and Its Impact Among the Hill Tribes of Manipur", Imphal, p-43

⁷⁰ Roy, Jyotirmoy, *Op.cit.*, p. 198

⁷¹Shimray, R.K., (1985): "Origin and culture of Nagas," New Delhi, p 224

expected to have their abode.⁷² They also believe in the existence of individual house deities who help the welfare of the families and individual paddy field deities who protect and bless the crops. They therefore, offer sacrifices very often to these deities to appease them, especially during the time of sowing seeds, harvesting and festival times.

3.3.4 Ancestor Worship

Among the Kuki-Chin-Mizo and the Nagas of Manipur, ancestor worship was most popular. Spirits of the ancestors were worshipped especially in time when they feel apprehensive of an impending misfortune, trouble, etc.⁷³ They also believed that sickness was caused by the souls of their ancestors. There, they offer sacrifices by killing hen and pig to their ancestors, to appease them and asks them not to trouble their lives but give them good health and prosperity to the family⁷⁴. They also believed that the spirits of the deaths were in constant presence in the earth, which are unable to adapt in valley of dead. They lingered around and acquired mysterious forces and power. In spite of their acquiring supernatural force and power, they still depend upon earthly nourishment and homage. So, they needed proper offering to propitiate them. If they were well treated, they will aid in maintaining the good fortune of the propitiators. On the contrary, if they were neglected, misfortune will befall on them.

3.3.5 Life after Death:

Both the Kuki-Chin and the Nagas believed in a life after death. The idea of the abode of souls varied from tribe to tribe. They however, held that the souls of the deceased go to the land of the dead; though the location of this village of the dead was not clear. The Kuki-Chin called it '*Mithikhuo*' and '*Pielgal*'. Among the Nagas, the Marams call it '*Kateinam*', Maos call it '*Kathimei Ralokii*', the Tangkhuls calls it '*Kazeiram*'. But, the common belief of the

⁷² Akhui, Z.A.S.,(1973): "A short Account of Tangkhul Naga Culture", Tarun, Imphal, p.40

⁷³ Hudson, T.C., (1988): "The Naga Tribes of Manipur", B. R., N. Delhi, p.138

⁷⁴ Vaiphei, Prim Suantak,(1986): "Church Growth Among the Hill Tribes in Manipur, N-E, India," Imphal p.38

people was that in the worlds of dead, the life is almost a repetition of their life in this world. They believed that the dead did not directly go to the land of dead. They stayed around their house for sometime and later went to the land of the dead⁷⁵. Hence, the people kept some portion of the food for them everyday. They also believed that the souls of good persons go to heaven to live with the supreme God.

3.3.6 Concept of Heaven

The general belief of the Kuki-Chin and the Nagas was that the soul of the dead goes to heaven. This heaven, according to their belief is divided into two places, one for the good people and the other for the bad people. T.C. Hodson, denotes that it is evident that the dead are sorted out by two methods which are not really inconsistent. In the first place there is a selection according to life lived in this world, where the good so-called go to one place and the bad to another.⁷⁶

The Kuki-chin-Mizo believed that when a man dies, the departed soul goes to '*mithikhuo*' (Village of dead). In *Mithikhuo*, the dead would unite again with their families who were already departed before them and they would maintain their own family and home and earn their living like they did here on earth. Moreover, there is also another place called *pielgal*, which lies beyond '*Mithikhuo*'. This is a land of paradise and those who go there are not expected to work any more for their living. They are fed by fair maidens, where all live in enjoyment of life. It is the home of the good souls. On the hand, the bad or wicked souls are believed to hover endlessly over the firmament.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p 42

⁷⁶ Hudson, T.C , *Op.cit* , p 160

⁷⁷ Pakhuongte, Roulneikhum, Rev., *Op.cit* , Shillong pp 20-21

3.3.7 Priests and Religious Offerings.

Offering animal sacrifice were the main mode of worship among the hill tribes. There are many kinds of sacrifice for different occasions, as they live in terrible fear, always afraid to anger the evil spirits, which might harm them. Thus, most of their religious energies are all centered on propitiating the evil spirits, which sends the calamity and sickness.⁷⁸ The mode to sacrifice is determined by the object to which sacrifice was to be made. Therefore, there are various methods of performing sacrifice and sorcerer's magic is in demand to determination of what animals should be to appease the evil spirits.

Each village or clan has a priest, who was responsible to perform traditional ceremonies and rituals. The methods of performance vary among them. The priest occupied an important place in the society. No religious ceremony or rituals could be performed without him. The Priest function maybe divided into two i.e. he has to performed tribal religious ceremonies to invoke the blessing from God for the people as well as to performed rituals to propitiate the evil spirits to cure their sickness. Thus, the village priest played the role of a modern doctor and was often called even at odd hours, depending on the emergency.

The most common sacrifices were performed during sickness in the family. There are also a special sacrifice accompanied by song, dance, and feast in the tribal society. Only domestic animals were used in the sacrifice. These ceremonies and rituals incurred heavy expenses. In the case of sickness, the propitiation sacrifice would begin with small sacrificial items. But if the sick did not show signs of improvements, its items would progress from simple sacrifice to costly sacrifice lasting several days along with observing genna. These constitute their formal methods of worship.

⁷⁸ Lewis, Grace R, (1907) "The Lushai Hills", Baptist Missionary Society, London, p 80

3.3.8 Omens, Signs and Superstitions

Tribal society in olden days believed in superstitions that God indicates future through omens, dreams to determine the future course of life. To Marams, in their dream if a cow flew across the sky, it meant death will occur in the village. To see a lizard on the way was a bad omen but if he can kill it, and then he will overcome the misfortune. The Tangkhuls believe that if a buffalo in a dream attacks one, he will suffer misfortune.⁷⁹ Being bitten by a snake was an omen of evil portent, which the Thadou-Kukis regard it as a proof of witchcraft directed against them. Birth of twin to Nagas was considered lucky but the Kuki-Chin though it unlucky. To the Kuki-Chin if a wild animal coming in the village was a bad sign, it meant misfortune would occur in the village but if they can kill it they will avert the misfortune. Moreover, to the Kuki-Chin the '*Thiempu*' (Priest) through dream and vision, he gets all directions as to what he should do, when and what materials or ingredients, what incantations are to be used as also his guidelines by the spirits who appeared in his dream, when he is to performed religious ceremonies and rites.⁸⁰ Thus, the omens, signs and superstitions determine the tribal daily life. They did not undertake anything of important like matrimonial engagement, waging a war against hostile village, going on journey, selection of *Jhum* land etc unless taking omens.

3.3.9 Burial Customs

The hill people bury their dead. The mode of burial customs though differ from tribe to tribe, a general uniformity is noticed in two natural death and unnatural death. Those who died a natural death were buried inside the village while those who died an unnatural due to war,

⁷⁹ Hudson, T C, *Op cit*, p 129

⁸⁰ Gangte T S, *Op cit*, p 129

suicide, accidents etc. were buried outside the village. The Kuki-Chin did not even take in the dead body of unnatural dead inside the village. The general practice among the tribal when an infant died was entirely different. The Kuki-Chin buried it beneath the house without much ceremony.⁸¹

Among the Thadou-Kukis the dead body was bath with hot water and rub with a particular glass called '*Thibel*' which had a pungent smell. It is belief that this would enable the soul of the dead man to merge with the dead.⁸²

The Kuki-Chin had a different burial customs in unnatural death. The dead body was taken out through an opening in the floor or a door on the rear wall was cut out and buried outside the village boundary. The dead body of a person who died committing suicide by hanging was not allowed to be touch by other because such a death was considered as a bad death. A hole is dug out just below the place where the person hanged. Then the hanging rope was cut so that the body itself dropped into the hole below. If necessary to handle the body at the time of the burial a few elderly person and the priest did the job. No rite was performed for such a burial.⁸³

The grave was usually dug by young males. In the grave are placed various articles for the use and comfort of the dead in the world after. The tribal people buried their dead with stick rituals ceremony.

3.4 Head-hunting

The Kuki-Chin and the Nagas were known to the outside world for their head hunting. According to T.C. Hodson, the simple and most obvious form of head hunting was associated with blood feud. Two different groups continued to hunt till the tally of head were numerically

⁸¹ Gougin, T., (1986) History of Zomi, churachandpur, Zomi Press, P 1-4

⁸² Goswami, Tarun, (1985); Kuki Life and Lore, Halflong, pp 176-209

⁸³ Ibid, pp. 176-209

equal Whenever, the process of reconciliation came, both parties insisted on the return of the slain head for a settlement ⁸⁴ However, in tradition, head hunting was practiced to attain social status Usually only brave individual practiced it Head hunter took the head by both fairs and foulds means So, even unsuspecting women, men and children lost their head due to this practiced

In Naga tradition a man could not climb the ladder of social recognition till he brought enemy head and also had great difficulties in getting a suitable wife They believed that the enemy head add fertility to soil They also believed that after death those capture and killed would carry his luggage to the land of the dead So, any God-fearing warriors were prompt to kill for head as they wanted to be happy and famous while a live and also after death This was the factor to hunt for head to climb social ladder and win favour and love of the fairest girl of the village for marriage⁸⁵ Among the Kuki-Chin-Mizo, human head were valued more as a trophies and house decorations than a religious symbol ⁸⁶ In Kuki-Chin-Mizo tradition, a man after bringing a few heads, one was entitled to wear a special type of shawl called '*Thangsuo*' which the commoners were not permitted to wear He was given special seat in social functions The Kuki-Chin-Mizo believed that those killed would become their slave in the next world after Therefore, they used to place the heads on the grave of relatives in order that the souls of the hunted human being might accompany the dead relatives in the next world ⁸⁷ Head hunting was practiced among the hill tribes were for acquiring social status

⁸⁴ Shimray, R K ,(1985) Origin and Culture of Nagas, New Delhu, pp 72-73

⁸⁵ Gougin, T, *Op cit* , p 54

⁸⁶ Davis, A W , 'Census of India', 1981, Vol 1, pp 237-249 cited in G S Ghurye, The Burning cauldron of North east India, Bombay, p 11

⁸⁷Ghurye, G S , *Ibid*, p 125

3.5 Political conditions and Advent of Christianity in Manipur

Manipur was an independent state before the Anglo-Manipuri war in 1891. Before 1891, the relationship between Manipur and British India was limited to the recognition and regulation of each successive king and stationing of a British officer under the pretext of guiding the ruling Maharaja.

As an independent state, Manipur had its political development different from Assam. Its first relations with the British were to repel Burmese (Myanmar) invasion in Manipur. After the Anglo-Manipur war of 1826, the British recognized Gambir Singh as the Maharaja of Manipur. Then the British, after his death in 1835 stationed a political officer at Imphal to keep an eye on his successor to ensure his loyalty. This officer in later stage become more and more powerful because of the internecine quarrel among the princes of Manipur which gave an opportunity to the political Agent to interfere directly or indirectly in every domestic affairs of the state.⁸⁸

In 1890, in a palace revolution, King Surchandra Singh was overthrown by his brother who compelled him to abdicate the throne in favour of his next brother Kulachandra Singh and retire to Brindavan in Utter Pradesh.⁸⁹ Kulachandra Singh became the king but the real power was vested in the hands of another brother Tikendrajit Singh. The British decided to recognize the new king on the condition that Tikendrajit Singh whom the British regarded as the architect of the palace revolution to be exiled from Manipur.⁹⁰

The British government deputed Mr. James Wallace Quinton; the Chief Commissioners of Assam to carry out the decision resulted in the palace revolt and the brutal atrocities of the commissioner of Assam, the Political Agent and his parties and the outbreak of Anglo-Manipur

⁸⁸ Lal dena (ed). (1991): History of Modern Manipur, Orbit Distributors, New Delhi, , P. 31

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p 31

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p 52

war on 24th March, 1891. The government of India felt deeply concerned over the cold blooded murder of its officers and sent a full-scale military expedition to Manipur and within a month the forces of the Senapati were subdued.⁹¹ The British government decided to preserve the existence of the state and nominated Churachand Singh, a minor son of Chawbi Yaima, a great-grandson of Raja Nara Singh as the Maharaja of Manipur on 18th September, 1891.⁹² Till his maturity the political agent, as superintendent, governed Manipur. On 4th February 1908, Churachand Singh was duly consecrated and was installed to the throne by Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam.⁹³ During the period of superintendence i.e. from 1891 to 1907, Manipur was for all practical purposes under the direct British rule. Even after the coronation of Churachand Singh, the British retained extensive powers. They kept a tight control on Manipur affairs as the president of the durbar, the highest court in the state was always to be an English Indian Civil Service officer. He also had responsibility for the administration in the tribal areas and all matters relative to finance.⁹⁴ The Maharaja thus became practically a puppet of the British government of India. This capture of political power in Manipur by the British in 1891 paved the way for Christian missionary to enter Manipur after a few years. Christian missionary work in Manipur started after British had established a reasonable degree of control after the Anglo-Manipur war in 1891. As mentioned above, the only established religion was Vaishnavite-hinduism in Manipur as an independent state. However, its propagation was confined to the people living in the valley while the hill-tribes remained animists with their act of worship without any established form. Vaishnavism was

⁹¹ Singh, R K Jhalajit, (1985) A Short History of Manipur, O K Store, Imphal, , pp 266-267

⁹² Singh, K M , *Op cit* , p 5

⁹³ *Ibid*, p 9

⁹⁴ Lal dena (ed) , *Op cit* , pp 79-80

made the state religion of Manipur from the reign of Gharib Niwaz Pamheiba and the king was considered as the preserver and protector of the people's faith. So, he did not allow any of his subject be converted to other religion. As mentioned above, it was only in 1894 that Christian faith made in-roads into Manipur with the arrival of William Pettigrew at Imphal after securing permission from the acting political Agent, A. Porteous. The coming of Christianity in Manipur was a significant ⁹⁵event in the history of Manipur. It made in-roads into Manipur through two gates viz, Silchar Gate and Aizawl Gate. William Pettigrew, an educationist entered Manipur through the Silchar Gate and Watkins Roberts along with Dr. Peter Feser a medical man entered Manipur via Aizawl.

The entry of the Christian missionary in Manipur was not a smooth affair. After working for six month in the valley among the Meiteis Hindu, when Major Maxwell returned from furlough changed the course of missionary history events. Actually, all he really did was to provide tuition for the children of government officials. Pettigrew though his call was among the Meiteis and was anxious to preach the gospel among them. However, the orthodox Hindu Meiteis misinterpreted Pettigrew's preaching as a deliberate attempt to impose upon them the government's religion i.e. Christianity. The political Agent Major Maxwell, after his return from leave was alarmed at this development. He feared that trouble might develop again, if Pettigrew's activities were not stopped immediately. Not only this, the Meiteis held on to the tenets of the Hindu religion almost to fanatic.⁹⁶ Moreover, the British authorities administrating the state on behalf of the minor Raja perhaps made them hesitant to interfere with religion. The social policy of British India after 1857 was non-interference. So, they decided to maintain status quo in Manipur. Therefore Maxwell asked Pettigrew either to leave or stop his

⁹⁵ Gangte, T.S., *Op.cit.*, p. 36

⁹⁶ Laldena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*(1988): A study for Missionary Movement in North-East India with particular reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills. 1894-1947. Vendrame Institute, Shillong, p. 33

missionary work. However, Maxwell had an alternative for him should he be willing to go to the hill areas amongst the animist head-hunter at his own risk, which he willingly accepted.⁹⁷

Pettigrew toured Manipur hill areas in 1895, looking for a site to establish his mission centre. Finally, he chose Ukhrul, which was more than fifty (50) miles on the north east side of Imphal and started his mission work on 1896. The state authorities realising the importance of his work had already appointed him as Honorary Inspector of school in 1897 a post which he held it till 1902, facilitating the preaching of gospel through education. Despite government's support, Pettigrew had a tough time initially. He found hard to get students as the parents were not willing to send their children to school. From the onset, suspicion of the missionary's action had been rankling in the mind that he was the agent of the government planning to remove their young men to the outside world. He had first to win the people's trust. In all this effort the political Agent helped him, to the extent of warning that the elders, in the event of failure to send their children, would be sent to jail. In February 1897, the missionaries had 20 boys. The boys were undisciplined, committing all sorts of wild manners and refused to remain at their studies. After overcoming these hurdles, by 1901, after five years of labour, Pettigrew was able to baptize 12 believers in Christ, and the number grew to 70 in 1907. Thus, in 1902, the Phungyo Baptist church was organized, the first Baptist church in Manipur and the only one until the year 1916.⁹⁸

In 1909, Mr. Kamkholun Singson chief of Sanvon village in Manipur south invited Watkins Robert of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission at Aizawl to establish a school in his village. At the relevant time two youngmen, named Thangkai and Lungpao in Manipur went to Aizawl to study and told Watkins Robert that the people in Manipur South had never heard and

⁹⁷ Vaiphei, Kim, *Op.cit* , p. 6

⁹⁸ Vaiphei, Kim , *Op. cit* , p. 9

no one had taken up any missionary work in the area. The appeal was taken as a Macedonian call and immediately accepted. So, towards the end of January 1910, Robert accompanied by Savawma, Vanzika and Thangchingpuia (Taite'a) Lushai Christians and the two native left Aizawl for Manipur after getting permission from Mr. Cole, the superintendent of Lushai Hills and he telegraphed the political Agent of Manipur about the journey of Roberts and his Party.⁹⁹

The journey to Manipur was a hazardous one; it took them thirteen days to reach Sanvon from Aizawl. During the journey, the two natives from Manipur viz. Thangkai and Lungpao accepted the new faith and became the first Christians in Manipur South. They passed through several villages and reached Sanvon on Saturday the 5th February 1910.¹⁰⁰ To his surprise Robert found the people quite responsive and sociable. This was the beginning of the exploration of the land-locked Manipur area and also the beginning of exposition of the gospel to the people.

Returning to Aizawl, Thangkai and Lungpao continued their studies but the three students viz, Savawm, Vanzika and Thangchingpuia (Taite'a)-volunteered to go to the new land and became the first national missionaries. Through the ministry of these three Lushais missionaries the area began to be exposed to Christianity and the number of followers soon multiplied. Watkins Robert felt the time was ripe for him to start a mission. Hence, in 1913, he founded the "Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission"¹⁰¹. Later, its name was changed to North-east India General Mission (NEIGM). Thus, Watkins Robert became the second pioneer missionary in Manipur through Aizawl Gate.

⁹⁹ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op. cit*, p. 95

¹⁰⁰ Gangte T.S., *Op. cit.*, p. 39

¹⁰¹ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit*, p. 97

3.6. Concluding Statement

The narration of the religion prevailing at the time of Christian advent may be summarized as follows:

The pre-Hindu Vaishnavism religion of the Meiteis was not much varied from animism. The Meitei believed in four supreme gods and demi-gods and goddess. The study reveals that traditionally the Meiteis also practiced ancestor worship, head-hunting and buried their dead.

In the first quarter of the 18th century, the Vaishnava missionary Santidas Goswami came to Manipur and spread Vaishnavism throughout the valley under the royal patronage and he was successful in converting the king and his subjects to Hinduism.

The traditional religion of the hill tribes was animism. All the hill tribes had belief in one supreme God. They had vague concept of heaven and hell as well as life after death. They believed that all sickness and calamities were due to the wrath of the evil spirits. Sacrifice was the main mode of worships to propitiate the evil spirits. Omens, dreams, signs and superstitions determined their life. They were savage and practiced headhunting.

Manipur was an independent state before the Anglo-Manipuri war in 1891. The capture of power in Manipur by the British in 1891 paved the way for Christian missionaries to enter Manipur.

William Pettigrew was the first Christian missionary to work in Manipur. However, he was not allowed evangelistic work among the Hindu Meiteis. So he went to Ukhrul in the Northeastern part of Manipur and started his mission work by starting schools. In the southern hills of Manipur Watkin Roberts and his native associate came to Sanvon in 1910 and started the missionary work.

CHAPTER –IV

SPATIAL PATTERN IN THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF THE CHRISTIANITY

4.1 Introductory Statement

Earlier, the arrival of Christian missionaries in the last part of the 19th century and their establishment of churches among the hill tribes was discussed. Now, an attempt is made to study the spatial pattern in the growth and spread of the church from the dawn of the present century till the present.

The Manipur missionary field till 1950 is considered to be the mission period and the main efforts in Manipur were directed towards the people inhabiting the hill areas, the Tangkhuls, the Kukis, Zeliangrong, Maos etc.¹⁰² Like in Nagaland Christianity was first introduced and established among the people of one major tribe before spreading. As mentioned earlier, the first missionary Pettigrew arrived in 1896 at Ukhrul. It was however, in the 20th century, especially in 1901 that the missionary was able to convert 12 persons who were the students of Ukhrul mission school and were baptized and subsequently, the first Baptist church was organized in 1902 at Ukhrul.

4.2 Pattern in the Spread of Christianity

As is shown in fig. 4.1, spread of Christianity in Manipur was first introduced to the Tangkhuls, inhabiting the North-Eastern part of the state (Ukhrul district) and they accepted it in the year 1901. The spread of Christianity in the initial stage during 1896 to 1910 was confined to the Tangkhul areas only. The reason is not far to seek as the government prevented missionary activities in other areas. As the Mission centre was located at Ukhrul, its spread was

¹⁰² Down, S. Feredicks, (1971): *The Mighty works of God: A Brief History of the council of Baptist Churches in North-east India – The Mission period, 1836-1950*, Guwahati, Christian literature Centre., p. 156

felt only in the surrounding villages of Ukhrul through the Students converts while studying at the Mission School. The spread of Christianity among the Tangkhuls in the North-east area gradually grew from a small Christian community, the number of converts crossed 234 in 1916 and then by 1926 it further rose to more than 2000 church members.¹⁰³

During the next decade of 1910-1920, it spread among the Kuki-Chin in the Central (Sadar Hills in Senapati district and Chandel district) and Western hills (Tamenglong district) of Manipur through the students studying in the Ukhrul Mission School. The Kukis-Chin-Mizo inhabiting the Manipur South (Churachandpur district) received the Gospel through Watkins Roberts and his native associates in the year 1910. These differences in the response to Christianity among the Kukis between the North and South may be attributed to the geographical factor of distance. The Kukis are separated by the presence of the valley region consisting of the Meitei Hindus. The diffusion of Christianity in the Southern hills took place from Mizoram where the Mission Centre located at Lushai Hills was well established. Hence the impact of the Northern Mission centre at Ukhrul had a lesser impact on the southern hills.

The spread of Christianity in Southern hills under the Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission was rapid in the initial stage. By the year 1912-1913 the church members grew to over 200 Christians.¹⁰⁴ The reason is that the Kuki-Chin-Mizo inhabiting this area were more open minded and more susceptible to the teachings of Christianity.

The pioneer in spreading Christianity in the North and Central areas was through the evangelistic works of Teba Kilong, Longkhobel, Helkhup, and Jamkithang who were converted in 1912, while attending the mission school at Ukhrul. They began preaching among their

¹⁰³ Sangma Milton S., *Op.cit.*, p 284

¹⁰⁴ Vaiphei, Th Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, p. 99

MANIPUR DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY

10 0 10 20 30



Kilometres

Boundaries:

International

State

District

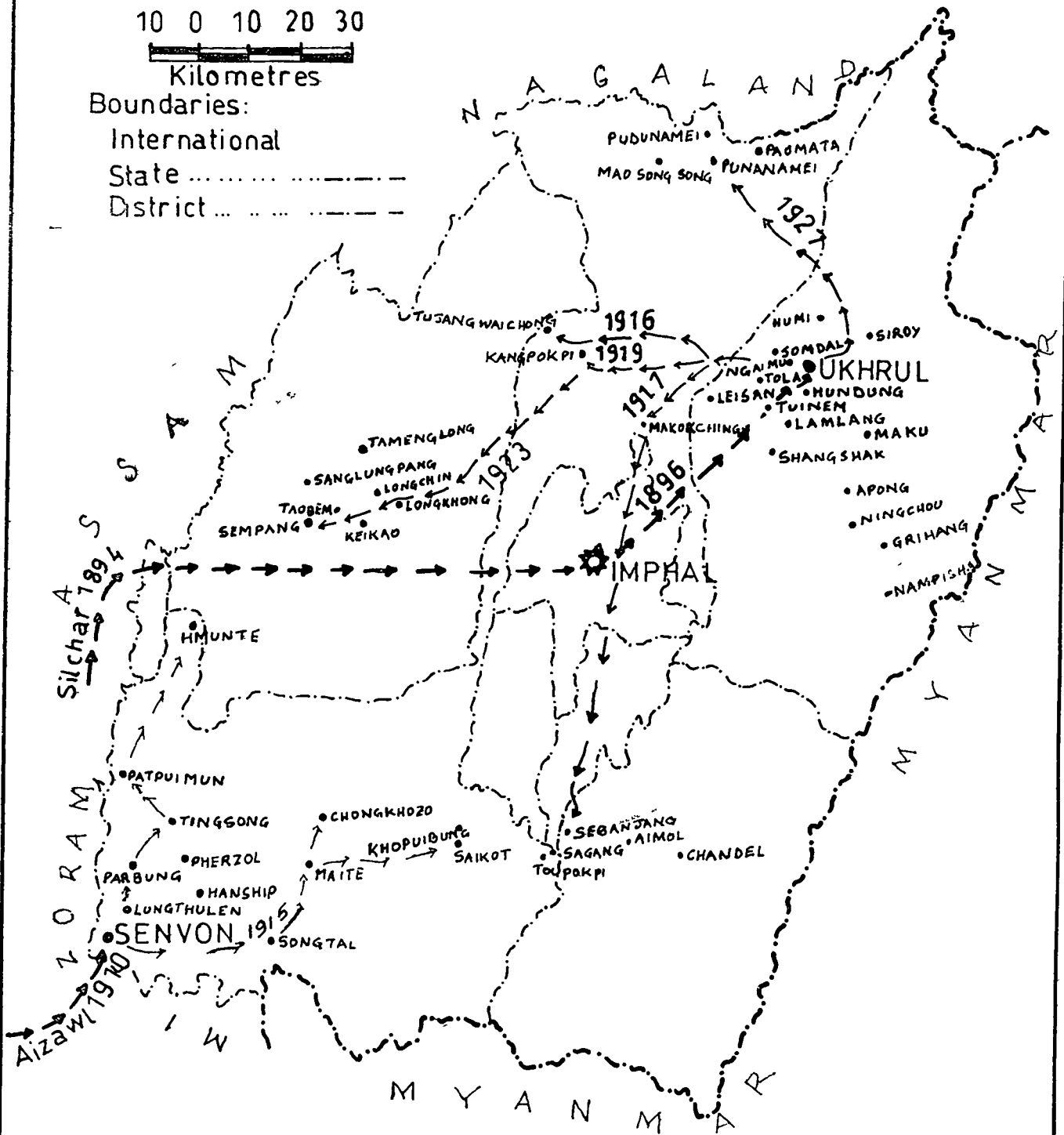


Fig.4.1

people. Thus, the Kuki-Chin became the second largest group to respond the gospel in Manipur.

The centres of missionary work among the Kuki-Chin in western Hills of Manipur were located in three places. The most northern centre was at "Tujangwaichong" a wholly Christian village. Here, the first Thadou-Kuki Baptist church was established in 1916 with 86 members. Evangelist Ngulhao Thomsong looks after the centre. The next centre was at "Longkhong" village, situated 80 kms due west of Imphal. Evangelist Longkhobel looks after the centre. It has 32 members. The other was at "Shebanjang" village south-west of Imphal, about 48 kms. Evangelist Teba Kilong looks after the centre.¹⁰⁵ The spread of church in Sadar (Central) area was encouraging in spite of government restrictions and mobility of the missionaries or superintendent pastor to visit them regularly. It is made up of Thadous, Koms and Anals numbered over 700 church members. By the beginning of 1920, there were five organized churches.¹⁰⁶

The Zeliangrongs, inhabiting the North-West hills (Tamenglong district), were the third major tribe to respond to Christianity during the third decades i.e., (in 1923) of Christian Missions in Manipur. The spread of Christianity among the Zeliengrong, consisting of the Rongmei, the Liangmei and the Zemei, inhabiting the western Hills of Manipur started in 1919, when K. Namrijinpu was converted. He along with the Kuki Christian began to preach the new faith among his people. So, in September, 1923, the first Zeliengrong church was established at 'Sempang' village. By 1930, there were eight churches among the Zeliangrong and were included within the North-west Association with the Kuki of that area.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 280-281

¹⁰⁶ Sangma, Milton S., *Op.cit.*, p 290

¹⁰⁷ Ansari, S A, (1991): Manipur : Tribal Demography and Socio-economic Development, Daya, p 156.

The Mao tribes in the Northern hills (Senapati district) were the next to respond to Christianity in the year 1927. The Mao Naga inhabiting the northern frontier of Manipur, 34 Kms from Kohima and 64 kms from Kangpokpi is located alongside the Imphal- Kohima road. The mission had started a state primary school in this Mao village in 1903, but due to the people's antagonistic view about Christianity and restriction of the government for the missionary to enter Mao area had made difficult for the spread of Christianity. However, systematic evangelistic work began at Mao area from 1923, when four Mao students studying in the mission school at Kohima were converted. The students with the Tangkhul Christians preach the new mission to their people. Thus, the first church was established in Punanamei in 1927.¹⁰⁸

4.3 Causes for Slow Growth

The spread of Christianity in the initial stage during 1896 to 1910 was slow. There were many factors for its slow growth. In the first decade Christianity the task of proselytizing among the Tangkhuls was not an easy one due to language problems, as its Tangkhul villages has different language in the north east of Manipur. Moreover, The Tangkhul considered the missionary's conduct of proselytizing was the work of the evil spirits rather than the work of true religion. The teaching of Christianity condemns drinking of wine, worship of spirits and sacrifices which they regarded as an encroachment on their time honoured custom and attacks upon their religion.¹⁰⁹ Hence, serious persecutions were followed by the custodian of the old ways, and some converts were beaten, some were fined and some were chased out from their

¹⁰⁸ Ansari, S.A., *Op.cit.*, p.156

¹⁰⁹ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi ,(1997): Advent of Christian Mission and its impact on the Hill Tribe in Manipur, Imphal, pp. 59-60

villages. Moreover, some British officers supported those who resisted further spread of Christianity. This active persecution continued till the year 1950.¹¹⁰

Another reason for the slow diffusion of the faith was that the early converts after sometime were reverted back to their traditional faith. The obvious reason for their reversion was their inability to follow and obey the Christian laws which were new to them and their inability to keep away from their traditional way of life. Hitherto, the people could not stop all of a sudden their time-honoured customs. Pettigrew in trying to discipline the converts had resulted into unprecedented clash when he forbid the Christians to participate in the village festival called '*Kathi Kasam*' ceremony for sending of the soul of death involving worship of the spirits. He therefore, in 1908, drew a list of rules that a Christian was expected to follow. Most of them refused to accept these rules resulting in relapse to their old ways of life. Only seven stood firm and accepted the new rules and organized a new church¹¹¹

In spite of these impediments the number of Christian community maintained an upward growth. The first decade of the 20th century, however, was a period of slow but steady growth. It was a time of watch and wait to those who have changed their religion. The position in the next decade improved since most of the early converts were school children coming from different villages. Christianity began to penetrate to many villages through these students converts

4.4 Method of Conversion

The entry of Christian missionary was not an easy task among the hill tribes. At first the tribal people were reluctant and hesitant as they considered the Missionary activities as work of the evil spirits rather than the work of true religion. Therefore, the Christian missionaries

¹¹⁰ Downs S Frederick ,(1983) Christianity in North east India Historical Perspectives Delhi, ISPCK, , p 141

¹¹¹ Sangma Milton, S (1987) History of American Baptist Mission in North-east India (1836-1950) Vol 1, Mittal, Delhi, , p 276

adopted several methods for propagating Christianity such as education, health scheme etc. They introduced western education and health care as means of propagating the Gospel to the people. Using education as means of spreading the Gospel, the missionaries were successful in planting churches wherever schools were established.

The Christian mission's contribution to medical care in the form of dispensaries and providing modern medicines had a great deal of impact among the tribal people. The western medicines and care in the dispensaries were taken as practical step to cure their disease that gradually changed their belief in traditional religion, which in turn prepared their mind for accepting Christian faith.

4.5 Change of Mission Centre

The mission centre remained at Ukhrul till 1919. Later, with the increase of Christian converts and the establishment of many more churches, they spread out all over the state and necessitate the establishment of its headquarters at a central location. So, in the year 1919, the mission headquarter was shifted to Kangpokpi, situated 45 kilometers from Imphal on Imphal-Kohima road. Here, Dr. Crozier started the missionary Dispensary and Leper Asylum on November 17th, 1919. A Middle English School and Orphanage were also established.¹¹² The transfer of Headquarter from Ukhrul to Kangpokpi in 1919 helped the spread of Christianity into other areas to great extent as it was situated in a strategic location situated on the Imphal-Dimapur road. It was easier for the mission to operate among the Kukis and Zeliangrongs in the West. Thus, the change in the location of Mission Centre to Kangpokpi provides ample

¹¹² Vaiphei, Kim (1995): The coming of Christianity in Manipur (with special reference to the Kukis), New Delhi, p 11

opportunities for the spread of the Gospel to the surrounding areas in the Western hills and Northern hills of the state.

4.6 Early Church Growth of Baptist Mission

As mentioned earlier, since 1913, the mission work was confined to Tangkhul areas in the North-east. However, it began to spread out into other areas through the voluntary works of the converted students significantly to the Kukis in western parts and Sadar hills, north of Imphal. This led to the growing increase of local churches and the widening of the area of missionaries frontier and necessitated to organize an Association. The church delegates met for the first of its kind, held at Ukhrul in November 1916, and formed an association known as 'Manipur Christian Association'.¹¹³ In 1917, there were 355 church members among five different groups in various parts of the state.¹¹⁴ From 1917 to 1928, all the Baptist church of Manipur was included in this organization.

The first decade of the 20th century, however was a period of slow but steady growth. The new spiritual movement which began in 1921 accelerated by the 'Manipur revival' reached the Tangkhul area in the spring of 1923. This not only stirred up the churches but stimulated extensive evangelistic activity. This resulted in the rapid spread of Christianity to the entire state.¹¹⁵ The first Baptist Christian conference in Manipur was held at Kangpokpi in January 1928. From 8 to 10 tribes about 1100 Christians attended the conference and Manipur Baptist Association (MBA) was changed into Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC). The magnitude of the Christian waves became a vigorous force and there was a gradual growth and spread of Christianity. By 1935, there were 67 churches, 5510 church members in Manipur Baptist

¹¹³ Sangma, Milton, S, *Op.cit.*, p. 281

¹¹⁴ Luikham, T., *Op.cit.*, p. 26

¹¹⁵ Downs S Fredick, the Mighty works of God, *Op.cit.*, p. 161

Convention.¹¹⁶ In spite of considerable persecution faced by the Christian, their population was less than 6000 Christians in 1919. However, by 1944, the total membership in the state grew to over 12,000. Thus, in 1945, the north-east (Tangkhul and Mao area) had over 8000 Christians associated with 112 churches. The north-west (Thadou, Kom, Chiru, Kabui, Liangmei, Zemei) together had 5000 Christians associated with 120 churches. The Sadar (central) had a dozen distinct languages with 5000 Christians associated with 217 churches.¹¹⁷

The period 1928-1947 may be considered as the time for consolidation of the work done before and the progress made during the period resulted in producing several Christian leaders who came to replace those who were deputed to do the job. The zeal to spread the news of the gospel reached the zenith. There is also noticeable evidence towards the self-supporting of the church. In 1947, there were 15,982 members of the Baptist churches in Manipur with 150 regularly organized churches of which 122 were entirely self-supporting.¹¹⁸ By the time when the golden jubilee was celebrated in Ukhrul in 1948, there were already 505 churches with Christian population of 42,910.¹¹⁹

During the period under study, after the Second World War and India's independence in 1947, with the rapid rise of national feeling greatly affected the life of the church in Manipur. For many years, the Baptist field in Manipur had been divided based on geographical locations into three associational areas which was far from homogeneous with respect to tribal groups had become difficult to carry on the work smoothly. Each ethnic group was then looking to form their own Association. So, in those day, the Baptist field was divided into 10 Parish partly based on geographical and on tribe basis, as shown in the following table.

¹¹⁶ Sangma, Milton S., *Op.cit.*, p. 287

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 290

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 291

¹¹⁹ Th. Lamboi Vaiphei, *Op.cit.*, p. 92

Table 4 1 Manipur Baptist Convention Association based on Ethnic group (1947)

| Sl No | Name of the Association | No of Churches | No of communicant member |
|-------------|---|----------------|--------------------------|
| MBC No 1 | Tangkhu Baptist Association | 188 | 17,936 |
| MBC No 2 | South Sadar Association(Anal, Tarao, Lamgang, Chothe, Moyon, & Monsang) | 20 | 2,345 |
| MBC No 3 | Present Sadar | 50 | 2,006 |
| MBC No 4 | Zeliangrong Baptist Association | 124 | 5,330 |
| MBC No 5& 6 | Kuki Baptist Convention | 225 | 7,130 |
| MBC No 7 | Komrem Baptist Church Association | 50 | 2,250 |
| MBC No 8 | Mao-Maram Baptist Association | 61 | 3,870 |
| MBC No 9 | Tiddim-Chin Baptist Association | 12 | 2,63 |
| MBC No 10 | Maring Baptist Association | 25 | 661 |
| Total | | 775 | 42,657 |

Source Census of India 1961, Demographic and Socio-economic Profile of the Hill Areas of North East India B K Roy Burman, NewDelhu, Jan 3, 1970, pp 54-61

The conversion of the tribal people was rapid after Independence in 1947. It was clear from the above picture that the bulk of conversions took place during 1947-1963. The total number of churches was 775 with Christian population of 42, 657 in the whole state under the Baptist

Table 4 2 Manipur Baptist Convention Local Association in 2000

| Sl No | Association | No of church | Members |
|-------|---|--------------|---------|
| 1 | Anal Naga Baptist Association | 47 | 3,812 |
| 2 | Chin Baptist Association | 16 | 1,079 |
| 3 | Chongthu Baptist Association | 38 | 2,602 |
| 4 | Chothe Baptist Churches Association | 8 | 1,667 |
| 5 | Gangte Baptist Association | 11 | 500 |
| 6 | Kabui Naga Baptis Association | 13 | 1,687 |
| 7 | Komrem Baptist Convention | 85 | 8,000 |
| 8 | Kuki Baptist Convention | 233 | 19,258 |
| 9 | Lamkang Naga Baptist Association | 20 | 2,221 |
| 10 | Liangmei Naga Baptist Association | 60 | 10,078 |
| 11 | Mao Naga Baptist Churches Association | 31 | 6,084 |
| 12 | Maram Naga Baptist Association | 17 | 1,986 |
| 13 | Maring Naga Baptist Association | 53 | 5,033 |
| 14 | Meitei Baptist Association | 45 | 2,000 |
| 15 | Monshang Naga Baptist Churches Association | 7 | 745 |
| 16 | Moyon Naga Baptist Association | 15 | 1,115 |
| 17 | Nepali Gokhali Baptist churches Association | 15 | 766 |
| 18 | Paumei Naga Baptist Association | 68 | 12,419 |

| | | | |
|-------|--|-------|----------|
| 19 | Rongmei Naga Baptist Association | 152 | 17,500 |
| 20 | Sadar Baptist Association | 21 | 2,010 |
| 21 | Southern Tangkhul Naga Baptist Association | 76 | 8,100 |
| 22 | Tangkhul Baptist Long | 162 | 39,000 |
| 23 | Tarao Naga Baptist Association | 4 | 640 |
| 24 | Thadou Baptist Association | 56 | 6,912 |
| 25 | Thangal Naga Baptist Association | 8 | 1,250 |
| 26 | Vaiphei Baptist Association | 7 | 737 |
| 27 | Zemei Naga Baptist Association | 24 | 2,460 |
| Total | | 1,292 | 1,59,705 |

Thus, by the year 2000, Christianity has been the dominant religion among the tribes nearly replacing the animistic belief. As clearly indicated in the above table, the association is now based on tribe consideration replacing the geographical consideration in the beginning.

4.7 Spread of Christianity in Southern Hills of Manipur

Christianity reached the Kuki-Chin-Mizo people living in the southern hills of Manipur through Watkins Roberts, who has his based in Aizawl. He visited Senvon village on the request of the village chief Mr. Kamkholun Singson in 1910. After sowing the seed of Christian faith among the people, Robert returned to Aizawl.¹²⁰ Later on, at the Chief's request of opening mission school, Robert's sent three Lushai Students-Vanzika, Savawma and Thangchingpui(Taitea) to begin permanent work. They arrived at Senvon on May 10, 1910. They opened mission school at Senvon and started evangelism work side by side with their teaching ministry. Thus, through the ministry of these three native missionaries the area began to expose to Christianity. The Christian population was steadily growing in a number of villages, and in 1913 a church was organized. This became the first Kuki-chin-Mizo church in Manipur¹²¹ Watkin Roberts named the new mission field as "Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission".

¹²⁰Jeyaselan, L., (1996), *Impact of the missionary movement in Manipur*, Scholar Publications, Delhi, , p 85

¹²¹ Vaiphei, Kim, *Op cit* , p 10

Later, as the mission expanded outside Manipur, it renamed into North East India General Mission (NEIGM).¹²²

To establish the new mission work at Senvon, Watkin Roberts asked permission from the political agent of Manipur and informed his developmental work in the Senvon area. However, the political agent of Manipur refused to grant permission as presence of another mission centre besides the Baptist mission will antagonize the native Rajah and his Darbar. On the other hand, Pettigrew protested that Manipur was an American Baptist field and others are looked upon as intruders. Roberts' action was taken as a breach of the principle of the comity of protestant mission societies working in India, which lay down that where one mission society had already worked, other missions should not undertake any work without prior understanding between them. Therefore, the Welsh Mission in Lushei hills also dissociated themselves in Roberts founding an undenominational mission in Manipur.¹²³ But the native missionary refused to leave and continued their mission work. As a result, the number of followers soon multiplied. Later, this brought misunderstanding between Roberts and Pettigrew, the two pioneer missionaries in Manipur.

The spread of Christianity under the Thadou-Kuki Pioneer mission was rapid in the initial stage. By the year 1912-1913 the churches grew to over 200 Christians. The reason is that the Kuki-Chin-Mizo inhabiting the southern hills had no language problem and the local evangelist had more advantages than the foreign missionaries in dealing with the local tribes. However, the progress of the ministry was not without trouble. As mentioned above, Pettigrew opposed the coming of new mission other than Baptist mission and secured Government's help

¹²² Vaiphei Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, pp. 97-98

¹²³ Laldena, *Op.cit.*, 1988, p. 38

to the extent that all Christians should be expelled from the area if at all they were to function separately.¹²⁴

The trouble between the two missions created hurdles to the growth and spread of the church. Besides the government prohibition order, there were stiff opposition from non-Christian chiefs of the villages and villagers who repeatedly warned Christians that it were unlawful and illegal to become Christian. These troubles had provided undue advantages for persecution of new converts such as destroying houses or dismantling the roofs and putting them into jails.¹²⁵ At last with the intervention of the political agent, the matter was brought under control. As a compromise, it was decided to draw a boundary between the Baptist mission and the Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission areas. Consequently, Manipur-Cachar (The Kailam range in Western Hills) road was fixed as the line of demarcation¹²⁶.

4.8 Early Church Growth of North East India General Mission

The Thadou Kuki Pioneer Mission, in spite of the above mentioned problem, held its first conference in December, 1914 at Senvon. Again, in January, 1922, the second Conference was held at Zekhra-Dawr, two miles from Bekhra, situated on the bank of Twilang River. Altogether 400 delegates attended the conference.¹²⁷

With the expansion of the mission field outside Manipur, the name of the mission was changed to North East India General Mission (NEIGM) in 1924. The Name Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission was given because the chief of Senvon and the Majority of the people in the area belonged to a Thadou-Kuki tribe. Moreover, in those days 'Kuki' was a composite name of all tribe of the south district. Roberts thus thought that it was most appropriate.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 98

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 104

¹²⁶ Downs, S. Frederick, *Op.cit.*, p.166

¹²⁷ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, p.108

The spread and growth of church during 1910 to 1930 is slow under the NEIGM. The spread of Christianity picked up after 1931.¹²⁸ However, by 1940, their number swelled to about 11013 Christian, spreading over 143 villages. The post Second World War became more fruitful so far as the expansion of the church was concerned. The total number of Christians reported in 1951 was 20,000.¹²⁹ About ten years later the population was 39,827, out of whom 39,568 were lay members and 259 were ordained pastor etc.¹³⁰ During the study period NEIGM had three hundred parish churches and chapels in Manipur. Their distribution is as furnished below.

Table 4.3: Number of Churches under NEIGM, 1951

| District | Number of churches |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Churachandpur | 226 |
| Jiribam | 46 |
| Tamenglong | 9 |
| Bishanpur | 19 |
| Total | 300 |

Source: Census of India 1961. Demographic and Socio-economic profile of the Hill Areas of N. E. India, pp. 358-361.

NEIGM had 300 churches by the year 1951. It may be stated that the church growth was rapid during the year 1947-1950. The whole NEIGM mission field consisted of six tribal groups, viz. Gangte, Hmar, Lushei, Paite, Thadou and Vaiphei. It was centrally administered under NEIGM until 1948. But after the Second World War, the problem of language cropped up. The number of Christians increased in each tribe, with an increase in desire to produce songs and Bibles and other literature in their own dialects. They spoke their own dialect and understood each other and a Lushei dialect was used as the official language in official conference and services. All seemed well until 1947. A resolution was passed in 1948

¹²⁸ Ansari, S.A., *Op.cit.*, p. 156

¹²⁹ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, pp. 128-129

¹³⁰ Census of India 1961, Demographic and Socio-economic profiles of the Hill Areas of North east India, pp. 358-361

conference that the whole of Manipur south be divided into five areas, basing partly on tribe concentration and partly on geographical confederation with a provision for area conference.¹³¹ Moreover, apart from language issue, communal feeling emerged with each tribe then striving for its identity paving the way for self-administration by stepping aside from the group. Thus, in 1953, Royal C. Paddock, the last missionary and the leaders of different tribes divided the mission into five autonomous presbyteries, viz,- Evangelical Assembly of Church (EAC) for Hmar tribes; Evangelical Synod Church (ESC); Evangelical Christian Convention (ECC) for Paite Tribe; Kuki Christian Association (KCA) for Thadou tribe; Manipur Christian Organisation (MCO) for Vaiphei tribe. Recently, the South-east Manipur Anal Christian Association (SEMACA) later renamed as United Evangelical Church joined the NEIGM. However, the Evangelical Convention Church (ECC) of Paite tribe left and joined the New Testament Baptist Churches in the year 1988 and came to be known as Evangelical Baptist Church (EBC). Again, Manipur Christian Organisation (MCO) later renamed as Evangelical Organisation Church (EOC) of the Vaiphei tribe split into two in the year 2000, while one group joined the Presbyterian Mission of Aizawl.

In the leaders' conference of the NEIGM church held in November, 1986, the proposal for merger with the Evangelical Congregational Church, the supporting body in USA was completed. NEIGM came to be known as the Evangelical Congregational Church of India (ECCI). In the changing circumstances some of the presbyteries had renamed their association. These are the present name of the constituent bodies of the ECCI. Evangelical Assembly Church, EAC, (Hmar) Evangelical Organisation Church, EOC, (Vaiphei) Evangelical Synod

¹³¹ Khajalian D, Tangthupha Tuna leh Tunnung Thu, New Lamka, 1986, pp-80-81

Church ESC, (Gangte) Evangelical Christian Association, ECA, (Thadou) United Evangelical Church, UEC, (Anal.)

4.9 Growth of Christian Population

The pattern of decadal growth of Christian population in whole of Manipur is highlighted in the following table.

Table No.4.4: Decadal growth of Population by Religion in Manipur, 1901-1991

| Year | Hindu | Sikh | Jam | Islam | Christianity | Other religion and Persuasions | Religion not stated | Total |
|------|-------|------|------|-------|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1931 | 57.73 | - | - | 5.13 | 2.33 | 34.80 | - | 4,45,606 |
| 1941 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5,13,069 |
| 1951 | 60.13 | | 0.03 | 6.44 | 11.84 | 21.55 | - | 5,77,635 |
| 1961 | 61.68 | 0.07 | 0.09 | 6.23 | 19.49 | 12.36 | .0001 | 7,80,037 |
| 1971 | 58.93 | 0.09 | 0.01 | 6.20 | 26.03 | 8.11 | 3.15 | 10,72,753 |
| 1981 | 60.04 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 6.99 | 29.68 | 3.12 | 0.62 | 14,20,953 |
| 1991 | 57.67 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 7.27 | 34.11 | 0.77 | | 18,37,149 |

(-) Not available

Source: Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002

The number of Christian converts had grown from 12 in 1902 to more than 68,394 in 1951 and it increased to 1,52,043 in 1961 and to 2,79,243 in 1971 and to 4,21,702 in 1981. Table-4.4 clearly reveals the fact that the proportion of Christian population in the state increased phenomenally after 1951. The increase in the proportion of Christian population was not so much at the cost of Hindus who populated the valley, but really at the cost of the animist tribal people shown in the table as belonging to "other religion and persuasion". The proportion of animist population declined from a high of 34.80 per cent in 1931 to less than one per cent in 1991 while proportion of Christian population increased from a low of 2.33 per cent to a high of 34.11 per cent during the same period. It is evident that the period between 1951 and 1971 witnessed the largest increase in the proportion of Christian population with a corresponding decrease in animist faith. It is clear that the religious transformation was confined to the tribal segment of the population living in the hills while the other groups living in the plains in close

proximity hardly experienced any such change. The Christian population as a percentage of tribal population however varies from tribe to tribe. The following tables give the district wise Christian population in 1991.

Table 4.5 District wise Christian population in 1991

| State/District | Total Population | Christian Population | % of Christian Population |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Manipur | 1,837,149 | 626,669 | 34.37 |
| Senapati | 208,406 | 173,462 | 83.23 |
| Tamenglong | 86,278 | 84,116 | 97.49 |
| Churachandpur | 176,184 | 164,453 | 93.34 |
| Chandel | 71,014 | 61,184 | 86.16 |
| Ukhrul | 109,275 | 102,356 | 93.67 |
| Imphal | 711,261 | 28,603 | 4.02 |
| Bishnupur | 180,773 | 9,717 | 5.038 |
| Thoubal | 293,958 | 2,778 | 0.95 |

Source: Manipur, Census of India 1991, Series I Part IV-B(ii) Religion (Table C-9), pp-120-121

Table 4.5 shows that percentage of Christian population is very high in all the hill districts and it accounts for more than 80 percent of the population. The Christian percentage in the valley districts is less than 10 percent of the total population. The reason is not far to seek and has been noted earlier. Among the Hill districts, Tamenglong district has the highest percentage for Christian population of 97.47 per cent in 1991, which was 89.29 per cent in 1981. It means that the animists in the district have been reduced to very small minority in the district. The Christian percentage in Ukhrul district and Churachandpur district were 93.67 per cent and 93.34 per cent respectively in 1991, which was 92.46 per cent and 88.21 per cent respectively in 1981. Chandel district has recorded 86.16 per cent Christian population in 1991 which was only 79.22 per cent in 1981. In Senapati district, though the percentage of Christian population is the lowest among the hill districts, it has recorded a fast growth of Christian population during the decade. It means that the animists in the districts have been still high and conversion is still an ongoing progress. It may be due to its isolation from the other areas due to

MANIPUR
 PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICT-WISE CHRISTIAN POPULATION
 1991

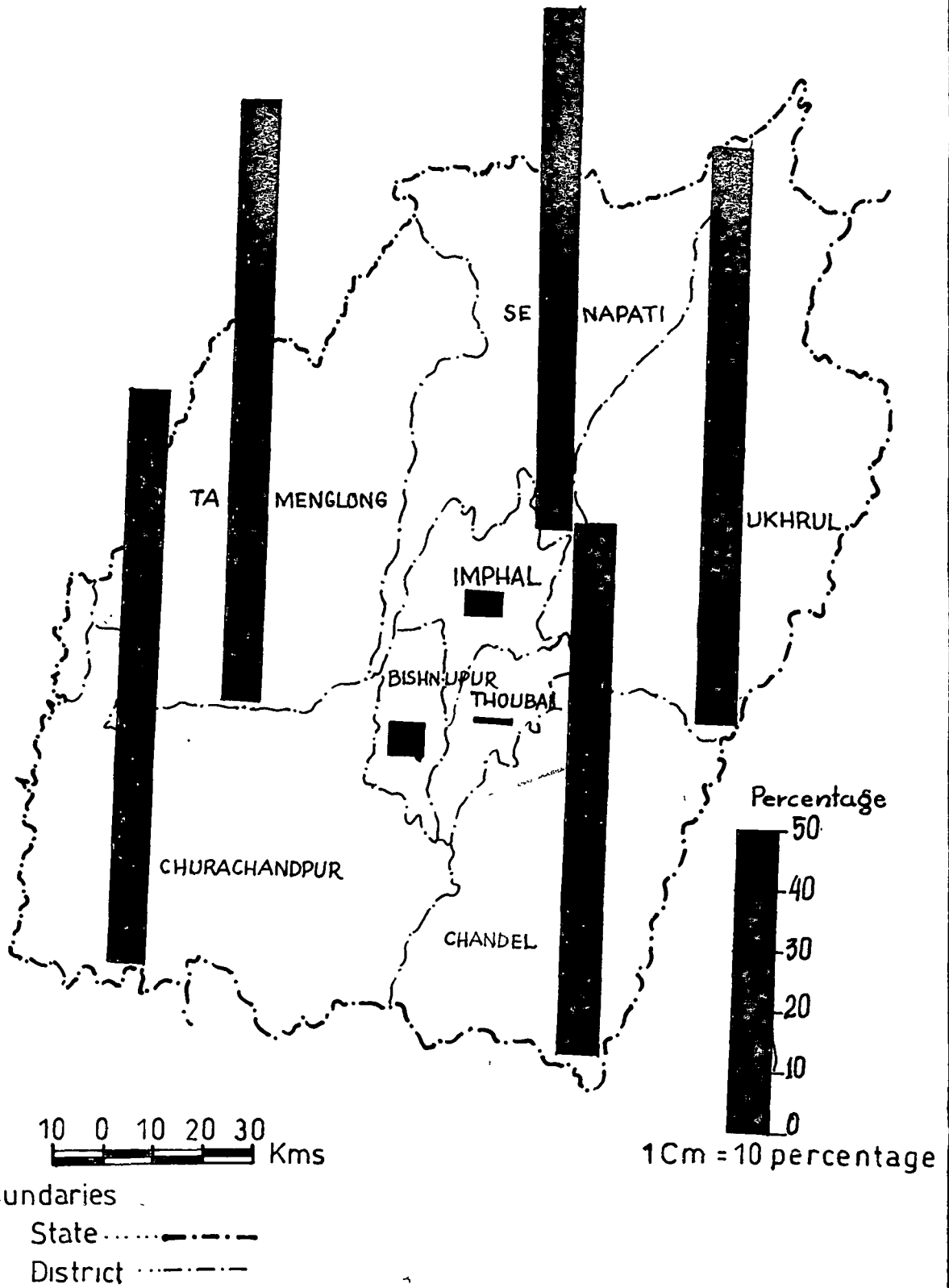


Fig.4.2

it rugged topography and far off from the state capital. The four-valley districts have however recorded minimal Christian percentage. This shows that Christianity has had only limited presence in the valley.

4.10 Concluding Statement

Based on the above study on the growth and spread of Christianity, the following broad conclusions may be made.

The Manipur missionary field till 1950 is considered as the mission period and the main efforts were directed towards the people inhabiting the hill areas. Christianity was first introduced and established to one major tribe before spreading into other tribes. Initially Christianity was mainly confined to the Tangkhul tribes inhabiting the Northeastern part of Manipur and then to the Kuki in the Northwestern hills of Manipur.

The spread of Christianity in the initial stage was rather slow. Contrary to popular belief the hill tribes accepted Christian faith not so much during the British period, but after India achieved Independence. In fact the period after 1951 has witnessed a phenomenal increase in the proportion of Christian population largely due to conversion of the tribal animists.

The method adopted by the missionary for spreading of the new faith was through education and health care. The spread of Christianity was through the converted students who have attended those schools run by the missionaries. The mission work especially through education proved to be the base for the future expansion of the mission work. The introduction of medical facilities too helped in discarding their old traditional belief and practices, thus encouraging the people to accept the new faith.

The mission field in the beginning was divided on geographical basis but after the Second World War and with the rise in national feeling, each ethnic group was then looking to form their own association leading to the establishment of tribe base association.

CHAPTER -V**INTER-TRIBAL DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSES TO CHRISTIANITY****5. 1 Introductory Statement**

Manipur hills, as mentioned earlier are the abode of 29 tribes, each tribal group having their main concentration in particular areas. So, Christianity was first introduced and established among the people of one major tribe before spreading. Thus, the growth of churches can be studied tribe wise for better understanding of the diffusion of Christianity among the tribal groups in Manipur.

5.2 Tangkhul Tribe

The Tangkhul Naga inhabiting the north-east hill area at Ukhrul was the first to embrace Christianity. The first Christians among the Tangkhuls were the 12 students of Ukhrul Mission School, and they were converted in 1901. Subsequently, in the same year, the first Baptist church was organized and christened as the Phungyo Baptist church. However, the progress was very slow among the Tangkhuls at first and setbacks were frequent. Even after the establishment of the Ukhrul Baptist church, the Tangkhul churches did not really begin to grow until after 1920.

5.2.1 Causes of slow diffusion among the Tangkhul Tribe

The task of proselytizing among the animist Tangkhuls was not an easy task. They were content with their customs and belief including worship of gods and spirits. The reasons for the slow diffusion of Christian were not far to seek. Firstly, they were superstitious and believed that evangelism work of the missionary was the work of the evil spirit rather than a true religion. Secondly, they considered the need to give up drinking of wine, the worship of

spirits as an encroachment on their time honoured customs and attack upon their religion. As a result, the custodian of the old ways to the new converts followed serious persecution. Some convert were beaten, some were fine and some were chased out of the villages. More over, the government supported the chiefs' who opposed the establishment of churches in their villages. Some converts in some villages were prevented from leaving their villages to establish new villages and in some villages the converts were chased out. The first convert of Kachai village, late S Shangyam was driven out from the village in 1925 and could not be permitted till 1931¹³²

Another reason for the slow diffusion of the gospel was that the early converts had reverted to their traditional faith after sometime. The obvious reason for this reversion was their inability to keep pace with Christian laws which were new to them and their inability to keep away from the village functions. The mission has a setback in 1908, when Pettigrew in trying to discipline the new converts had resulted into unprecedented clash when he forbade the Christian to participate in the village festival. It is a ceremony for sending off the soul of dead involving worship of the spirit. He therefore drew up a list of rules that Christian was expected to follow. Most refused to accepted these rules. With the result many of the converts relapsed to their original religion. Only seven stood firm with him and they organized a new church¹³³

¹³²R. R. Lolly, (1985) The Baptist church in Manipur, A Historical Survey of the mission strategies and development of the Baptist church in Manipur, North East India, 1894-1983, Imphal, p. 30

¹³³ Sangma, S. Milton, (1987) History of American Baptist Mission in the North east India (1894-1950), Vol 1. Mittal, Delhi, , p. 276

5.2.2 Spread of Christianity among the Tangkhul Tribe

With the introduction of education and health care, Pettigrew was able to convince the Tangkhul people in accelerating the breakdown of the traditional animistic world view. The students who were converted in school, when returned to their villages started propagating the new faith to their people. The number of churches increased in the following years, since the early converts were from different villages. Christianity, therefore, began to spread out in many villages through the converted students during the year 1901-1910.

By 1910, with the increase in the number of Christians, the mission work in Ukhrul area was divided into three sub-divisions, viz, Western, Northern, and Eastern sub-divisions.¹³⁴ For supervision of the respective sub-division, three superintendents were appointed; R. Ruichumhao for the Western circle; S. Kanrei for the Northern circle and T. Luikham for the Eastern circle. They met annually for formulating mutual concerns and programmes.¹³⁵ These measures helped in the growth of the Baptist churches in the Tangkhul area. When Pettigrew move out from Ukhrul, with the shifting of the mission centre at Kangpokpi, M.K. Shimray take charge of the Ukhrul mission station and was also appointed headmaster of the Ukhrul Mission School. The Ukhrul Mission was then directly supervised by the Tangkhul Naga Baptist Association.¹³⁶

There was a new spiritual awakening among the Tangkhuls in May 1921, led by two young men, Mikhsa Shimray, the Headmaster of the Ukhrul mission school and Thisan the pastor of the church, which resulted in a large number of conversions. About 295 individuals

¹³⁴ Jajo Champang, (1990) Christian Life in Tribal Context: In Manipur, Calcutta, , p. 33

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 49

¹³⁶ Jona & Mahangthei,(ed), (1986): Forty years in Manipur, Assam, Aaccount of the work of Rev. & Mrs. William Pettigrew, Imphal, , p. 20-21.

were baptized that year. The new spiritual movement that begins in 1921 was accelerated further in 1923 by the 'Manipur Revival' which reached the Tangkhuls area in the spring of 1923.¹³⁷ In 1923, 1018 people were converted and baptized. The great Revival not only stirred up the churches but stimulated extensive evangelistic activities.

Following the revival in the Tangkhul areas all the churches and schools had become self-supporting by 1925. Pastors and teachers were paid by the Christian communities themselves. By 1927, there were about 2000 Christians among the Tangkhuls.¹³⁸ The Tangkhuls were very active in evangelizing the neighbouring tribes after the revival. They sent people to spread the gospel in Mao areas as early as 1924. In 1932, two evangelists, T. Luikham and G. H. Maya went up to the extent of Somra Naga area in Myanmar.¹³⁹

During 1940's two important Christian organizations were formed. One was the Christian Endeavor Union (ECU) established in 1941 and the other was the Women's Society established in 1946 at the Associational meeting at Hundung Baptist church. But the Second World War hindered its normal activities as regular Christian work could not be maintained and many church buildings were destroyed. However, the challenge was met and there was a recovery of churches after the war was over. By 1950, the Tangkhul church with more than 10,000 members was the largest and strongest church by a single tribe in Manipur.

¹³⁷ Downs, S. Feredicks, (1971) *The Mighty works of God: A brief history of the council of Baptist churches in North East India-The mission period 1836-1950*, Guwahati, , p 156

¹³⁸ Downs, S. Feredicks, *Op cit*, p 161

¹³⁹ Luikham, T., (1948) *A short History of the Manipur Baptist Christian Jubilee*, Calcutta, , pp 23-25

5.3 The Kuki-Chin-Mizo Tribe

The Kuki-Chin-Mizo were the second major tribal group to respond favourably to Christianity in Manipur. The Kuki-Chin people were scattered all over the state. Since, they were not concentrated in one geographical area; the diffusion of Christianity among the Kuki-Chin came from two missions. They inhabited areas in the north and northwest which received Christian influences through William Pettigrew, a Baptist missionary. The Southern Hills areas received the Christians' faith from Watkins Roberts, an independent missionary. This division of Christian influence among the Kuki-Chin brought divisive elements among them; and has greatly hampered the Christian unity as well as fellowship among them.

5.3.1 The Pattern of Growth among the Kuki-Chin Tribe

The first church established among the Kuki-Chin was the Senvon church by Roberts and his associates in 1910. Lungpau Vaiphei and Thangkai Vaiphei, who accompanied Watkins Roberts in his historic tour of the Southern Manipur, are the first Christian among them, when they were converted on march 17, 1910. The diffusion of Christian faith among the Kuki-Chin of southern hills of Manipur was through the works of Roberts and the native missionaries- Savawma, Vanjika, and Taitea from the Lushei hills. The Christian population was steadily growing in a number of villages; and in 1913, the first Kuki-Chin Christian church was organized At Sanvon.¹⁴⁰ Watkin Roberts named the new mission field as "Thadou-Kukis

¹⁴⁰Vaiphei, Kim, *Op.cit.*, p 10

Pioneer Mission” which was later changed into North East India General Mission. From Savon, it spread to the surrounding villages inhabited by the Kuki-Chin Tribes, Viz, Hmar, Paite, Simte, Vaiphei, Gangte, Thadou, living in the Southern Hills (Churachandpur district).

The first Thadou-Kuki to become a Baptist Christian was Ngulhao Thomsong, a resident of Janing village in Nagaland. He was converted and baptized on January 20, 1908 at Kohima Mission School.¹⁴¹ He came to Manipur in 1910 and spent the rest of his life until he died in 1945. Through his initiative, the first Kuki Baptist Church was established at Tujangvaichong in 1916. He is said to have converted 85 persons in this village including the chief and 70 others from the neighbouring villages. During the First World War, he volunteered to serve in France as a member of the Labour corps. After his return to Manipur in 1919, he served as a voluntary evangelist among the Thadou and the Anals in the Sadar areas. It was said that during his three years with the Anals, 334 persons were converted to Christian. After 1926, Ngulhao Thomsong largely devoted his time towards literary work. He was mainly responsible for the translation of a Thadou-Kukis Primer, a hymnal and the New Testament.¹⁴²

The early Kuki-Chin Christians can be traced back at Ukhrul mission school, when nine Kuki students were baptized in 1912. Among them, the names of four are Known-Teba Kilong, Longkhobel Kilong, Helkhup and Jamkithang.¹⁴³ In the next few years, many more Kuki-Chin students were converted and they began to spread the gospel in their villages after their schooling. Some of them had faced stiff opposition from their community. In fact, the diffusion of Christianity among the Kuki-Chin made little progress before the Kuki Rising.

One significant development in the second decade of the 20th century, among the Kuki-Chin was that the local people started spreading the Gospel to their own people. They became

¹⁴¹ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, p. 64

¹⁴² Downs F.S., *Op.cit.*, p. 169

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.168

the pioneer workers, who spearheaded the new mission movement among the different Kuki-Chin tribes. For example, Longkhobel work among the Koms, Anals, and Thadous in the Sadar Hills area.

The spread of Christianity among the Kuki-Chin were more favourable than the Tangkhul areas as the social set up of the Kuki-Chin is different from the Nagas. On a whole, the Kuki-Chin were more open-minded and susceptible to the teaching of Christianity than the Nagas. They have nothing like the number of sacrificial feast and carousals that the Nagas have. The fact that the Thadous had a chief in each village with absolute authority was a great advantage compared to the democratic Nagas.¹⁴⁴ There were cases in which a village chieftain approved of the Christian religion, subsequently, the whole village were converted and baptized in a day. By 1920, the Kuki Christians were numbered as many as 500.¹⁴⁵

5.3.2 Causes of Slow Growth of Church among the Kuki-Chin

The evangelistic work among the Kuki-Chin during the second decade of the 20th century was hampered by the restriction of the missionary movements and the Kuki rising (1917-1919). They occupied the remote hills and lived a peaceful and contained life under their own custom and tradition. The extension of the British administration in the hill areas was regarded as an intrusion to their territory and extensive preparation had been undergoing, prior to the launching offensives against the British. Knowledge of manufacturing flintlocks enabled them to stock in thousands for use in any eventually. From 1907 to 1919, the British collected from the Kukis 1,195 guns. The immediate cause of the Rising was the order of the Raja to enlist the Kukis by force if necessary for the Labours Corps that was being raised to help the war effort. The people thus enlisted were to be sent to France. The Kukis refused enlistment

¹⁴⁴ Sangma, Milton S., *Op.cit.*, p.278

¹⁴⁵ Vaiphei P. S., (1986) :Church growth Among the Hill Tribes in Manipur North east India, Mrs. Heniang Vaiphei, Imphal, p.17

stating that it was not their war and they had no intention of co-operating with an administration that had treated them unjustly. They also further pointed out that as a custom, they were no under obligation to provide young men to serve a government that had not conquered them first in the battle.¹⁴⁶

The Kuki Rising was headed by the chief of Aisan, who is the pipa or head of all Thadou-Kukis; chief of Longja in the west and the chief of Chahsat village in the east.¹⁴⁷ In the first week of March 1917, Chengjapao chief of Aisan, held a gathering of various chiefs to deliberate on the impending war. The Kuki Rising, the event was a culmination of ongoing opposition to colonialism, triggered by the Labour Corps drive in 1917, sustained for nearly three years. It was finally put down in 1919. After the Rising was suppressed, many people turned to Christianity. The suppression of the rising was taken more than a defeat at arms by the people. In course of time, it also proved to be defeat of the old ways of life and so many Kukis turned to Christianity in large numbers for the fact that Christianity was their conqueror religion. Besides, by this time, the mission centre had been moved from Ukhrul to Kangpokpi had been favourably stimulating the Kukis.

Like in the Tangkhuls area, when the Christian movement began to grow, the non-Christian Kukis also started persecuting the Christian. There are also two other events, which disrupted the diffusion of Christianity to the Kukis. One was the 1924 school strike at Kangpokpi and other was the resignation of Dr. Crozier in 1932. The mission school at Kangpokpi had to be closed down for a year in 1924, when the student went on strike. The reason for the strike was that the students, mostly Kukis were refused recommendation to schools outside Manipur. This reaction by the missionaries created a greater sense of ill feeling

¹⁴⁶ . Haokip, S, Dr..The Kuki Rising, Seminar paper, Shillong, Also published in Ahsijolneng Monthly Journal of KSO, June-July 2003 Issue, 2003, p.1

¹⁴⁷ Vaiphei P. S., *Op.cit.*, p. 55

and generated communal tension. The immediate cause however was the resentment of the students against their teachers treating them in a childish way although most of them were quite older than their teacher, who was a Meithei's¹⁴⁸. This incident had a negative impact and affected the progress of the Christianity in general and the Kukis in particular.

Another reason was Dr. G. G. Crozier resigned in 1932. Earlier the state durbar refused to permit entry to Dr. Crozier as more missionaries were not allowed to work in the state. To win their confidence, Dr. Crozier volunteered himself as medical officer in the Kukis Punitive measures from 1918-1919. In consideration of the contributions he made during the war, the state government granted him permission to work in Manipur.¹⁴⁹ After his arrival, it was thought that the missionaries –Pettigrew and Dr. Crozier will be able to accelerate the growth and spread of Christianity. This did not happen due to their personal antagonism. Consequently, Manipur missionary field was divided into two areas of influence. Dr. Crozier worked mainly among the Kukis where as Pettigrew worked among the Nagas. A party spirit within the church eventually developed and encouraged a tribal spirit. They had their own personal antagonism and rivalries which often reflected in their behaviour towards others. The resignation of Dr. Crozier thus, came to be interpreted as the victory of anti-Kukis forces within the church. The close association of Crozier with the Kukis and his resignation made it a traumatic experience for the Kukis. They felt that his successors favoured the Nagas. It was one of the major factors leading to the formation of a separate association after the Second World War.

5.3.3 Evangelistic Work among the Kuki-Chin

The permission granted to evangelize the entire region of the state in 1928 by the state Durbar was used by the local church leaders to their advantage. The opening of the area

¹⁴⁸ Downs F. S., *Op.cit.*, p 170

¹⁴⁹ Vaiphei, Kim, *Op cit.*, p 23

accelerated the growth of Christianity. Following the Manipur Revival the Kuki churches became very active in evangelistic work among their own tribal group and among some of the Naga tribes. Dr. Croziers was also responsible for the growth of Christianity among the Kuki. By 1931, there were about 900 baptized members¹⁵⁰ and 2478 NEIGM members¹⁵¹ among the Kuki.

The Kuki evangelists played a significant role in the establishment of the Kuki church and the spread of the gospel among their people as well as the Zeliangrong Naga. The Kuki-Chin church really began to grow only in the late forties of the 20th century. Another reason for the slow diffusion of Christian faith among them apart from their relationship with other groups was that the Kuki-Chin churches also had internal problems. One of the most serious of these was misunderstanding among the various Kuki-Chin tribes. Besides, the Kuki-Chin were scattered in the whole areas of the state, it was difficult to build a strong church organization with adequate leadership. As mention earlier, with the influence of two missions denomination in the beginning, the divisive elements among them still exists and hits the Kuki-Chin worst. By 1950, their numbered increased to 4500 baptized members¹⁵² and 20,000 NEIGM¹⁵³ members. Despite all their problems and difficulties, the Kuki-Chin became one of the major Christian groups by 1950.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56

¹⁵¹ Ansari S. A., *Op.cit.*, p. 156

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 56

¹⁵³ Vaiphei, Th Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, p. 129

5.4 The Pattern of Church Growth Among the Zeliangrong Tribes

The Zeliangrong Nagas inhabiting the north western hills (Tamenglong district) was the third major group that responded to Christianity in Manipur. Zeliangrong is the composite name of the Rongmeis, the Zemeis and the Liangmeis. The first convert among the Zeliangrong was a Rongmeis tribe named Mr. K. Namrijinang of Khuikiu village, then serving in the Raja band. He was commonly called Maipak. He and his wife embrace Christianity in 1914 and were baptized on December 5, 1915 by missionary U.M.Fox at Imphal.¹⁵⁴ Later, when he came in contact with the Kukis evangelists working in the western hills, the interest he had was revived. He finally decided to become a full time evangelist and resigned from his service as a band master in 1919. He could not however, take up this task till the Kuki Rising was over. During this period through his ministry, Jinlakpu of Khuikiu village was converted and baptized in 1920 by Pastor Helkhup.¹⁵⁵ Later through him about ten families including his own family became Christians in his own village i.e. Khuikiu village. Within two years the number of Christians families increase to twenty.¹⁵⁶

In 1922, Maipak himself went to khuikiu village form the first Christian group. Like other areas, with the increase of Christian converts, the oppositions to them also started mounting from non-Christian. The elders of Khuikiu village in collusion with the SDO of Tamenglong, gave an order to the Christians to leave the village within a week. Additionally, they also imposed a fine of Rs. 400/- on them. At this juncture Pettigrew intervened with the state authorities and secured permission for the Christians to settle on a new site about a quarter of a mile from their old village and named it Sempang. On September 9, 1923, Pastor Helkhup,

¹⁵⁴ Downs F.S., *Op.cit.*, p. 173

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175

¹⁵⁶ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, p. 170

in charge of the North-west Area organised a church at Sempang, the first church of the Zeliangrong. Two churches were organized, one in 1924 at Sangrungpang and the other at Taobam in 1926.¹⁵⁷ Tamenglong church was organized in 1930 in the midst of strong opposition. Namrijinang was responsible for the establishment of the Tamenglong Baptist church.

The New church was full of fire for Christian ministry and sent Latdi and Hulenang to neighbouring villages. Gradually their labour bore fruits and so, small but faithful churches were started at chingkhonglong and Bourong Namthan. Mr. Pakho Singsit from Kuki tribe came to Sempang village to be the Pastor in August 1923 and also assumed the responsibility of secretary of the church on September 26, 1923 from Pastor Helkhup who became the field-in-charge.

Namrijinang was responsible for the establishment of the Tamenglong Baptist church. Tamenglong, was one of the largest village of the Zeliangrong people. Initially when he came to the village he was not allowed to enter the village for preaching. The village elders ordered him to be stoned to death. Fortunately he managed to escape. Defying the order, he stood outside the village singing, preaching and reading from the Bible. In this way he was able to inspire two youngmen Hurong and Ngandiang and baptized them. Later, they were driven out from their village. In some cases like Tamenglong church which was established were dismantled the building by the then S.D.O on the strength of the complaints of the village.¹⁵⁸

5.4.1 Causes for slow growth among the Zeliangrong Tribes

There were many factors for the slow growth of Christianity among the Zeliangrong. The most serious opposition to Christianity came from Jadonang Gaidiului cult known as

¹⁵⁷ Downs F.S. *Op.cit.*, p. 175

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71

Kampai cult or the Zeliangong Raj movement, which originated in the late 1920's. The Kampai cult activities were directed against the alien administration that threatens their old way of life. The most active period of this cult was during 1929 to 1931. This cult or movement was directed towards Christians, the Kukis and the government. Taking advantage of the general belief of the Zeliangrong people that one-day a Naga king would arise and set them free from the whites. Jadonang stood up and proclaimed that he was the long awaited king. The movement became forceful soon many followers from the Zeliangrong tribe of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland accepted him and paid tributes to him.¹⁵⁹ Claiming mysterious powers Jodanang sought to lead the Zeliangrong in order to exterminate those who wielded power over the people with a view to himself thereafter to become their supreme ruler. After a period of violent rebellion, during which many innocent lives were lost, he was arrested and executed in August 29, 1931.

5.4.2 Spread of Christianity among the Zeliangrong Tribes

In the midst of strong opposition from non-Christians yet Christianity continued to grow. After 1928, the Zeliangrong churches were included within the Northwest Association with the Kukis of the area. But the Association was divided into Nagas and Kukis elements thus; the Kukis formed a separated association in 1943, leaving the Zeliangrong alone to the North West Christian Association.¹⁶⁰ During the time of Manipur Revival and immediately after there was close co-operation between the Zelingrongs and the Kukis in the evangelization of the Northwest areas. This combined efforts led to the establishment of the Zeliangrong churches in the Northern and Eastern region of the area. The Western area was the last and most difficult region to evangelize due to its relative isolation. In 1948 the Zeliangrong held its

¹⁵⁹ Downs F. S., *Op.cit.*, pp. 178-179

¹⁶⁰ Singh, K.M., (1991): *History of Christian Mission in Manipur & Other Neighbouring State*, Mittal, New Delhi, p. 364

first church conference at Khongjaron village in 1948. By 1950, there were about 1000 Zeliangrong Christians in Manipur.¹⁶¹

5.5 The Mao Naga

The Mao Nagas inhabiting the Northern part of Manipur was the fourth major group to embrace Christianity in Manipur. Pettigrew came to the Maos as early as 1895 to establish a mission center but was unsuccessful.¹⁶² In fact, the Mao owes much to the Tangkhuls Christian in bringing Christianity to them. Evangelistic activity among the Mao area begins after 1923, following the 'Manipur Revival', The Tangkhul evangelists began to visit their area.

The first Christian converts among the Mao tribe were the three students studying at Kohima mission school who gave up their studies and began to actively participate in propagating what they had learned at Kohima. At this juncture, the Tangkhuls missionaries started evangelistic work in the Mao area following the Manipur Revival. As a result several young Maos, especially from Pudunamei and Punanamei village went to Somdal villages, to study in the mission school. Consequently, they were converted during their studies. So, on their return, they spread the Gospel among their own people. These students after returning home as Christians formed a small nucleus Christian community and organized the first Mao Baptist Church at Punanamei village in 1927.¹⁶³ A second Mao Baptist church followed at Pudunamei in 1930, through the efforts of some students who were converted at the Somdal Mission School.¹⁶⁴ More over, the Kholi Puni who was instrumental in the establishment of Punanamei was ordained as the evangelist in 1930 and Mihru Lorho in 1931 greatly influence

¹⁶¹ Lolly, R.R., *Op.cit.*, p. 65

¹⁶² Downs, F.S., *Ibid.*, p. 180

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*,

¹⁶⁴ Vaiphei, P.S., *Op.cit.*, p.63

the progress of Christianity among the Mao areas inspite of strong opposition from the non-christian.¹⁶⁵

5.5.1 Causes of Slow Growth among the Mao

There are some basic reasons why the advent of Christianity is rather late her unlike other areas in Manipur. Rev. K. Hepuni, one of the outstanding leaders of Mao Naga Baptist association summed up as follows. a) The wild and stiff-necked attitude of the people towards Christianity and their pride of their own religion and culture led to form an antagonistic view about Christianity. b) The second reason is the unwillingness of the Government to place this hilly mountainous region on equal footing with other tribal inhabited areas of Manipur so far as the freedom to proselytize by the missionaries concern. The Mao area was strategically important to the government. It was through this area that communication was maintained with Kohima. For this reason, it was under the direct administration of the Darbar and much care was taken to prevent any disturbance along this route. Missionaries were strictly prohibited from entering the area and evangelistic activity was discouraged.¹⁶⁶

The first reason was well demonstrated, when Pettigrew following Major Maxwell's the then political Agent refusal to continue his work at Imphal came to Mao area looking for a suitable place to establish a mission center. He was not only refused permission to buy a plot of land from one Mr. Sani Kapani a government interpreter, but was told by the 16 *Khulakpas* (chief) to quit their area soon and never to return for spreading such kind of new religious order.¹⁶⁷ On the other occasion in 1922-1923 at Purul village when the Tangkhul Christians visited the village to preach Christianity, they were beaten and chased out of the village. When

¹⁶⁵ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, p. 79

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77

¹⁶⁷ Downs, S. F. *Op.cit.*, p. 77

the matter was brought to the political Agent, Mr. Gimson, they were fined by the court thirty rupees because of encroaching upon their religious practice.¹⁶⁸

5.5.2 Evangelistic Work among the Mao

As in other areas, the Mao students who attended the mission school were active in evangelizing among their own people. When the Christian movement began to grow the non-Christian Mao also started persecuting the Christians. The chief Aru Shou and the elders attacked the Christians village and sacked all the buildings materials and scattered over a mile along the side of the village's path. Such incidents strengthened the determination of the Christians to construct even better building than originally planed. The materials used were from a large tree and some rocks that were regarded as haunted by the villagers. More over, the most serious bond of contention between Christians and non-Christians aroused mainly of the non-Christian who insisted not to violate some days that had been strictly observed by the people as scared one. On the other hand, the Christians used these days for preaching and for their fellowship. At this disregard of their scared days, the non-Christians even sometime brought the matter to the law court to reprimand and punish the Christians, which was unheard in other areas. When the matter went into the hand of Government, the violation of the traditional practices of the Mao Nagas were liable to punishment, further allowed Christians to continue on conditions that they would also observe the non-Christian practices. As a matter of fact, it provided only a room for greater conflagration between the parties. The fearlessness and determination of the Christian in spite of opposition greatly impressed the entire community. Under this order, the matter continued up to 1938, where after Christians were no more bound to observe such days.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, p. 78

¹⁶⁹ Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi, *Op.cit.*, pp. 79-80

As mentioned above it has been seen that the spread of Christianity in Mao area was tooth and nail opposed by the village's chiefs and the non-Christian community. In spite of these setbacks Christianity continued to grow by 1950 and there were over 1600 Mao Christians¹⁷⁰. Initially, the Maos were within the Sadar Association. In 1946, a separate Manipur North Sadar Association was formed and its first conference was held at Pudunamei¹⁷¹. In 1956, the Manipur Naga Sadar Association was renamed as Manipur North Nagas Baptist Association and come to include Maos, Marams and Poumeis tribes. The Association was officially recognized by Manipur Convention in October 12, 1956, at Kangpokpi¹⁷². The church growth became quite spectacular after the Second World War. During the two decades following the war 46 local churches were established and there were about 1411 baptized church members. Thus, the Manipur North Nagas Baptist Association became one of the leading Associations under Manipur Baptist Convention in 1949 without any outside assistance.

Table 5 1 Percentage of Christian Population among the Hill Tribes-1931-81

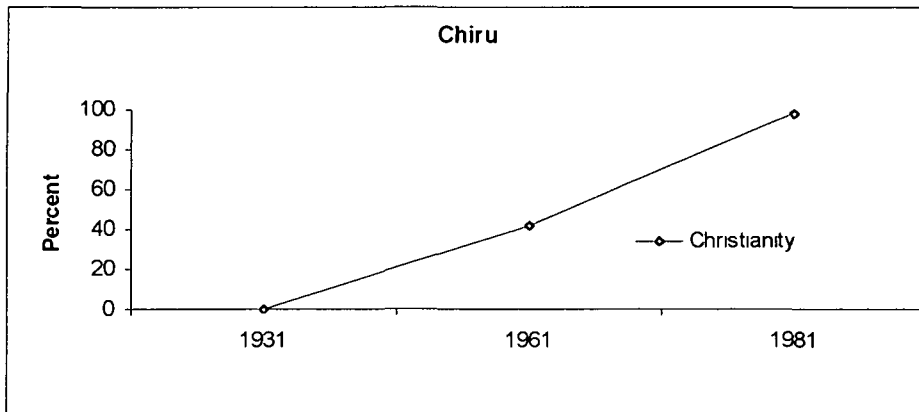
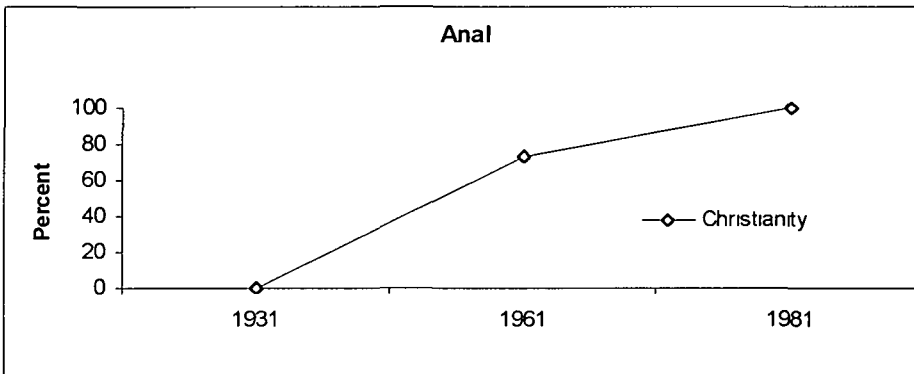
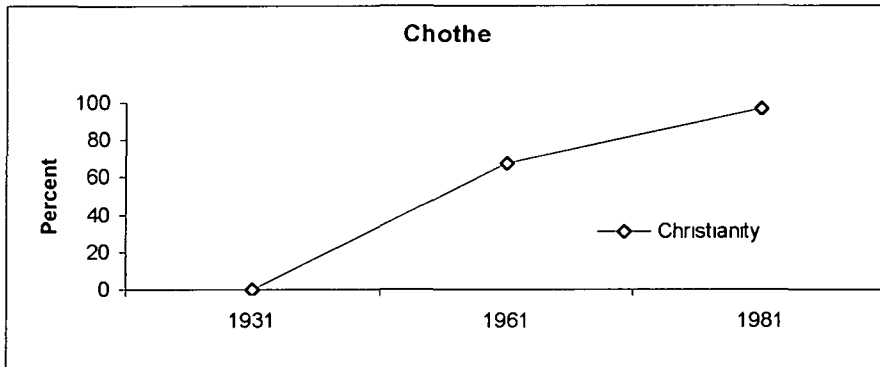
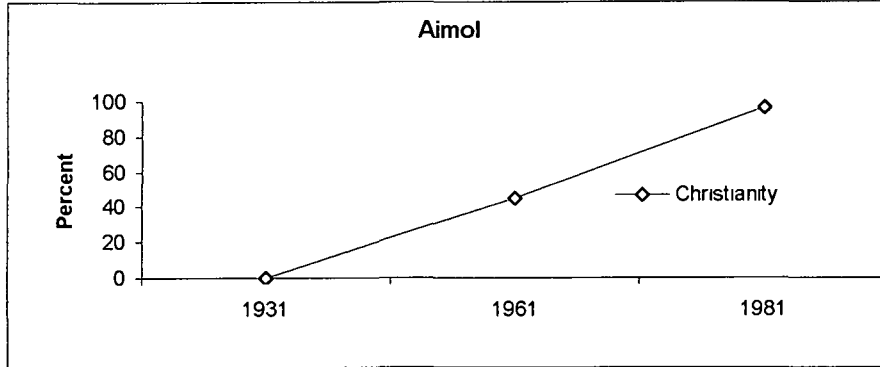
| Years | 1931 | 1961 | 1981 | Years | 1931 | 1961 | 1981 |
|----------------|------|-----------|-----------|----------------|------|-----------|-----------|
| Tribe/Religion | | Christian | Christian | Tribe/Religion | 0 00 | Christian | Christian |
| Aimol | 0 00 | 45 37 | 99 51 | Lamgang | 0 00 | 63 08 | 98 32 |
| Anal | 0 00 | 73 40 | 99 85 | Any Mizo | 0 00 | 99 78 | 99 77 |
| Angami | 0 00 | 55 22 | 99 50 | Maram | 0 00 | 23 78 | 99 33 |
| Chothe | 0 00 | 67 15 | 96 82 | Maring | 0 00 | 12 55 | 65 77 |
| Chiru | 0 00 | 42 40 | 98 29 | Mao | 0 00 | 22 02 | 84 85 |
| Gangte | 0 00 | 87 83 | 99 51 | Pate | 0 00 | 85 69 | 92 07 |
| Hmar | 0 00 | 99 21 | 99 87 | Purum | 0 00 | 8 54 | 99 44 |
| Kabui | 0 00 | 35 52 | 64 44 | Ralte | 0 00 | 100 | 63 72 |
| Koirao | 0 00 | 97 04 | 99 15 | Tangkhul | 0 00 | 85 03 | 100 |
| Koireng | 0 00 | 3 77 | 100 | Thadou | 0 00 | 58 72 | 100 |
| Kom | 0 00 | 64 03 | 88 41 | Vaiphei | 0 00 | 83 53 | 99 19 |

¹⁷⁰ Jajo, Champang, *Op cit*, p 43

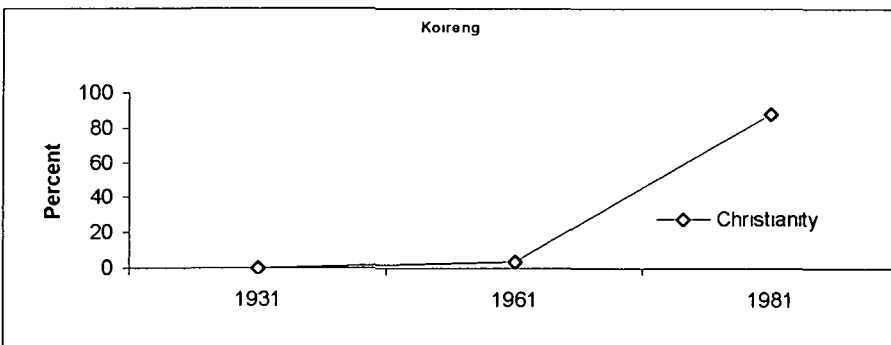
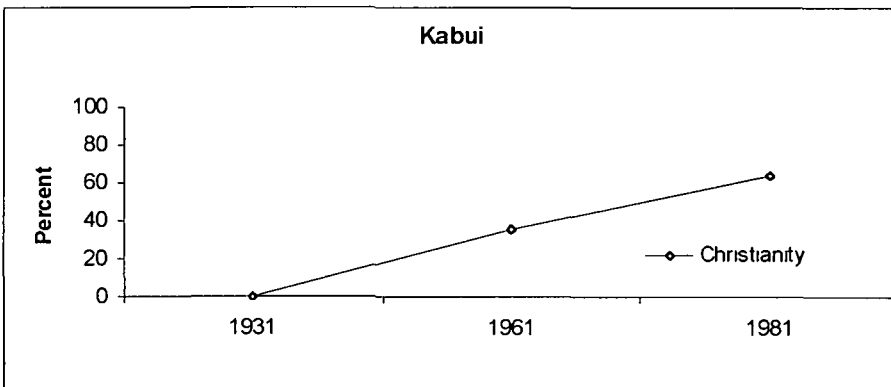
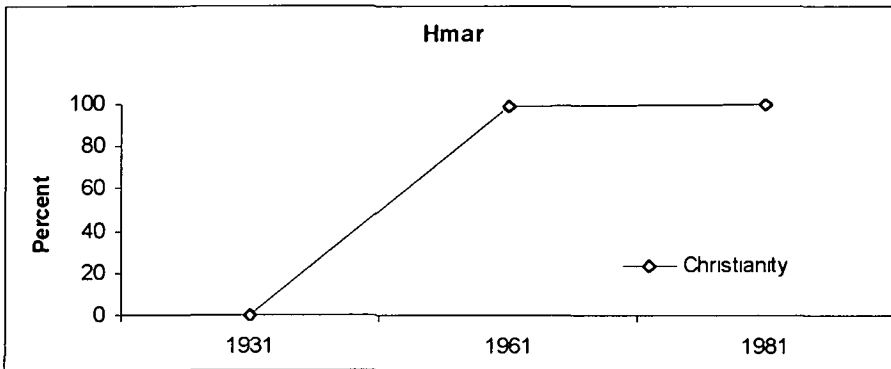
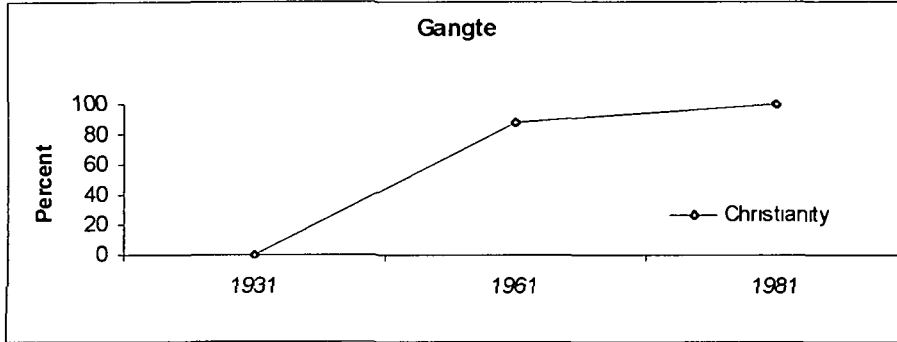
¹⁷¹ Downs, F S, *Op cit*, p 182

¹⁷² Vaiphei, P S, *Op cit*, p 63

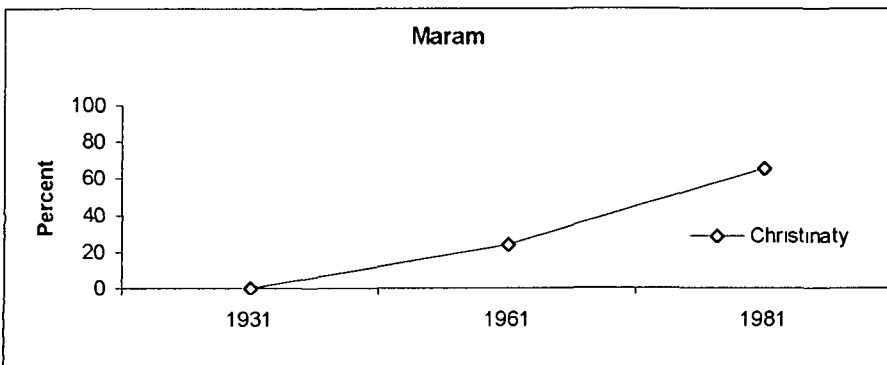
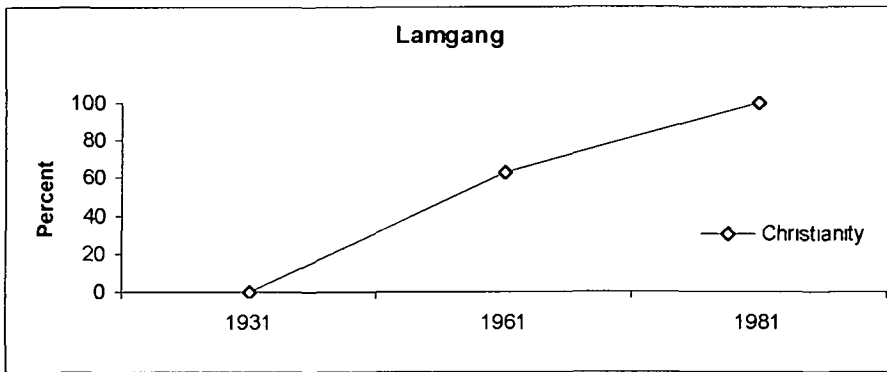
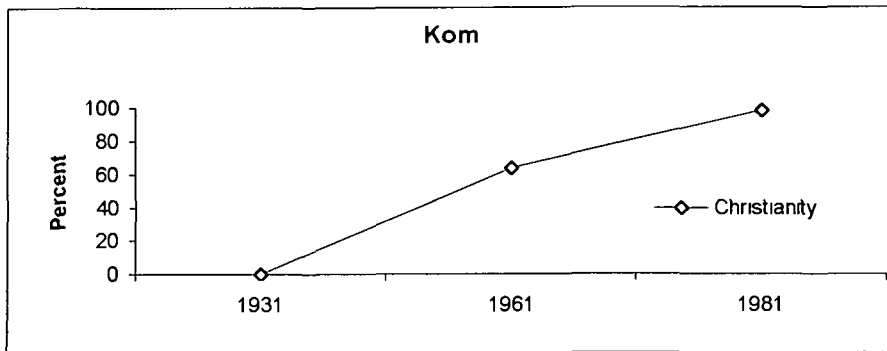
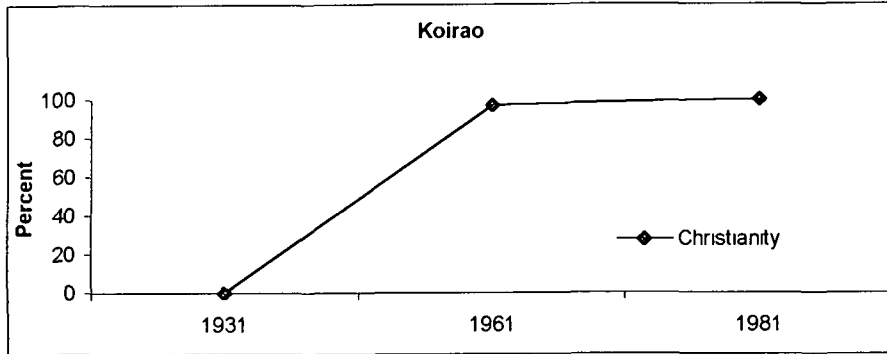
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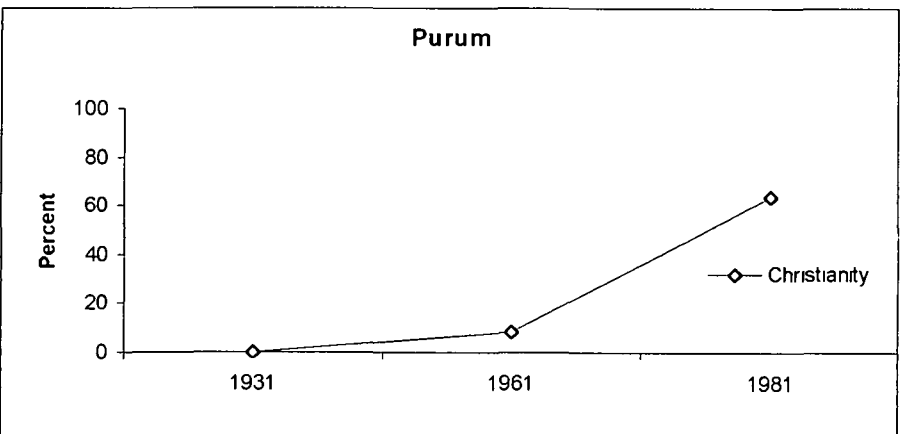
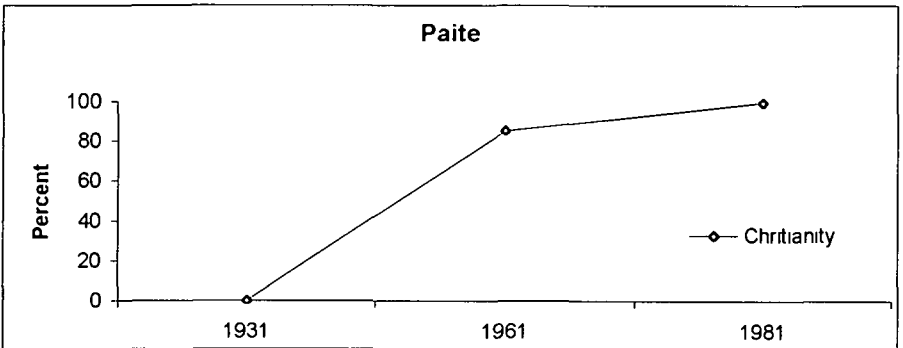
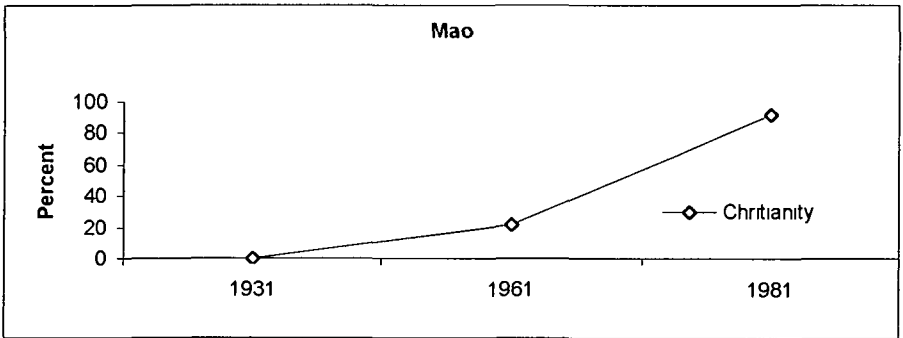
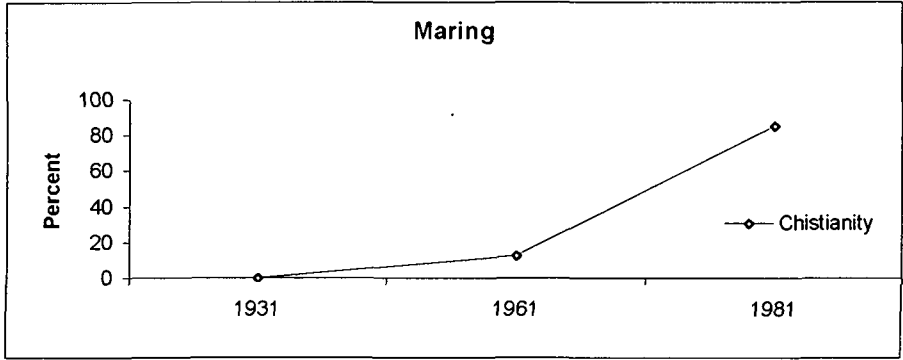
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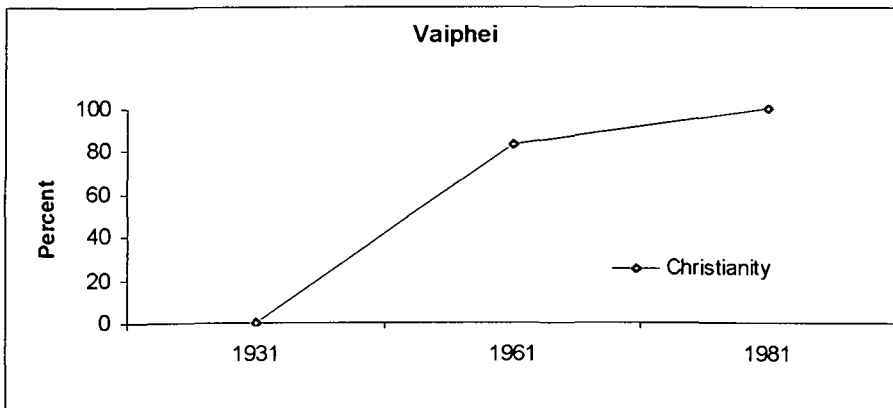
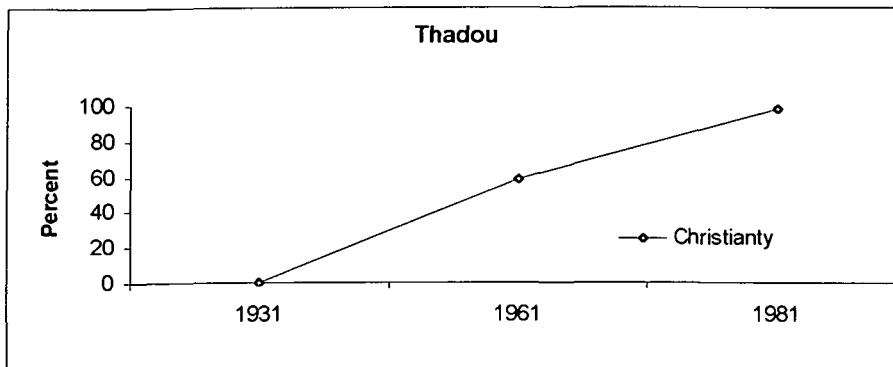
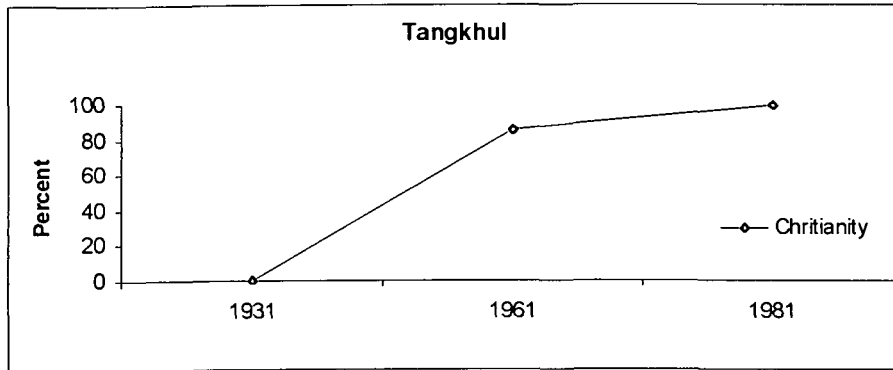


Table 5.1 and figures 5.1a-5.1e reveal that the spread of Christianity was spectacular among the Gangtes, Paites, Tangkhuls and Vaipheis during the same period where 80-90 per cent people had accepted the faith. All these groups except the Tangkhuls are located in close proximity to the Hmars in the South-Western part. The Thangkhuls are however located in the North-East. The Anals, Chothes, Koms, Lamgangs and Thadous were not very enthusiastic in

this phase to embrace Christianity. Response to Christian faith was muted among Aimols, Chirus, Kabuis, Maos and Marams tribal communities where the resistance to Christianity was more. The highest resistance to Christianity was found among Marings, Purums and Koirengs communities. Most of the communities which provided resistance to Christianity are close to the Valley.

However, by the year 1981, all the tribal communities had accepted Christian faith irrespective of their location. The only two communities which still retained its animist character are Kabuis and Purums, the former located close to Kachar plains and the latter close to the Manipur valley. Thus, it is clear that inter tribal differences in acceptance of the Christian faith had minimized after 1961 and that a great uniformity had come in the religious composition of the tribal population. Interestingly, the tribes, in spite of differences in the degree of their acceptance of Christian faith had resisted intrusion of any other religion including that of Hinduism which was dominant in the plains.

5.6. Concluding Statement

The Tangkhul inhabiting the Northeastern hill areas were the first to receive Christianity. The missionary through imparting education and medical care won the confidence of the people and they began to respond favorably. The spread of Christianity was through the student converts. The spread was slow in the beginning. The Manipur Revival in 1923 stimulated extensive evangelistic work among the Tangkhuls and since then they became an active Christians. The Kuki-Chin were the second major tribe to respond to Christianity. Since the Kuki-Chin were scattered all over the state, Christianity came to them from two missions. The spread of Christianity among the Kuki was impeded by the Kuki Rising, School strike in 1924.

The Zeliangrong inhabiting the Western Hills of Manipur were the third tribal group to receive Christianity. The spread of Christianity was impeded by the Kampai Cult considered as the custodian of the old way of life. The Mao Naga inhabiting the Northern part of Manipur were the fourth major group to embrace Christianity. The late advent of Christianity among Mao was due to the antagonistic view about Christianity and the government prohibition for evangelistic activity in the areas.

Inter-tribal differences in acceptance of the Christian faith had minimized after 1961 and that a great uniformity had come in the religious composition of the tribal population. Interestingly, the tribes, in spite of differences in the degree of their acceptance of Christian faith, had resisted intrusion of any other religion including that of Hinduism which was dominant in the plains.

CHAPTER –VI**IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE TRIBAL SOCIETY****6.1 Introductory Statement**

The advent of Christianity brought forth far-reaching effects on the tribal society. The Christian missionaries, apart from evangelism introduced western education and modern medicine to the tribal society. These therefore, acted as the forces of social change among the tribal people. The missionary contribution in the field of education, health care and society besides spreading Christianity is highly commendable. In both the fields, pioneering works were taken up by the missionary with the help of government. Thus, the adoption of new religion led to the inculcation of new outlook, new cultural values, and eliminations of their traditional animistic belief and embedded them to a new concept in their attitude to life. We briefly analyse their contributions in education and health standard of the people as the handmaid of social change among the hill tribes of Manipur.

6.2 Impact on Education

Education always has been an integral part of missionary movements in the areas of teaching and development of churches. The main emphasis of imparting education by the missionary was to propagate evangelism, as they considered education in turn could illuminate the individual mind and arouse conviction in the truth of the Gospel. For them imparting a good education become life-goal, just as was their missionary zeal for preaching the Gospel. Thus, the pioneering effort to develop the tribal of Manipur had started with the introduction of education with the arrival of Christian missionary in the interior part of the hill areas in the state.

The first school to come up in the tribal area was at Ukhrul in February 1897. It was established by William Pettigrew, the first Christian missionary in Manipur, after he was not allowed to work among the Hindu Meiteis in the valley. However, due to numerous problems like poverty, communications, traditional beliefs and rituals etc. Pettigrew had a difficult task in getting students despite the government support.

In the beginning the Tangkhul Naga were however superstitious and hence did not respond favourably. They had a belief that God had once given wisdom to them like other communities but their original script which was supposed to have been written on animal hides had been taken away by a dog which in consequence led to their mass illiteracy. Thus, they believed that their chances of learning have been lost eternally. So suspicion was high on the missionary activities. These efforts would not have materialized without the timely intervention of the political agent Maxwell who compelled the Ukhrul and Hundung chiefs to send their boys to the school. Twenty boys were sent at the beginning followed by another 10 boys which were much against their wishes.

The early students at the Ukhrul mission school were tardy in showing up and attended school anytime they felt like. They came to school with heavy brass bangles wearing them on both their waists and carrying heavy brass bangles and carrying dangerous weapons with them. The behaviour of the students was wild, some sat quietly, some lay on the benches, some wrestled and some sang. With great patience and care Pettigrew could induce them to learning. Very often he used to distribute sweets, pictures, clothing's and many other curious articles to persuades them to proper behaviour.¹⁷³ The mission school sprang up from love and compassion. Pettigrew in spite of the above mentioned problem reasoned with the tribal leaders

¹⁷³ Singh, K. M., *Op.cit.*, p-87

and won some of them over by persuasion and patience. Hesitant and suspicious, initially the parents in particular and the people in general, began to realize the value of elementary education. By the time Pettigrew took their first furlough in 1903, the first batch students were able to assist the teacher in taking class and many of them volunteered to propagate Christianity to their village and the people.

The state authorities realizing the importance of his work had already appointed him as Honorary Inspector of Schools in 1895. Pettigrew with the help of the political Agent William J. Shakespeare evolved an educational scheme to spread education to cover as many as possible. According to the scheme, the village schools were re-organized on a three years basis in about a dozen villages in the Tangkhul areas. Besides, by providing scholarships to the deserving students, he motivated them to attend the school regularly with full parental support. The scheme did work and bore good results; the schools opened every third year and fourth years continued until 1915. The appreciation of the people increased and the good impression on the Christian gained as a result of this vigorous educational policy. Thus, people from Ukhrul and surrounding villages began to make requirement for more school to be established in their respective areas. The subsequent schools established in different villages were not all mission schools but were Government or Government aided schools.¹⁷⁴ The light of education began to burn and a ray of hope appeared in the first decade of the present century. In the second decade it spread to the Kuki in the western Hills and Sadar areas much later than the Tangkhul. Education started among the Kuki when Teba Kilong, Longkhobel, Helkhup and Jamkithang joined the Ukhrul School in 1909. Through them Christianity as well as education spread to other areas in the state.

¹⁷⁴ Vaiphei, Th Lamboi, *Advent of Christian Mission and Its Impact on the Hill-Tribes of Manipur*, Imphal, 1997, p-173

The transfer of Headquarter from Ukhrul to Kangpokpi in 1919 helped the educational expansion into other areas to great extent as it was situated in a strategic location situated on the Imphal-Dimapur road. It was easier for the mission to operate among the Kukis and Zeliangrongs in the Western hills of Manipur. However, even though the government sanctioned facilities for primary education, until 1933, the education scheme could not be implemented in the Tamenglong district. It was only after the Sempang church conference that steps were taken for the establishment of school. Thereafter, schools were established at Longchin, Maranjing and Haochong.¹⁷⁵

In Manipur south district, the establishment of Thadou-Kukiss pioneer Mission at Senvon to evangelize proved to be the beginning of education. In 1910, Savawma, Vanzika and Thangchingpuia from the Lushai hills were sent by the new mission to start the ministry of the mission and subsequently primary schools were established at Tinsoung, Hanship, Kailam, Maite and Khopuibung during the years followed their coming. The condition was very poor with no school facilities either from the mission and the government at the beginning. The primary mission school started by the mission moved to any place where the evangelist was transferred by the mission. Students who wanted further studies had to proceed to other places like Lakhipur, Aizawl, etc. However, with the arrival of Missionary Paul Rostad and his wife Ella Rostad and the transfer of NEIGM missions headquarter from Lakhipur to Churachandpur changed the course of the church in Manipur South. The mission started a middle school and Bible school in the name of Dinwiddle, contributed a lot in the field of education. As a result many young boys in Manipur south were able to get benefits in education for it was easily accessible. The Middle School was raised to Junieur High School that became a full-fledged

¹⁷⁵ Namthiurei, M.P., *The Great Awakening(The coming of Christianity in Zeliangrong areas, (1915-1971), Golden Jubilee Publication, Tamenglong, Manipur, 1972, pp-32&34*

one in 1955.¹⁷⁶ The impact of education on the tribal Christians was very great as mentioned above. More than any other element, education played a more effective role in making the tribal people to participate in the mainstream of life in the state as well as in India. The New class of educated people came from Christian background and co-operated with the British Government during the First World War to supply Labour Corps in France. Most of the chiefs who were against sending Kukis abroad came from the non-Christian group. Pettigrew himself was of the opinion that had he not started education in 1897 no Tangkhuls and Kukis boys would have agreed to volunteer for Labour Corps during the war period. The Christian missionary apart from teaching how to read and write reduced to writing in Roman script as the tribal dialects had no script of their own. Rev. Pettigrew introduced it among the Tangkhuls, Dr. Croziers and Rev. W.R. among the Kukis. In 1917, Rev. W. Roberts with the help of Pastor Thangkhai published the gospel of St. John in Vaipheis. In 1926, the Tangkhuls New Testament was published through the effort of Rev. Pettigrew.¹⁷⁷ Dr. Croziers with the help of Nulhao Thomsong published the Thadous New Testament in 1942. Subsequently hymn book were published in the language of almost every tribe in Roman Script. All the 29 tribes by now had the Holy Bible in their own language.

The Christian missionaries were the Pioneer to introduce western education as part of their missionary activities in the hills areas in the states for upliftment of the primitive tribal. However due to numerous problems like ignorance, poverty, communication, traditional belief etc. this important tool of modernization could not be spread fast and it took many decades to produce a 1 percent literacy population among the tribal people. The trend of literacy in the state of Manipur during the present century can be studied from the table below.

¹⁷⁶ Vaiphei, Th Lambol, Op cit., pp-175-176

¹⁷⁷ Vaiphei P. S., Church Growth Among the Hill Tribes in Manipur, Imphal, 1986, p-147

Table 6.1 Percentage of Literates in Manipur (1901-2001)

| Year | Total Population | Decennial % | Male literate | Female Literate | Total | Literacy % |
|---------|------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| 1901 | 2,84,465 | - | 2,596 | 62 | 2,658 | 0.9 |
| 1911 | 3,45,222 | 21.71 | 6,889 | 217 | 7,106 | 2.05 |
| 1921 | 3,94,016 | 10.92 | 14,396 | 291 | 14,687 | 3.82 |
| 1931 | 4,45,606 | 16.04 | 13,806 | 689 | 14,495 | 3.25 |
| 1941 | 5,12,069 | 14.04 | 24,339 | 1,594 | 25,933 | 5.06 |
| 1951 | 5,77,635 | 12.80 | 58,933 | 6,962 | 65,895 | 12.57 |
| 1961 | 7,80,037 | 35.04 | 1,74,656 | 62,620 | 2,37,376 | 36.04 |
| 1971 | 10,72,753 | 37.53 | 2,49,383 | 1,03,707 | 3,53,090 | 38.47 |
| 1981 | 14,20,953 | 32.46 | 3,84,231 | 2,03,387 | 5,87,618 | 49.66 |
| 1991 | 18,37,149 | 29.29 | 5,60,884 | 3,55,808 | 9,16,692 | 59.89 |
| 2001(p) | 23,88,634 | 30.02 | 8,15,944 | 6,13,712 | 14,29,656 | 68.87 |

Source: Statistical Hand book of Manipur 2002

** Percentage of literate to total population (excluding 0-6 population)

(p)Provisional

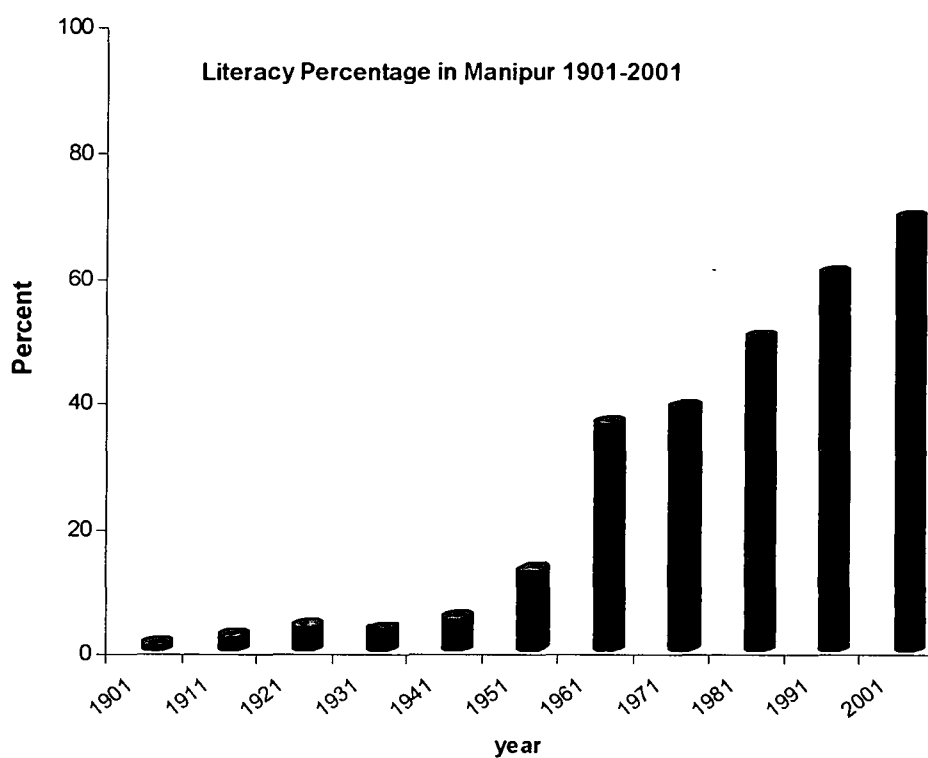


Fig. 6.1

From the table 6.1 and figure 6.1 it can be clearly pointed out that the over all literacy rates were very low in the state before Independence and it picked up momentum only after 1951. Meanwhile the percentage of literate among the tribal of Manipur was still negligible even by the 1950's.

Table 6.2: Percentage of ST literate in selected Sub-divisions, 1991.

| State/Subdivision | Total Scheduled Tribe Population | Total number of S/T literates | Percentage of S/T literate to total S/T Population |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Manipur | 527575 | 282940 | 53.63 |
| Paomata | 35,434 | 15,840 | 44.70 |
| Mao-Maram | 39,159 | 15,104 | 38.57 |
| Sadar Hills West | 42,286 | 23,302 | 55.11 |
| Sadar Hills east | 32,016 | 14,536 | 45.40 |
| Tamenglong North | 32,016 | 6,717 | 44.57 |
| Tamenglong west | 15,069 | 5,541 | 42.65 |
| Tamenglong | 12,991 | 11,469 | 54.41 |
| Nungba | 21,078 | 10,847 | 54.18 |
| Tipaimukh | 18,680 | 9,829 | 52.62 |
| Thanlon | 15,745 | 9,125 | 57.95 |
| Churachandpur North | 16,880 | 7,220 | 42.77 |
| Churachandpur | 70,278 | 44,403 | 63.18 |
| Singnat | 15,287 | 8,006 | 52.37 |
| Tengnoupal | 19,758 | 7,465 | 37.78 |
| Chandel | 14,108 | 8,734 | 61.91 |
| Chapikarong | 16,707 | 6345 | 37.98 |
| Ukhrul North | 14,844 | 7,198 | 48.49 |
| Ukhrul Central | 45,661 | 31,135 | 68.19 |
| Phungyar Phaisat | 8,660 | 4,740 | 54.73 |
| Kamjong –Chassad | 9,230 | 4,890 | 52.98 |

Source: Census of India 1991

The tribal people however have progressed in the field of education after the first schools was set up by the missionary in 1897's. Literacy has a substantial growth due to the steps taken by the government and missionaries, which was nil in the year 1900 increased to 27.25 percent in 1961 to 39.73 Percent in 1981 and 53.63 percent in 1991. The district wise literate population and literacy rate in Manipur according to 2001 census is given in the following table.

Table 6.3: District wise literacy in 2001

| District/State | Person | No. of literate Male | No. of literate Female | Literacy % Person | Literacy % Male | Literacy % female |
|----------------|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Senapati | 1,71,100 | 99,583 | 71,517 | 50.47 | 56.39 | 44.04 |
| Tamenglong | 56,629 | 33,640 | 22,629 | 58.46 | 67.04 | 49.11 |
| Churachandpur | 1,48,829 | 84,537 | 64,292 | 74.67 | 84.98 | 64.40 |
| Chandel | 61,345 | 35,469 | 25,876 | 57.38 | 66.12 | 48.57 |
| Thoubal | 2,08,464 | 1,23,372 | 85,092 | 67.90 | 80.50 | 55.34 |
| Bishenpur | 1,27,667 | 72,751 | 54,916 | 71.59 | 82.25 | 61.09 |
| Imphal West | 3,12,125 | 1,71,350 | 1,40,775 | 80.61 | 89.40 | 72.24 |
| Imphal East | 2,60,573 | 1,47,617 | 1,12,956 | 76.38 | 86.44 | 66.30 |
| Ukhrul | 83,284 | 47,625 | 35,659 | 68.96 | 75.40 | 61.91 |
| Manipur | 1,429,656 | 8,15,944 | 6,13,712 | 68.87 | 77.87 | 59.70 |

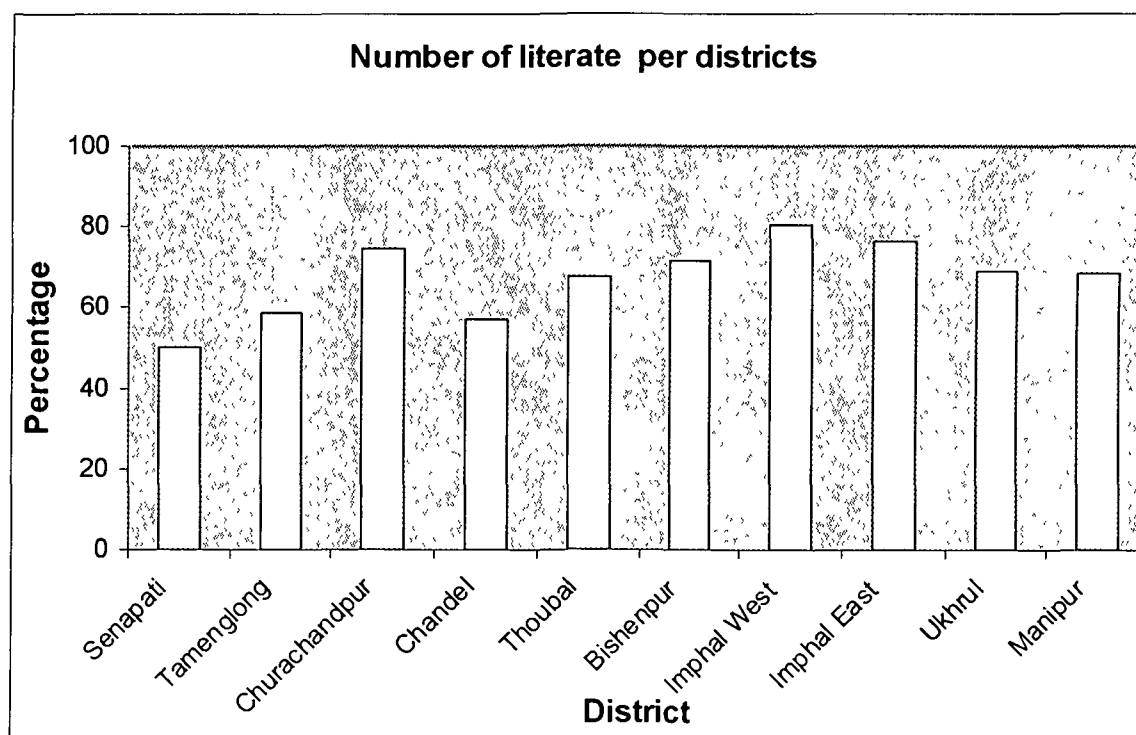


Fig. 6.2

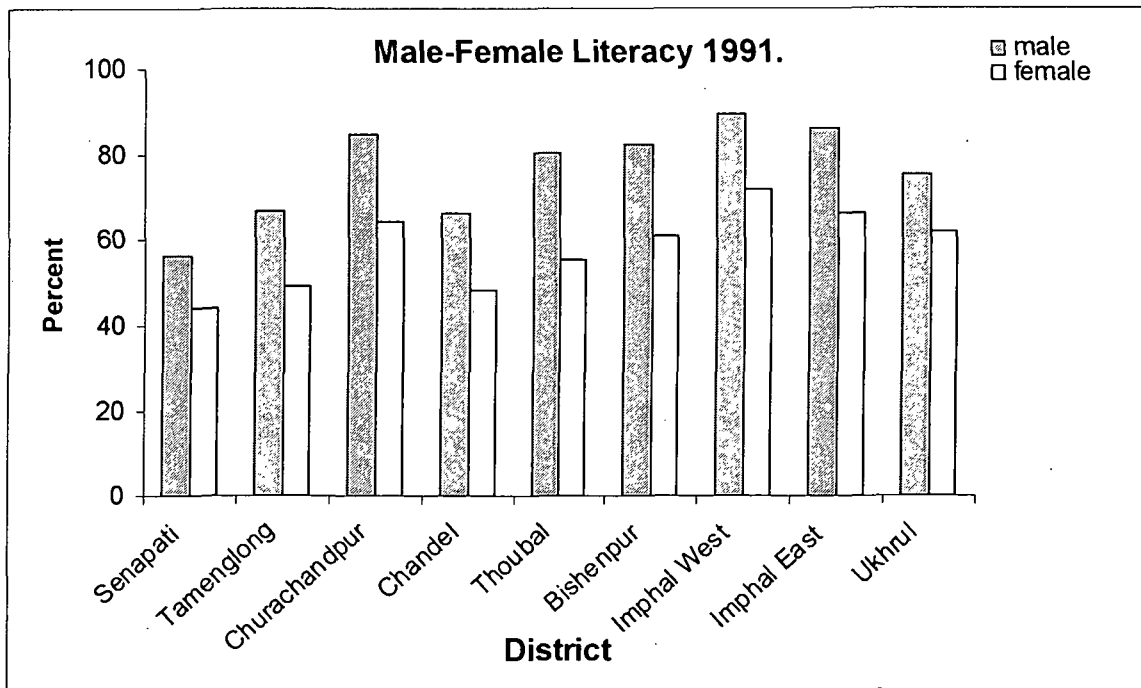


Fig. 6.3

The table 6.3 and figure 6.2 and 6.3 depict a very satisfactory and promising literacy in all the 9 districts. The literate percentage in Manipur is 68.87 per cent in 2001 which in 1991 was 59.89 percent. Among the hill districts, the highest literacy rate is seen in Churachandpur district with 74.67 percent literate population which in 1991 was 58.17 percent. The literacy percentage of Churachandpur has gone up at much faster rate during the decade. The literacy rate in Ukhrul and Tamenglong district is 68.96 and 58.46 percent respectively in the year 2001 which was as low as 62.54 and 50.16 per cent in 1991 respectively. The Chandel district has recorded a fast growth of literacy during the decade. It was 57.38 percent in 2001, which in 1991 was 46.08 per cent. The literacy growth in the case of Senapati district is rather slow. The literacy in 2001 was 50.47 percent, which in 1991 was 46.04 percent only.

It is significant to note that the literacy performance in the tribal dominated hill areas have shown a much faster increase in the last couple of decades, particularly after

Independence- a fact of considerable change under the impact of Christianity. As compared to the progress made in areas located in the valley and considering the fact that the hilly areas consisted of totally non-literate population prior to the Christian impact, the progress of literacy is considered to be profound in the tribal areas. The difference in literacy rate between the valley and the Hills is declining sharply and it is remarkable that some of the hill districts now have a literacy rate comparable or even better than the literacy rate attained by a few of the districts located in the valley.

Another heartening feature of literacy development in the Hill areas and among the tribal people refers to the lack of a significant male female disparity in literacy attainment unlike their counterparts living in the plain areas. The tribal values of egalitarianism coupled with Christian values has produced a more balanced literacy attainment among the two sexes- something missing among the people living in the valleys which seem to have discriminated against females in attaining a comparable literacy standard.

6.3 Medical Impact

The Christian missionaries were the pioneers in introducing modern medicine to the hill tribes in Manipur. The missionary involvement in the medical work in the late 19th century and early and early 20th century was undertaken mainly for evangelism. The early missionaries employed it as Christ like ministry of healing men's body as well as their soul. Moreover, in those day, the value of modern medicines and surgery become more appreciated in America, it was also felt tat the best available healing should go out to the mission field, hand in hand to supplement the preaching of the gospel.¹⁷⁸ Thus the missionary in bringing the medical work

¹⁷⁸ Sangma, Milton S A., History of American Baptist Mission in North east India (vol. 2), Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 63.

thereby accelerated the breakdown of the traditional animistic worldview and has become one of the major impacts in the social transformation of the hill tribal people.

Mrs. Alice Goreham Pettigrew started medical mission work in Manipur. When they arrived in Ukhrul, a medical aid dispensary was attached to the mission center for urgent relief. The missionaries were non-medical and could look after only simple cases like treatment of fevers, cuts, bites, health education etc. The Tangkhuls Nagas in the beginning were not willing to accept medicine, as they were afraid to offend evil spirit by taking the medicine. Mrs. Pettigrew however, gradually won their confidence by her long patient and successful nursing of a young Tangkhuls Blacksmith burn in an explosion, convinced them of the efficacy of her treatment as well as love and devotion that lay behind her ministry.¹⁷⁹ The arrival of Dr. Crozier in 1919 signified a major change in the nature of the church's medical ministry. Dr. Crozier was responsible for the establishment of the first missionary Dispensary and Leper Asylum in November, 1919 at Kangpokpi.¹⁸⁰ The work started by the missionary continued even today, the dispensary was turned into a Christian Hospital with 60 beds and five doctors, a host of nurses and 30 staff. It also has a nurse-training center.

The medical work in the southern hills of Manipur was started by the North East India General Mission with aid from the government has 5 Dispensary. They are Churachandpur, Tinsuang, Hanship, Khanpi and Patpuihmun. The mission apart from opening dispensaries sent students to Dibrugrah to study Compounder class. By 1938 there are said to be one local medical person, 4 compounders. Thus all the dispensaries were under native in charge during the study period. In short, the missionaries apart from evangelism established Dispensaries had a great impact on the health care and sanitation of the people. It helped in the breakdown of the

¹⁷⁹ Solo Jonah M., & K. Mahangthei (ed); *Forty Years in Manipur, Assam; An account of the work of Rev. & Mrs William Pettigrew*, Imphal, 1986, p-13.

¹⁸⁰ Vaiphei, Kim, *The Coming of Christianity in Manipur (With Special Reference to The Kukis)*, Imphal, 1995, pp.24-25

traditional belief and accelerated the spread of Christianity in the state. Thus, the missionaries laid the foundation of health care a century ago from those humble beginning emerged the present day hospital.

6.4. Concluding Statement

The following broad conclusions are made from the above study:

The advent of Christianity brought about far reaching affects on the tribal society of Manipur, pervading all spheres of activities, outlook, ways of life, cultures and customs. It also brought anew awareness and concern leading the society to move toward modernism. The factors responsible for the changes and development of tribal people with the advent of Christianity are mainly through education and health care.

Education, through the coming of Christianity, was truly a crusade against the old animistic way of life. The wild and rough people were tamed by the new teaching of love and the spirit of headhunting disappeared. Education also played a more effective role in making the tribal people to participate in the mainstream of life in the state.

The Christian missionaries were the pioneers in introducing modern medicine to the hill tribes in Manipur. The missionary in bringing the medical work thereby accelerated the breakdown of the traditional animistic worldview and has become one of the major impacts in the social transformation of the hill tribal people.

It is significant to note that the literacy performance in the tribal dominated hill areas have shown a much faster increase in the last couple of decades, particularly after Independence- a fact of considerable change under the impact of Christianity. As compared to the progress made in areas located in the valley and considering the fact that the hilly areas consisted of totally non-literate population prior to the Christian impact, the progress of literacy is considered to be profound in the tribal areas. The difference in literacy rate between the

valley and the Hills is declining sharply and it is remarkable that some of the hill districts now have a literacy rate comparable or even better than the literacy rate attained by a few of the districts located in the valley.

A heartening feature of literacy development in the Hill areas and among the tribal people refers to the lack of a significant male female disparity in literacy attainment unlike their counterparts living in the plain areas. The tribal values of egalitarianism coupled with Christian values has produced a more balanced literacy attainment among the two sexes- something missing among the people living in the valleys which seem to have discriminated against females in attaining a comparable literacy standard.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is observed that Christianity had made a significant impact in the social transformation of the tribal communities inhabiting the hilly region in Manipur. For centuries the tribal areas of Manipur (Presently the district of Churachandpur, Chandel, Senapati, Tamenglong, and Ukhul) was a neglected region. The tribal people lived in isolated in the hilly region and they had also little inter-tribal contact. During the rule of Meitei Maharaja, there has been some sort of relationship with the hill people. However, the hill tribal areas were left alone to lead a life according to their own, following their own customary laws in all matters of their socio-economic and village administration. The advent of British rule in the last decade of the 19th century however, brought significant changes in their social life, the most prominent being a change in their religion.

The present research placed before itself the following broad objectives: to study the diffusion and growth of Christianity in Manipur with a special reference to the Hill tribal communities and to identify the factors responsible for the diffusion and growth of Christianity in the hill region and its influence on the socio-economic structure of the region. The important research questions which the dissertation aimed at answering are: i) how has Christianity managed to percolate down to the hilly areas only and among the tribal segments while the people of the plains have remained immune to any such changes; ii) even among the tribes, what were the forces that led to the sudden change in the religious affiliation, iii) are there inter-tribal differences in responses to Christianity and iv) what are the social implications of the changes for the tribal communities both within and without?

Based on historical evidences on the pattern of spread of Christainity and geographical methods of interpretation of the historical evidences, the study has tried to answer the research questions posed before itself within the scope of the study as defined by the specific objectives. The major findings of the study are outlined below.

Physiographically, the state of Manipur has two major landforms namely; the plain and the hills. While the plain areas are inhabited by the peasant communities, the hills have provided an ideal habitat for a number of ethnically differentiated tribes who inhabit these areas for centuries. The tribes inhabiting the hills in Manipur are broadly divided into two main groups; viz. the Kukis and the Nagas and they consist of 34.41 percent of the total population of the state.

The social life of the tribal society does not vary much from tribe to tribe or from village to village. All the hill tribes of Manipur are patriarchal in lineage and inheritance. They have a well-set customs of marriage, bride price, divorce, child-name giving ceremony and many indigenous festivals. The traditional social system is built up around the clan system and the village administration is based on a chieftainship. One of the interesting aspects of social life of the hill tribes of Manipur is the Youth dormitory, which serves as the learning center for the un-married boys and girls.

The pre-Hindu Vaishnavism religion of the Meiteis was not much varied from animism. The Meitei believed in four supreme gods and demi-gods and goddess. The study reveals that traditionally the Meiteis also practiced ancestor worship, head-hunting and buried their dead. In the first quarter of the 18th century, the Vaishnava missionary Santidas Goswami came to Manipur and spread Vaishnavism throughout the valley under the royal patronage and he was successful in converting the king and his subjects to Hinduism.

The traditional religion of the hill tribes was animism. All the hill tribes had belief in one supreme God. They had vague concept of heaven and hell as well as life after death. They believed that all sickness and calamities were due to the wrath of the evil spirits. Sacrifice was the main mode of worships to propitiate the evil spirits. Omens, dreams, signs and superstitions determined their life. They were savage and practiced headhunting.

Manipur was an independent state before the Anglo-Manipuri war in 1891. The capture of power in Manipur by the British in 1891 paved the way for Christian missionaries to enter Manipur. William Pettigrew was the first Christian missionary to work in Manipur. However, he was not allowed evangelistic work among the Hindu Meiteis. So he went to Ukhrul in the Northeastern part of Manipur and started his mission work by starting schools. In the southern hills of Manipur Watkin Roberts and his native associate came to Sanvon in 1910 and started the missionary work.

The Manipur missionary field till 1950 is considered as the mission period and the main efforts were directed towards the people inhabiting the hill areas. Christianity was first introduced and established to one major tribe before spreading into other tribes. Initially Christianity was mainly confined to the Tangkhul tribes inhabiting the Northeastern part of Manipur and then to the Kuki in the Northwestern hills of Manipur.

The spread of Christianity in the initial stage was rather slow. Contrary to popular belief the hill tribes accepted Christian faith not so much during the British period, but after India achieved Independence. In fact the period after 1951 has witnessed a phenomenal increase in the proportion of Christian population largely due to conversion of the tribal animists. The method adopted by the missionary for spreading of the new faith was through education and health care. The spread of Christianity was through the converted students who have attended those schools run by the missionaries. The mission work especially through education proved to



be the base for the future expansion of the mission work. The introduction of medical facilities too helped in discarding their old traditional belief and practices, thus encouraging the people to accept the new faith.

The mission field in the beginning was divided on geographical basis but after the Second World War and with the rise in national feeling, each ethnic group was then looking to form their own association leading to the establishment of tribe base association.

The Tangkhul inhabiting the Northeastern hill areas were the first to receive Christianity. The missionary through imparting education and medical care won the confidence of the people and they began to respond favorably. The spread of Christianity was through the student converts. The spread was slow in the beginning. The Manipur Revival in 1923 stimulated extensive evangelistic work among the Tangkhuls and since then they became an active Christians. The Kuki-Chin were the second major tribe to respond to Christianity. Since the Kuki-Chin were scattered all over the state, Christianity came to them from two missions. The spread of Christianity among the Kuki was impeded by the Kuki Rising, School strike in 1924.

The Zeliangrong inhabiting the Western Hills of Manipur were the third tribal group to received Christianity. The spread of Christianity was impeded by the Kampai Cult considered as the custodian of the old way of life. The Mao Naga inhabiting the Northern part of Manipur were the fourth major group to embrace Christianity. The late advent of Christianity among Mao was due to the antagonistic view about Christianity and the government prohibition for evangelistic activity in the areas.

Inter tribal differences in acceptance of the Christian faith had minimized after 1961 and that a great uniformity had come in the religious composition of the tribal population. Interestingly, the tribes, in spite of differences in the degree of their acceptance of Christian

faith had resisted intrusion of any other religion including that of Hinduism which was dominant in the plains.

The advent of Christianity brought about far reaching affects on the tribal society of Manipur, pervading all spheres of activities, outlook, ways of life, cultures and customs. It also brought anew awareness and concern leading the society to move toward modernism. The factors responsible for the changes and development of tribal people with the advent of Christianity are mainly through education and health care

Education, through the coming of Christianity, was truly a crusade against the old animistic way of life. The wild and rough people were tamed by the new teaching of love and the spirit of headhunting disappeared. Education also played a more effective role in making the tribal people to participate in the mainstream of life in the state.

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