CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF MISSIONARY OCCUPATION, 1894-1919
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2.1 Beginning in Manipur: The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1894-1919

The American Baptist Mission in Burma made the first attempt to establish their mission station in Manipur, an erstwhile princely state, as early as 1836. But this was not possible because of the opposition from the local native government which had already accepted Vaishnavite Hinduism as a principal religion by a royal edict in 1705. With it a new dawn of orthodoxy and conservatism arose particularly among the native aristocrats which tended to look upon every movement of the white people with misgiving and suspicion. In complete disregard of their sentiment, James Johnstone, the political agent of Manipur made every arrangement for any missionary who would be willing to work among the people of the state.

Before 1891 the relation between Manipur and British India was limited to the recognition and regulation of each successive king and the stationing of a British officer with the objective of guiding the ruling maharaja.

3 Baptist Missionary Magazine (BMM), October 1891, p.445.
Realising his limited role, Johnstone thought that he should not push matter further, but still kept his eyes on the hill areas. 4

For the Welsh mission too, which had been on the look-out for mission field, Manipur was one of the suggested fields because no Christian missionaries whichever had ever entered into the state by then. Perhaps the unsettled political situation in the state unnerved both the officials and the missionaries and the suggestion could not materialise for sometime.

The first missionary who went to Manipur with full patronage from a British official (Mr A. Porteous, the acting political agent) was Mr William Pettigrew, from the Arthington Aboriginese Mission Society, named after Robert Arthington, a millionaire at Leeds near London.

Robert Arthington's concept of a mobile missionary movement was rather unconventional. His whole strategy was that if a Christian foothold was gained in any country, that was enough for him; he would press on the next country and the Christians there must, according to him, be urged to press on too. 5 The sole motivating force for organising such a private mission society was an unusual

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4 James Johnstone, *op. cit.*, p.44.
dream that 'every tribe in every land shall have the
Gospel'. Himself the sole contributor, he alone would
determine its policy, employ or dismiss its missionaries.6
Even prior to the founding of the mission society, Arthing-
ton wrote to the Assam Baptist Mission on 15 September 1885
stating his desire to open a work among any unevangelised
tribes in and around Assam or elsewhere in India.7 Arthington's
interest in Assam hill tribes had been kindled by the
reports of St John Dalmas, a missionary in Bengal, who had
spoken when on furlough about the 'untamed' hillmen of
Assam who were not yet reached by the Gospel. John Dalmas
later on became a key intermediary in Arthington's private
mission, issuing instructions, forwarding money and receiv-
ing reports on Arthington's behalf. Of about thirteen
missionaries whom Arthington commissioned in 1890, William
Pettigrew proceeded to Manipur and J.H. Lowain and F.W.
Sevidge to Lushai hills in 1894, respectively.

Before permitting William Pettigrew to enter Manipur,
the government officials wanted to settle first what should
be the fate of Manipur consequent upon the latter's defeat
in the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891. Ward, who succeeded

6 Ibid., p.11.
7 P.H. Moore, Twenty Years in Assam or Leaves from
my Journal (Calcutta, 1901), pp.59-60.
Quiton as the Chief Commissioner of Assam, in his letter on 16 July 1891 strongly pleaded in favour of annexation. He took it as an accepted axiom of their foreign policy in India that if a native state waged a war against the Queen, that alone (leaving out of consideration for the present the question of expediency) was sufficient and justifiable ground for annexing the state to British India. He had even cited one practical instance in recent years of the application of this axiom, the most recent being the annexation to British territory in Burma of the state of Suntho. The pro-annexationists thus held that any measure that was short of annexation of the offending state would be considered by every native state in India as a sign of weakness.

On the other hand, Viscount Cross, speaking in debate in the House of Lords, expressed his disapproval of the idea of annexation on the ground that annexation would undoubtedly involve an application of the cumbersome machinery of British laws to Manipur with considerable expense and trouble and it might give to native princes a mistaken idea of the policy of Her Majesty's government.

8 Foreign Department Proceedings, October 1891, nos.123-147.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
Duishah Andeshin of Baroda, perhaps a close friend of Lord Landsdowne, Viceroy, suggested to the government that the policy likely to be pursued by Landsdowne’s government was outright rejection of the idea of annexation of the state. According to him, annexation could hardly be accepted as a potent remedy to introduce loyalty where it might be absent. He further argued that the opposite policy of generosity and large-minded statesmanship must act far more efficaciously in strengthening a common friendly bond between the government and their feudatories. Such a policy alone could inspire that confidence in them which would prove invaluable to imperial India in all times of foreign troubles.12

Lord Landsdowne, while admitting that the government had undoubtedly a moral right to annex the state for it, according to him, had been guilty of rebellion, also favoured the policy of inflicting sufficient punishment on the state without annexing it. Finally the government of India declared that the state of Manipur had become forfeit to the crown, but the queen Empress of India had been 'graciously pleased' to forgo her undoubted right and to permit re-establishment of native rule under a minor raja (Churchand Singh) on suitable grounds.13

12 Foreign Department ExtB. Proc., 1891, no.81, p.7.
13 Foreign Department Proc., nos.123-147, October 1891.
It was under these circumstances that William Pettigrew approached A. Porteous, the acting Political Agent, and started his work at Imphal, the capital of the state, on 6 February 1894. Pettigrew began to think that his call was among the Meiteis and was anxious to preach the Gospel among them. But the Hinduised Meiteis construed Pettigrew's preaching as a deliberate attempt to impose upon them the 'government's religion'.

Maxwell, the political agent on his return from furlough, took an alarming view of the new emergent situation and expressed his fear that trouble might arise if Pettigrew's activities were not nipped in the bud because the Meiteis held to the tenets of the Hindu religion almost to fanaticism.

The peculiar position in which the British officials were put to administer the state on behalf of the minor raja perhaps made them hesitant to interfere with the religion which occupied so much of their (Meiteis') time and attention. The official policy of the government of India was that officials were not to undertake major reforms during the regency administration. The decision

15 Ibid.
16 See, for example, Manual of Instructions to Officers of the Political Department of the Government of India (New Delhi, 1924).
to administer the state through a regent necessitated at most cathartic changed in the native administrative structure. More importantly, the social policy of British India towards the princely states after the revolt of 1857 particularly in matters of religion was apparently 'non-interference' or 'strict neutrality'. Any departure from such policy, C.J. Lyall, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, contended would very likely be seized upon by Hindus in Bengal and elsewhere as a ground for an attack upon the government and also be construed as a breach of so-called 'neutrality'. 17 Thus in so far as the Hindu Meiteis were concerned, the British officials decided to maintain status quo and Maxwell had to serve the ultimatum that Pettigrew leave Imphal or stop his missionary work. But where the missionary movement was likely to sustain colonial control, they were not hesitant to break neutrality.

Pettigrew was sadly disappointed because the door for missionary work in Manipur was closed. Maxwell came to his rescue and suggested that he should work in the hill areas - the north-east area at Ukhrul among the Tangkhul Nagas. 18 Pettigrew was acting not only as a missionary but also as officiating state officer in all

17 F.D. Secret Proc., nos.24-28, January 1895.
18 Ibid.
matters concerning the day-to-day administration of the hill areas. He, therefore, kept himself in close contact with the state officials at Imphal. But as the work was about to begin, it appeared as if the door seemed to be closed again because the Arthington Mission which sponsored him, was not willing to establish a permanent mission station in any particular place and instructed its missionaries to move to new places after every three years. Rev. Pettigrew was to leave Manipur or be sent back home as he had completed his three-year stay in Manipur. Having no other alternative, Pettigrew thus applied for membership to the American Baptist Missionary Union in Assam adding that unless the Manipur field was taken over immediately, it would be closed to mission work, if not for good, at least for some years to come. Accordingly, the Baptist Missionary Conference at Sibsagar in 1895 took up the matter in all seriousness and sometimes dwelling on needless procedural details as to whether Pettigrew had credentials of Christian character and fitness for missionary work in deliberate disregard of his being a missionary for about three years. The committee

19 A.M. Chirgwin, op.cit., p.81.

20 Minutes of the Conference of the Assam Missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU), Minutes, Resolutions and Historical Reports of the 4th Triennial Conference, Sibsagar (December 14-22, 1895), p.5.
on 'Resolutions on Pettigrew's petition' pointed out that even though Pettigrew was not fully versed in all that they (the Baptists) held in regard to church polity, he (Pettigrew) did not hold views contrary to their 'distinctive doctrines' which was perhaps 'believer's baptism'. The committee then placed its recommendation before the conference which formally redesignated Pettigrew as a missionary to Manipur subject to his ordination by the Sibsagar Baptist Church, Assam. Following this, the Executive Committee at Boston endorsed the Sibsagar resolution in January 1896 and decided to take over the work in Manipur.

With much enthusiasm and excitement, Pettigrew continued his work among the Tangkhul Nagas. The entry of more than one missionary into the state was strictly restricted by the Manipur state durbar. Till the informal installation of the young raja to the throne of Manipur, no other missionary family was allowed to enter the state and without prior sanction of the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

The first few years of Pettigrew seemed to be quite dull and unpromising. Pettigrew was heavily engaged in

21 Ibid., p.5.
22 Resolutions of the Assam Missionary Conference (AMC) (Dibrugarh), February 11-19, 1899), p.50.
23 Ibid., p.55.
the construction of a mission bungalow, teaching, studying the local dialect, doing translation work and sometimes giving out medicines apart from assisting the state officials in the administration of the hill areas.24 He attempted too much. Being single-handed, he hardly achieved anything substantial. Apart from lack of manpower, mutual suspicion between the missionary and the people greatly hampered the progress of missionary work. From the very outset, suspicion of the missionary's actions had been rankling in the minds of the people. Nor did the missionary trust the people. In his annual report he stated that the Manipuri was reckoned a liar but the Tangkhul Naga could easily beat the former. He further remarked that he had not come across one yet whose words or actions could be fully relied upon.25

Addicted to 'zu' (rice-beer) drinking, it was the custom of the people to offer a bottle or two of 'zu' to any European official on tour, for all understood that they expected a 'bakshish' in return. Trivial though it might seem, the missionary's principle of total abstinence ran counter to the age-old customs of the people. Pettigrew was not unaware of his shortcomings. Over-engaged in official and secular activities, he knew that he could

24 Ibid., p.54.
25 Ibid., p.52.
hardly give himself to preaching. He, therefore, asked for immediate deputation of another missionary who would either take over the educational and literary work and leave him free for itinerating and evangelical work or vice versa.\textsuperscript{26} Impatient and over-burdened, he again appealed to the Baptist Missionary Society for sending more missionaries against the declared policy of the state durbar. This enraged the durbar members because the fear that the missionary work might penetrate into the valley still loomed large in their minds. As a result, the state durbar did not budge from its earlier decision. To Pettigrew's misfortune, the political agent who succeeded Maxwell, was totally a different character. He took no interest and saw no reason why ignorance should be dispelled.\textsuperscript{27} This made Pettigrew to pen his annual report to the Baptist mission in Assam with such pessimistic tone that his whole scheme, he feared, would collapse.\textsuperscript{28} As a last resort, they tried to take advantage of Lord Curzon's visit to Manipur in 1905 and in fact impressed upon him to liberalise the restrictive policy on the number of missionaries working in the state.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p.55.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Asam Baptist Missionary Conference} (27 December 1902-4 January 1903) (Gauhati), p.37.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p.37.
They also hoped that following the installation of Churachand Singh to the gaddi of Manipur by Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, on 15 May 1907 there was every likelihood of the raja giving a favourable reaction to the missionary work. In this connection, they sent their memorandum to the state officials through their mission Foreign Secretary, Dr. Barbour. The durbar rejected the plea outright. The durbar, on the pressure of the maharaja, was made to review the whole situation and resolved to lay no obstacle on the way of the missionary union intensifying their work among the hill people on the condition that they did not attempt to extend the missionary work in the valley.

With the permit for more missionary, the mission embarked upon more ambitious work covering the whole hill territory. J. Shakespeare, the political agent, took up the matter and reminded the ABMU to immediately place more missionaries at Ukhrul. This need, though not new, had already received greater emphasis for the fact that all the hill tribes adjoining the main valley had been thrown open to missionary work. The ABMU conference solemnly thanked Shakespeare for his reasonable and zealous

30 Ibid., p.10.
initiative and thus resolved to send another missionary without further delay.31

Meanwhile the state government appointed Pettigrew as Superintendent of the first real census of the hill tribes (1910-1911) because the missionary was the only man who knew the language of the hill tribes. Along with his school teachers and some senior students, Pettigrew undertook the work of the census and carried it out successfully.32 The census work definitely enabled the missionary and his native workers to explore more areas hitherto unvisited. This was in one sense a gain, for he could preach the Gospel to anyone with whom he came into contact. But on the other hand, his close association with the colonial establishment made him behave himself as 'becometh prisoner of the great shorkar'.33 As a result, Pettigrew found it hard to eradicate from the minds of the people that he was not a paid subordinate official of the government.

The arrival of U.M. Fox in Ukhrul in 1911 was a great relief for Pettigrew. Hardly had they worked together for about a year, Pettigrew had to leave for

31 Ibid., p.83.
33 Minutes of the ABMC of 1910 (10th Session, Gauhati), p.81.
England in early 1912 on furlough leaving his friend to face more or less a similar situation which he himself had experienced. Socialised in a largely secular American society, Fox's concept of a missionisation was not determined solely by religious factors. In addition to his itinerating work, he trained the native workers in practical skills such as carpentry, metal work, etc., thereby enabling them to make modern furniture and also develop mission stations. This is to show that there existed close linkage between material improvement and missionary work and such material comforts often acted as a means for the furtherance of missionary work. In his annual report, Fox had to write with evident jubilation that he saw all around encouraging signs which gave hopes of whole village stepping forward and accepting Christianity.

To the missionaries, the penetration of their work into the 'forbidden' valley seemed to be inevitable. Because with the Christianised tribals, who began to hold petty clerical posts organised themselves for the first time a church in the capital following the baptism of Maipak Kabui, Kachindai Kacha Naga, Bhagirath Gorkha,

34 T. Luikham, op. cit., p.23.
Thanga Hmar, Jaison Kom and Majaching at Imphal by U.M. Fox in 1915. Naturally, the durbar took it as a violation of the conditional terms by which the missionaries were permitted to enter the state. To add fuel to the fire, the Board of Assam Baptist Mission instructed Pettigrew, soon after his return from furlough, to settle at Imphal with the intention of shifting the mission station from Ukhrul. This meant direct confrontation with the state. The officials had not only been unwilling to allow Pettigrew to live in Imphal, but had refused permission for the Baptist mission to open a new mission headquarters at any other place in the hills than Ukhrul, having decided not to change their ruling of two years ago.

Thus, there had not been a marked change in the attitude of the state durbar towards Christian missionaries in so far as the Manipur valley was concerned. But in the hill areas the missionary movement began to encompass the western part and Sadar hills north of Imphal where an institutionalised local churches grew up mainly through the voluntary efforts of Lungkholkel Kom and others,

36 T. Lukham, *op. cit.*, p.25.
37 *Supplement to the Minutes of the ABMC, Nowgong (February 17-24, 1916)*, p.12.
38 Ibid., p.12.
the first converts among the Kukis. 39 The growing increase in local churches and the widening of the frontier of missionary movement necessitated the formation of what was known as the Manipur Christian Association in November 1916, the first of its kind and its first convention was held at Ukhrul in 1917. As this posed a serious threat, according to the durbar members, the missionary movement was curtailed and permission to tour in the hills was refused by the Vice-President (usually a British officer) of the state durbar. 40 Although the durbar failed to specify the reasons for restriction of missionary tour, the overriding factor seemed to be the outbreak of the Kuki revolt of 1917. The mission station was also temporarily shifted to Kohima, capital of Naga hills and Pettigrew later moved to Guwahati as treasurer.

There was a frantic move for the involvement of the native Christians and the missionaries both in the war efforts (First World War) and the Kuki Punitive Measure (KPM). Representing the neutral country, the American Baptists were confused as to what should be the right attitude towards the government orders. The matter was thus referred to the National Christian Council of

40 Annual Reports of the ABFM, (Ohio), 16-22 May 1917, p.89.
India for specific advice.\textsuperscript{41} Herbert Anderson, the Secretary of the National Christian Council of India (NCCI), however, considered it unwise to press the matter further at that stage but proposed that the proper procedure would be to appeal to the local government through the Bengal-Assam Council.\textsuperscript{42} On the failure of H.J. Higgins, the President of the Manipur state durbar to organise a contingent for the second Manipur Labour Corps for service in France, Pettigrew was called out from Gauhati and on the order of the political agent, proceeded to Ukhrul to help in the work of persuasion and recruitment for the Labour Corps.\textsuperscript{43} Where H.J. Higgins failed, Pettigrew succeeded. The reasons are not far to seek. In the schools the first converts were taught loyalty to the colonial government and to the ruling chiefs of the state. Brought up in such atmosphere, it is not surprising that the first to volunteer had always been the Christians in every case.\textsuperscript{44} The missionary took it as a hopeful sign pointing to the unity and solidarity

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\item \textsuperscript{41} Minutes and Resolutions of the ABMC, Sibsagar (January 15-22, 1917), p.54.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.54.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Annual Reports of ABMC. (New Jersey), 15-21 May, 1918.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p.93.
\end{itemize}
of Christians as if the war were for the defence of Christian faith. In the process, the native Christians were also made to feel that the prestige of Christians was raised and the confidence of the government was greatly enhanced.

The Manipur Labour Corps consisted of 2000 men, of whom 1200 were from the Tangkhul Nagas amongst whom Pettigrew had been working for the last 20 years. Six Christian workers and students were selected to lead the contingent and also to act as interpreters. Pettigrew served as a commissioned officer in the British army in India and was awarded after the war the Kaisar-i-Hind silver medal and war medal in recognition of his 'distinguished public and military service during the war'.

On return from the war, the Tangkhul Nagas were again enlisted in the coolie sections of the Kuki Punitive Measures which was unleashed for the sole purpose of suppressing the Kuki uprising. The imposition of the colonial bureaucratic structure upon the traditional tribal administration greatly undermined the authority of the Kuki chiefs. The forcible recruitment of the Kukis for the second Labour Corps served as an occasion

45 Luikham, op.cit., p.27.
46 Ibid., p.41.
rather than the cause of the uprising. Ironically, the missionary and the official circles tended to look upon the uprising as merely a local war between the Thado-Kukis and the neighbouring tribes, obviously implying the Nagas. The administration of the whole hill territory was entrusted to the President (a British officer) of the Manipur state durbar but the state durbar was simply de jure executive body. A point of fundamental significance of British colonial administration was the recognition of the need for the regularization of the institution of tribal chieftainship which was a tradition-based unit of tribal social system. The tribal chiefs were authorized to administer simple justice in their village courts and to collect hill house tax of Rs 3/- annually within their chieftains. But one glaring anomaly was the emergence of powerful lembua (something like a peon) who acted as middleman carrying the order of the government to the chiefs and the people. The chiefs thus felt that their traditional authority had been challenged by these new petty officials who assumed more and more undefined powers in the day-to-day administration of the hill territory. It is interesting to note that all

through the uprising the Christian Kukis had not only sided with the government but also acted as the means of influencing the non-Christian Kukis to volunteer for the war service. In fact, one leading Kuki evangelist, Ngulhao, the native evangelist, had mobilized as many as 500 non-Christian Kukis for the first Labour Corps.49 It was during the Kuki uprising that Dr G.G. Crozier and his wife came to Manipur on the recommendation of the Reference Committee of American Baptist Mission Society after the departure of U.M. Fox. But the state durbar refused to permit his entry as more than two missionaries were not allowed to work in the state. To win their favour and confidence, Dr Crozier had to volunteer himself as medical officer in the Kuki Punitive Measures from June 1918 to 1919.50 On his return from the war, Pettigrew thought it opportune to revive the question of shifting the mission headquarters from Ukhrul to some other convenient place in the valley. In consideration of the contributions made by the missionaries and the native Christians towards the global war and the Kuki Punitive Measures, the state government had thus granted a land for the new mission headquarters at Kangpokpi — on

49 Twentyfive Years, 1907-1922, p.14.

the Imphal-Dimapur road. With the expressed support, even in the tune of financial aid of Rs 2000/- earmarked annually in the state budget, Dr Crozier started the first missionary dispensary and leper asylum at the new mission station on 7 November 1919. Along with it, mission work was also divided between the two missionaries by making Pettigrew in charge of education, Northeast (Ukhrul) and Sedar Hills and Dr Crozier that of the dispensary and the North-West area (Zeliangrong Nagas).

Equally significant was the change in the administrative structure of the hill territory. Deeply aware of the loose control over the hill people, Cosgrave, the political agent, was of the view that the whole administration of the hill area should be handed over to the exclusive management of the political agent. The Chief Commissioner of Assam, however, preferred to place the hill people under the personal government of the maharaja Churachand Singh provided the rules made it clear that in all things connected with the hillmen, the maharaja should be guided by the advice of the political agent to a far closer and more ultimate degree than in matters connected with the plainsmen. In his

51 Ibid., p.93.
52 Home Political Department, Manipur Affairs, Part B. Proc. (October 1919), no.14.
53 Ibid.
letter to the Viceroy, dated 19 April 1919, the Chief Commissioner further suggested that the placing of British sub-divisional officers at suitable places in the hills to administer simple justice with the sole purpose of regaining the hill peoples' confidence in British raj, keeping in mind the speeding up of the process of education and medical work which had already been started by the missionaries. 54 Thus, under the new scheme these new sub-divisions were formed: (1) Churachandpur (named after maharaja Churachand Singh) sub-division with B.C. Gasper as Sub-Divisional Officer; (2) Tamenglong sub-division under William Shaw; and (3) Ukhrul sub-division under L.L. Peters. Having thus reorganised the administration of the hill country with direct official supervision at close quarters, the difficulty of manning their offices with clerks, their peon service with lemhus, and their road mahorris and supervisors, their vaccinators and compounders for their respective dispensaries and hospitals was enormous but the mission schools supplied the men in almost every instance. 55 This was indeed a source of satisfaction for the missionaries and the colonial officials.

54 Ibid.
55 Twentyfive Years, 1877-1922, pp.19-20.
2.2 "Beginning in North Lushai Hills: The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Mission Society"

Almost simultaneously, the Lushai hills also succumbed to the onslaught of British imperialism in 1891. It was the unrestrained expansion of tea-plantation on the foothills bordering the Lushai hills which threatened the very existence of the Lushais and this was wrongly or rightly considered as direct encroachment of their lands. To check such expansion, the Lushais therefore launched a number of raids into the tea-gardens. But the pillars of their strength tumbled before the mighty imperial power in 1891 and were humbled to accept new conditions with stoical sagacity.

A point of fundamental significance which marked British colonial administration over the Lushai hills and the adjoining hill areas was the introduction of the colonial system of indirect rule which was widely practised in different degrees in many African states too. The system of indirect rule involved, among others, recognition and legitimization of the native authority, that is, the tribal chieftainship which was, no doubt, the basic structure of tribal polity. Under this system,

the native authority became a link between the people and the colonial administrators.

The main concern of British officials from the very outset had been the provision of law and order and modicum of utility of services all backed by a policy of upholding the social customs of the people. While welcoming the missionaries in the Lushai hills, the officials were afraid that a full-scale assault which Christian missionaries must let loose was bound to undermine the social values, particularly the tribal customs. It is from this perspective that the local officials looked at the missionary movement with mixed feelings. The weight of the argument, however, lay in the fact that Christian missionaries contributed directly or indirectly to the pacification of the people. Deeply aware of this, Sir Hector Duff, a veteran British administrator in Africa, has argued that he could not condemn missionary enterprise because it induced so much that was clearly for the good of the people. Prompted by such considerations, the officials thus considered their responsibility could be discharged by affording the missionaries carte blanche to work among the people and the government relying rather for its contribution on the efficacy of a static


58 Ibid., p.197.
preservation of the customs of the people. The government aimed at securing stable political condition, while the missionaries aimed at converting the people from their animist beliefs to those of the Christian religion.

When the Lushai hills gradually came under the firm grip of British control, William Williams, a Welsh missionary who had then been working in Khasi hills, took it as the 'fulness of time' to proclaim the message of the Gospel among the Lushais and rushed to Aizawl on 20 March 1891. Williams' visit seemed to be primarily investigative in nature. He was aware of the new emergent situation with the prospect of political stability in the Lushai hills. What he did was to immediately appeal to the home board in Liverpool on the urgency of the need for missionary work in Lushai hills. The board favourably reacted to the appeal and after getting the concurrence of the British officials in Assam, formally adopted, by the resolution of the Mechylleth General Assembly, June 1892, the Lushai hills as part of their mission field.

The choice for missionary to the Lushai hills naturally fell on Williams. But no sooner had William

59 Ibid., p.198.
reached Shella, Khasi hills than he died of typhoid. Unable to find a suitable person immediately, the Welsh mission's plan to extend its sphere of activity in Lushai hills remained unfulfilled for several years. Quite unaware of this, Messrs J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge, the two Arthington missionaries felt drawn to the Lushai hills when they came to know that it was being occupied by the British. Using Brahmanbaria, the easternmost mission station in Bengal which was just opened by the New Zealand Mission as a base, the two missionaries prepared themselves for the uncertain task for which they had been keenly waiting and watching the new political developments in the North Eastern zone.62 The missionaries tended to accept such happenings as a matter of providence. Coincidentally, A. Porteous, who had initiated the missionary entry into Manipur, was then transferred to Aizawl as the Superintendent of Lushai hills and to their great relief, Messrs Lorrain and F.W. Savidge were granted a land nearby the British fort.63 The Lushais soon realised that though the two whitemen belonged to the conquering nation, they were not as powerful as the white officials.


63 J. Shakespeare's letter to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam (Aizawl, June 1898).
Partly because of language difficulty and partly because of such contemptuous attitude, Lorrain and Savidge failed to make any effective contact with the people. In order to prove and show that they were powerful, they approached the Superintendent to give them permission to issue salt which was in so much demand among the Lushais, in their name only. Only when the Lushais could buy salt with the signature of the missionaries that the situation changed favourably for the latter.

Lorrain and Savidge soon applied themselves to the stupendous task of reducing the language to writing with simple medical and educational works. While one cannot doubt their sincerity and dedication, the readily available help from the officials was a great asset for the initial success of the missionary work in the hills. The government provided them with a Bengali teacher and urged the chiefs and other leading men to learn. In addition to this, the school primer, catechism and grammar were published by the government. J. Shakespeare, the Superintendent of North Lushai Hills, who had been a helpful partner of American Baptists in Manipur, appreciably

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wrote that while the government failed, the missionary work succeeded and 'their valuable work had materially assisted in the pacification of the Lushais'.

But Arthington, who officially sponsored the two missionaries, thought it otherwise and was really annoyed at what he called the wastage of time and money that had been incurred on their work. His unconventional idea of missionary work as it has been pointed out sounded as an utopia because of the inaccessible mountains of Assam and the non-availability of interpreters for the missionaries. To preach the Gospel as a witness to all nations that the 'Second Advent' (the second coming of Jesus Christ) might occur in his lifetime was the beginning and the end of his missionary zeal. He washed his hands of Lorrain and Savidge and withdrew the offer of £100 each for their furlough in London.

In the meantime, the Welsh mission also made an arrangement to send David Evan Jones, from Montgomeryshire to Lushai Hills. Arthington's view was that if another mission society came in where his mission had already started working, he would regard the new-comers as adequate.

66 J. Shakespeare's letter to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam (Aizawl, June 1898).
67 A.M. Chirgwin, op.cit., p.80.
68 Ibid., p.82.
to the need and would move his men to some new and un-evangelised area. Failure to fall in line with their sponsor's view, primarily on the concept of missionisation, Lorrain and Savidge had to offer themselves to the Welsh mission that they would only be too glad if their mission would accept them as evangelists whose work it would be to preach the Gospel, leaving all Church matters to the regular missionaries. But the Welsh mission could not accept them even on these terms. St. John Dalmas, Arthington's agent in India, had thus finally handed over the field to the Welsh mission. Putting aside their own feelings, Lorrain and Savidge had to yield to the force of circumstances and to leave the Lushai hills, of course, after seeing D.E. Jones, who arrived in Aizawl on 31 August 1897, comfortably settled in their own bungalows. For D.E. Jones it was indeed a blessing as he could not only learn the language from his two predecessors but also gain the first-hand experience as to how he had to plan his future work on such securing foundations.

69 Ibid., p.79.
70 From Lorrain to Stephen, Fort Aizawl, North Lushai Hills, 14th May 1895.
71 J.H. Lorrain to J. Thomas, 1st October 1898.
D. E. Jones' hands were further strengthened by Rai Bhajur, a Khasi who voluntarily relinquished his lucrative government post to become an evangelist in Lushai hills.72

In December 31, 1898 a new missionary in the person of Edwin Rowlands, who had teaching experience in Texas, USA, prior to his joining the Welsh mission, joined D. E. Jones. Fired by the holy ambition of opening the whole land for Christ, the two missionaries lost no time in preparing their journey throughout the hills however inaccessible the areas might be, and their main objective being winning the confidence of the people.73 Meanwhile, the government officials had vigorously carried on the disarmament policy, that is, the disarming of the Lushai chiefs. On slight suspicion amounting to knowledge that the Lushais possessed guns, they were imprisoned or hundreds of them were arrested. In the process, the people were always suspicious of the ruling white sahibs and began to rally around the missionaries.74 The people began to say that they would like all the sepoys and their officers to leave, but that they would wish the missionaries to remain among them. Becoming conscious of recklessness and unpopularity, J. Shakespeare had all the time wooed the

72 J.H. Morris, op.cit., p.231.
74 Ibid., p.xvi.
missionaries and supported them without any least hesi-
tancy and slackening of enthusiasm. 75

With the coming of Dr Peter Fraser to the Lushai
hills in December 1908, as a medical missionary, the
cordial relationship between the officials and the mis-
sionaries had almost reached a breaking point over the
controversy on the abolition of 'slavery' in Lushai
hills. Otherwise, having been instructed to give an
undivided loyalty both to the imperial and to the local
government, the missionaries had often themselves in a
self contradiction tending to compromise their loyalty
to Christ with that of their nation. This was clearly
manifested in the manner in which the missionaries and
the newly converted Christians were mobilized in the
British war efforts in France and Middle East. 76

2.3 South Lushai Hills: British Baptist Missionary
Society

In view of the almost insurmountable communication
problem and for purposes of administrative convenience,
the colonial authorities bifurcated the Lushai hills
into two districts, viz., the North Lushai hills with


76 See for example, V. Hawla, *op.cit.*, pp.23 & 35.

*This controversy is discussed in the next
chapter.*
Aizawl as its headquarters and the South Lushai hills
with Lunglei as its headquarters, respectively. Although
the whole Lushai hills was the proclaimed field for the
Welsh mission, its missionaries focussed their attention
more to the North Lushai hills. It should be recalled
that the district committee of Welsh mission in Shillong
passed a resolution in favour of Lunglei as a sub-station
subject to the approval of the home committee.77 With
no positive approval forthcoming immediately, Edwin Rowlands
became impatient and decided to move to Lunglei to open
a new station by going to the extent of severing his
connections with the Welsh mission.78 In this connection,
Rowlands had already made queries to the Baptist mission-
aries in Chittagong and D.L. Donald of Baptist mission
replied that Herbert Anderson, the Indian Secretary of
BMS had already strongly urged a forward movement among
the hill tribes inhabiting the hill tracts of Chittagong
and of the South Lushai.79 At the same time, Herbert
Anderson also asked the Welsh mission at Shillong whether
their mission would be prepared to leave the evangelisa-
tion of the South Lushai hills to BMS in view of the fact

77 Letter to the Directors by D.E. Jones and Edwin
Rowlands, Aizawl, North Lushai Hills (17 July, 1901).
78 Edwin Rowlands' letter to D.L. Donald, Chittagong,
13 July, 1900.
79 D.L. Donald, Chittagong to E. Rowlands, Lushai
Hills, 25 July 1900.
that the latter had already met with considerable success among the hill tribes bordering on them. Rowlands was determined not to leave the field to the BMS and reiterated the urgent need of competent Khasi help in view of the South Lushai extension. Hard-pressed financially because of the earthquake which swept the Khasi hills in June 12, 1897, the Welsh mission thought in terms of reconstructing its buildings in and around Shillong and could not, therefore, appreciate the extension work during such financial crisis. For the present, the Welsh mission thought it wise to concentrate only in North Lushai hills. The Baptist claims for the South Lushai hills were at the same time seriously considered by the home committee of the Welsh mission. Alfred Henry Baynes, the General-Secretary of BMS, London, while maintaining that his mission had already taken a decision to occupy the land and send special missionary, sought an opportunity to confer with the Welsh mission in Liverpool before any final decision was arrived at. As per the joint resolution of the delegates from the Welsh mission and the

80 Herbert Anderson to E. Williams, Jowai, Shillong (Calcutta, 27 July 1900).

81 Sialaiyang, History of Mizo Church (Mizo Kohran Chanchin), Reprinted (Aizawl, 1976), pp.16-17.

82 A.H. Baynes' letter to Secretary, WCMFMS, dated 4 December 1900.
BMS, the Lushai hills was to be occupied within twelve months. This caused a lot of heart-burning to the Welsh missionaries on the field. In their joint letter to Home Secretary, D.E. Jones and Rowlands contended that they had already occupied the southern part of the field which was, according to them, one with the north from all natural indications, virtually a common language, a common people and a common unit of political government. 83 E.J. Evans, acting Secretary of the Welsh mission, however, tried to put the blame on the missionaries on the field, alleging that the latter showed a disinclination to express their opinion on it. The government reaction was not favourable at first because differences of method and aims of different missions might cause trouble among the Lushais who were still restive. 84 What concerned the officials was that uncontrolled mission expansion might jeopardise the orderly administration. Convinced of the well-intention of the Baptist mission and having experienced the constructive work of their counterparts in North Lushai hills, the Superintendent assured the

83 D.E. Jones and E. Rowlands' memorandum to the home board, Aizawl, North Lushai Hills (17 July, 1901).

84 P.H. Jones, op.cit., p.19.
Baptist mission that he was not averse to mission work and he did not think anything could be better for the Lushai people than their evangelization. Accordingly, G. Hughes was assigned to report to the Committee of BMS as to what were the necessary steps to be taken after proper touring of the hills. The positive reception which he received during the tour made him to believe that there was no finer body of men to be found anywhere than the men of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Medical Service; men who served their country and the land of their adoption under the most difficult circumstances and often in the most out of the way places.

While this preparation was afoot on the part of the Baptists, there was a serious rethinking among the Welsh missionaries on the revocation of the decision reached at the joint meeting in London. At one stage Giffith Giffiths suggested that they should let the Baptist take the whole field rather divide such a small one between two different societies. But the only alternative left for the Welsh missionaries was to proceed to the South Lushai hills in the event of the

85 Ibid., pp.19-20.
86 Ibid., p.20.
87 G. Giffith to E.J. Evans, 5 September 1901.
Baptists failing to occupy the district with the stipulated period. The home committee remained firm and the decision to transfer the southern portion of the Lushai field was consequently endorsed by the General Assembly in Liverpool in 1902.

Almost coinciding with the Baptists' decision to send a new missionary to South Lushai hills, late Robert Arthington's bequest in missions was made available to the BMS. It was probably the largest British gift ever made during that period to the missionary cause. Despite their enthusiasm and flowery reports, the Baptist evangelists so far failed to have any firm footing till Messrs Lorrain and Savidge who, after their departure from North Lushai hills, had been in the stride of the new evangelistic venture among the Abors (NEFA), were invited to the Lushailand again. Known for their works, the government officials gave an assurance that they would cooperate with them. If Lorrain and Savidge had left behind them in the north an abiding foundation together

88 By the time Arthington died, he left a fortune of about £1,119,848-155-2d. Over £100,000 was bequitted to his relatives, a few thousand to institutions and friends. The rest went to mission. See A.M. Chirgwin, op.cit., p.38.

89 The Missionary Herald (MH), (London), July 1903, p.358.
with useful literary and other tools for the Welsh missionaries to start with, they also had to start with a Christian community of about hundred twenty-five who were the first fruit of the Welsh mission. 90

According to the census of 1911, the number of Christian community rose to more than one thousand in spite of the threat that all who professed the new faith would be taken down to the plains to work as coolies. 91 It is doubtful whether the missionaries could have enrolled so many converts in so short a period even at the cost of their lives had they come before the native people who suffered military defeat. As the pax-Romana was an important factor for the rapid spread of Christianity in the first century, the pax-Britannica enabled the rapid expansion of Christianity into the hill tracts of Lushai hill. 92 Sometimes conditions, as Dr McGavran has pointed out, attending defeat conduced towards acceptance - acceptance of the conqueror's religion. 93 Equally important,

90 Dorothy F. Glower, Set on a Hill: The Record of Fifty Years in the Lushai Country (Bristol, 1944), p.23.
91 The Herald, BMS, 1924, p.200.
93 Ibid., p.245.
the opening up of better means of communication - properly cut-roads through the forests in various directions also made the evangelistic tours a far less laborious matter.94

2.4 The Welsh Missionary in South Manipur Hills

As the whole Manipur hills was claimed to be the exclusive field of the American Baptist Mission, other mission society or any individual missionary were looked upon as 'intruders'. It was Watkin R. Roberts who, accompanying Dr Peter Fraser to Lushai hills in December 1908, first broke the silence of the claimed but un­ trodden southern Manipur hills in 1910 for undenomina­tional mission field. In the beginning, Roberts did not wish to be considered himself as a missionary but undertook to act as dispenser and private helper of Dr P. Fraser at the Welsh mission medical clinic in Aizawl.95 Burdening himself for the 'lost souls', Roberts must have harboured the idea of establishing an independent mission field anywhere in North-East India. The turning point in this wishful fantasy was the invitation from a heathen tribal chief which reads: "Sir, come yourself, and tell us about this book and

95 Peter Fraser's letter to R.J. Williams, Secretary, WCMFMS, Liverpool, dated 14th September 1908.
your God". The appeal was taken as a Mecadonian call. Previous to the starting of the hazardous journey, Roberts thought it proper to seek entry permit and Cole, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills accordingly telegraphed the political agent of Manipur for the purpose. The permit to cross the border was officially granted to him by the native prince and the political agent. On the chief's request and offer of his land for a mission station, Roberts soon recruited native workers among the raw converts for the new pioneer mission at Senvawn.

If the founding of the Manipur pioneer mission was fulfilment of Roberts' long-cherished dream, it was also a beginning of trouble for him. In August 8, 1911, T.W. Reese, Secretary of the Welsh Mission District Committee, passed William Pettigrew's letter stating that the Secretary of American Baptist wanted all particulars of the Kukis of Manipur, with a view to extend their work among them, and also asking if Roberts, Dr Fraser or the Welsh Mission intended to take up work

96 Mr Roberts sent one copy of the Gospel of St. John in Lushai to the chief of Senvawn, the biggest Hmar village in South Manipur having a common border with Lushai hills. It was after some months that the same copy was brought back to Mr Roberts with the appeal. See Rochunga Pudalite's, The Glory of the Lord : The Study of Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission (Wheaton: Illinois, 1960), p.6.

97 The Observer (a Missionary Organ), July 1911.
in Manipur. Roberts replied by giving a detailed account of what was being done in the southern hills by an undenominational pioneer mission of which he himself was the founder. On 29 August 1911, the letter was duly acknowledged by Pettigrew with an agreeable tone and judging from the letter, no one could imagine that misunderstanding would crop up between Roberts and Pettigrew. Moreover, on their way to Khasi hills in December 1910, Reese introduced Roberts to Pettigrew at Budpur railway junction. Pettigrew then assured Roberts in the presence of other missionaries (T.W. Reese, Dr and Mrs Fraser, Miss E.M. Lloyd) that the American Baptists hoped to extend their work on the northern side of Manipur, and had no objection to Roberts' working among the tribes on the southern side. T.W. Reese was quite well-informed of Roberts' new mission because the latter spoke on how his new mission came into existence at the church service in Silchar with Mrs Reese as an interpreter. Most surprising was, therefore, that the district committee on which Reese was Secretary should nominate two or three of the brethren to enquire


99 Ibid., pp.3-4.

100 Ibid., p.8.
into the new mission and to ask Roberts his reasons for starting the new work.\textsuperscript{101} Whether the inquiry was conducted in response to Pettigrew's query or at the behest of the Secretary of American Baptist Missions, was not clear. Whatever might be, while the new mission was not officially linked up with the Welsh Mission, it cannot be denied that it was an expansion of Welsh Mission work directly or indirectly. It was perhaps for this reason that Dr Peter Fraser apprised the home committee of the Welsh mission about the significance which he attached to the pioneer mission being done where no mission work had been commenced excepting that of Pettigrew's in a very far away hill region.\textsuperscript{102}

While in Shillong, Roberts was again asked to speak on the new pioneer mission in about two places - Mawkhar Church, Shillong and Jowai. This is to say that the Welsh Missionaries both at home and on the field were well aware of the new mission movement from the very outset. But Roberts was not a regular missionary officially recruited by any mission society. So, the district committee in its meeting in September 26-28 at Shillong pleaded official ignorance about Roberts' new mission and regretted that the American Baptists were not informed

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p.8.
\textsuperscript{102} L. Fraser, Aizawl to R.J. Williams, Liverpool, dated 11 July, 1910, pp.6-7.
at the outset. Naturally, Pettigrew became more emboldened when he came to know that Roberts was being cold-shouldered by the other missionaries. He then wrote again to T.W. Reese that they (the American Baptists) regarded themselves as in possession of Manipur as a whole, adding that he 'refrained himself from writing something strong about his personal feelings in the matter'. Placed in such a state of mental frame, it is not surprising that Pettigrew immediately got an official order from the political agent of Manipur prohibiting Watkin Roberts from entering the state or carrying on work. The logic of the official argument was that no mission movement should disturb the established law and order. There was an element of truth in Pettigrew's argument that the whole hill territory of Manipur was regarded as the field of the American Baptists. The fact is that the Baptists had not so far penetrated into that part of the country. This was acknowledged by W. Pettigrew himself. But Roberts' action was taken as a breach of the principle of the comity of Protestant Mission Societies

103 Minutes of the District Committee Meeting in Shillong in September 26-28, 1911.

104 William Pettigrew, Manipur to T.W. Reese, dated 28th October 1911.

105 Ibid., dated 11th November 1911.
working in India which laid down that where one mission society had already started working, other mission should not undertake any work without prior understanding between them.106 The Secretary of the Welsh Mission, Liverpool, therefore, wrote back that in founding an undenominational mission in Manipur, thereby breaking the comity of missions, Roberts had acted entirely on his own responsibility, and instructed the Welsh Missionaries on the field not only to dissociate themselves from but to repudiate the steps which Roberts had taken in a field which all missionary societies in Assam had looked upon as part of the field for which the American Baptists were responsible.107

In the meanwhile, W. Pettigrew made a hasty trip to the area in question and offered the pioneer mission workers double wages if they would join him. While at Senvawn, he called the workers and most of the time was spent in discussing some theological questions like 'immersion'. Most surprising, Pettigrew allowed himself to be carried out in the steep mountain in the broiling sun by the native people.108 The native people appeared

106 Secretary, WCMFMS, Liverpool to D.E. Jones and Peter Fraser, 16 February 1912.

107 Ibid.

to be on the side of Roberts during all the critical period but the latter never had a chance to live among the people because of government restrictions.

The mission station thus established was to be manned entirely by the native workers upon whom Roberts had to rely. Despite his great enthusiasm and dedication, Roberts could not give his whole attention to his mission as he enrolled himself as an active member of YMCA and also served as Secretary of Scripture Gift Mission in Calcutta. Naturally, therefore, the new pioneer mission had very limited resources both in personnel and finance.

Even if the Welsh Mission thought in terms of disowning Roberts and his mission, it was not possible because their first converts in Lushai hills had to man the new mission. In December 1913, R. Dala was sent out as the first native missionary from Lushai hills to look after the pioneer mission as its field superintendent. In the task, the native missionary was assisted by the native teacher-evangelists, namely, Savamma, Vanzika and Taisena. Within so short a time, the mission spread over about twenty places and villages. On 20 December 1914, the first presbytery which Roberts also joined

109 V. Hwolla, op. cit., p.2.
110 Ibid., p.8.
was convened at Senvawn with R. Dala as Chairman and Taisena as Secretary.\footnote{111}

Failure to win over the new pioneer workers, Pettigrew took the help of the government to further restrain the movement of the pioneer mission. As has been pointed, Pettigrew was more or less a part of the colonial establishment and because of his incessant pressure, Higgins, President of the Manipur durbar, sent one *lamby* to Senvawn where the presbytery was being held with an order that the new mission workers should immediately leave Manipur as no other mission than the American Baptists would be tolerated.\footnote{112} The worst victims of this curse of sectarianism and denominational distinctions were always the native workers.

Seeing Cole, who had already been to Lushai hills, the political agent of Manipur, R. Dala, pleaded that his mission had spread all over the southwest of Manipur; he should be permitted to meet his people without any restriction whatsoever either from the government or from any other mission.\footnote{113} Cole did not budge from his


\footnote{112} Ibid., p.45.

\footnote{113} H.L. Sela (MSS), *op.cit.*, p.10.
stand and advised R. Dala that his mission should merge either with the American Baptist Mission or the Welsh Mission. In fact, Cole had already sought the opinion of D.E. Jones in Aizawl asking him how the Welsh mission would view the suggestion of taking out the pioneer mission.114 D.E. Jones tried to evade the issue and simply said that Roberts had never given them to understand that he would not be allowed to work in Manipur, but gave as a reason that he could not stay there as there was no path fit to go up to Senvawn.115 The attitude of Welsh mission towards the pioneer mission was well-known. Fearing to incur the wrath of American Baptists, the Welsh mission successfully kept themselves aloof from the conflict. But because of financial constraint, Pettigrew did not think it wise to pursue the matter and a sort of gentlemen's agreement was forced upon the two rival missions by Cole.116

With the solution of the conflict, there was a reconciliatory move both from the Welsh mission and the pioneer mission. In response to Watkin Robert's application, his name was recommended for ordination by the

114 D.E. Jones to R.J. Williams, 19 May 1915.
115 Ibid.
116 D.E. Jones to R.J. Williams, 9 September 1915.
In addition to this, the assembly also authorised the Lushai presbytery and the pioneer mission to work out the extent and modalities for mutual cooperation for future.\(^{118}\)

Despite the stress and strains, the pioneer mission began to penetrate into the neighbouring regions such as North Cachar hills, Tamu (Burma) and Tripura with those runaway converts (during the conflict) forming a new Christian community. What had begun at Senvawn in the teeth of the opposition, soon began to have its peripheral mission stations almost throughout the North-East India. In order to cope with this, Roberts changed the mission into the North East India General Mission (NEIGM), 1919.\(^{119}\)

While one cannot deny Roberts' genuine missionary zeal, his modus operandi and the manner in which the work of his mission was extended from its very inception, into the state of Tripura and into the province of Assam were wrapped up with evidences that he had little or no regard for rights of other missions.\(^{120}\) The extension of the NEIGM into Cachar was an example of the last breach of comity of which Roberts was held guilty. In fact, Roberts' and his mission was suspended from the comity of Protestant Foreign Missions in Bengal and Assam in December 1922.

\(^{117}\) F.J. Sandy to R.J. Williams, 14 July 1915.
\(^{118}\) Ibid.
\(^{119}\) D. Ruolngul, op. cit., p.20.
\(^{120}\) Letter addressed to Mr Crowe from Berar, Central Province, dated 27th February 1924.