CHAPTER 4

THE PROBLEM OF PROSELYTIZATION

This chapter looks at the larger dialogue between the Aos and the missionaries that marked the process of Ao conversion to Christianity, a dialogue that led to a synthesis between Ao culture and Christianity. Given the enormity of the task, the American Baptist missionaries who served in Naga Hills were often locked in debates about the best means of conversion. I would like to understand how Christianity initially looked at the Aos and their culture and how in the actual act of proselytization the practices of the Aos came to define the ideal Christian practices.

It is important to identify the peculiar features of the strategy of individual missionaries. The missionaries displayed a wide variation in their commitment to bring the Aos within the Christian fold. For instance, the pioneer missionary Rev. E.W. Clark envisioned conversion as a gradual process. But the missionaries who came later to the field wanted a radical transformation of the converts and their society according to strict Christian teaching.

The missionaries had to address various issues for their proselytization program. How were they to relate to the Aos and their culture? Were they to preserve or change past practices? What would be the basis of reform, Scriptures or dialogues? Was proselytization to proceed by force or by persuasion? The reports and records of the missionary conference, missionary magazines and journals tell us about the issues
and questions around which the debates among the missionaries were centered.

**Purifying the Natives:**

The missionaries launched their scheme to purify and reform the natives' lifestyles. They were not satisfied with baptizing the Aos or with their renunciation of ancestral worship. They wanted to transform the daily practices of the Aos. At the Jubilee Conference of the Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union in December 1886, Mr. Rivenburg who was serving among the Aos opened the discussion on 'the prevailing vices' and their possible treatment. In this conference the question of abstinence and temperance was vigorously debated. Mr Rivenburg stated:

They ferment the rice, and it becomes eatable. So far so good: but as fermentation proceeds, the liquid, which trickles out is intoxicating. This they drink. It seems the best thing would be to eat the fermented rice, but not drink the liquid. But the former leads to the latter, so we think we must teach them to dispense with both, lest the temple of the Holy Ghost be defiled.¹

It is worth mentioning that abstinence from intoxicants was seen as an important condition for becoming Christian. At the 1886 missionary conference, some of the missionaries were critical of any obsessive focus on the reform of lifestyles. They were of the opinion that spiritual transformation was more important than meddling with food habits and they opposed standardized discipline. Mr Mason Stated:

In all discipline there is a danger of laying down specific rules. In our mission, there is a tendency to magnify the merit and demerit of specific acts. If we make the refraining from these the standards of Christian character, this danger is increased. My opinion is that we should make no standard as to discipline, other than the scriptural ones.2

Rev. Clark who had lived with the Aos for several years felt total abstinence for the Aos was difficult. He found that reforms that do not follow directly from the scriptures were unnecessary. He said:

It is a matter of food with the Nagas in reference to maud (rice beer). The law of preservation compels them to ferment the bad rice. The Bible only demands temperance, not total abstinence. We can discipline, but must have scriptural authority, and not do it on the say of the missionary.3

Many missionaries were worried by the methods of discipline used by the church in some areas. In the course of a discussion Mr. Gruney cited the example of the Kolhs congregation which was also plagued by the problem of maud drinking. Some of the converts were expelled from the church because they were guilty of drunkenness. They were restored to the church membership only after they repented. Mr. Witter said that he would also combat the idea of merit in the refraining from vices but he felt that churches had been injured by the phenomenon of drunkenness, or open sin, and membership should not be too hastily

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3 Ibid.
restored, but should be under the watch care of the church. Mr. Burdette was to oppose repressive method. He was concerned about losing church members if abstinence was made a criterion for church membership. Adding a word of caution he said: "We must be positive, in our requiring them to attend worship. I cannot teach total abstinence from the scripture. In receiving converts I make total abstinence test strong, as, if one is not willing to give up the intoxicants then, I have little hope for him afterwards."5

The missionaries at the 1886 conference discussed at length what was to be controlled: drunkenness or drinking? How was drunkenness to be defined? Rev. Clark himself admitted, "One difficulty is, the Nagas do not get drunk easily. When does drunkenness begin? It is difficult to say just what is to be called drunkenness. Total abstinence is best.6

The reform was legitimized through reference to scriptures. Discourse against drinking was authenticated by profuse quotations from the Bible: "You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go in the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is lasting ordinance for the generations to come."7 Or again: "Wine is a mocker, and a beer a brawler; whoever is led astray is not wise".8 And "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Leviticus 10:9, Holy Bible, New International Version.
8 Proverbs 20:1, Holy Bible, NIV.
or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from the birth”. 9

The missionary’s insistence on total abstinence was also derived from the Christian concept of the body as a temple of God, which should not be defiled. “Don’t you know that you yourself are God’s temple and that God’s spirit lives in you” If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is sacred, and you are that temple”. 10 These ideas appear in the opening speech of Mr. Rivenburg at the 1886 missionary conference when he stressed the need of total abstinence from intoxicants lest ‘the temple of the Holy Ghost be defiled’.

When the Christian missionaries attempted to apply a programme of directed change in the food habit of the Aos, they argued that abstinence should not be a condition for church membership. Rev. Clark gives another account of how the issue of giving up rice beer entailed tension when the missionaries like Haggard and Perrine who came to serve among the Aos aggressively campaigned for teetotalism in 1892:

I was present when the question of temperance was discussed. No Naga present approved publicly of making total abstinence a basis of church membership. The leaders advised disciplinary sharp for any show of drunkenness. One of the most influential and outspoken man quickly remarked that wine was apparently used in New Testament and total

9 Luke1:5, Holy Bible, NIV.
10 1 Corinthian 3:16-17, Holy Bible. NIV.
abstinence from the use of it did not seem to be taught or made a condition for discipleship.\textsuperscript{11}

For several years the missionaries were to deal and argue constantly against the Ao habit of drinking rice beer. Rev. Clark soon understood that insistence on total abstinence was one of the factors for the slow process of conversion to Christianity amongst the Aos. In 1900 he wrote: “The missionaries are accused of meddling with the food of our converts, the great question ninety nine out of hundred is that of giving up rice beer, not a question of choice between the old faith and the new”.\textsuperscript{12} Rev. Clark further said that very seldom is a man intoxicated by rice beer since it is part of their daily diet. He felt that total abstinence was not a necessary requisite for church membership.

In all the dialogues that emerged between the missionaries and between the missionaries and the natives, it appeared that the Word in its pure form could not be legitimized. Christian temperance rather than abstinence gained ground. The campaign was not directed only against rice bear. One mode of reasoning suggested by an Ao Christian is that rice beer did not pose much of a problem before the coming of the British. “After the coming of the British, they introduced strong drinks and opium for the purpose of establishing friendly relations and for political reasons”.\textsuperscript{13} As rice beer was identified as one of the

\textsuperscript{11} Rev. Clark letter to Mr. Duncan, dated 19 September, Molungyimsen Baptist Church Record, Nagaland.

\textsuperscript{12} Rev. Clark’s letter to Dr. Barbour, dated 15 march, 1900, Moulngyimsen Baptist Church Record, Nagaland.

\textsuperscript{13} Takatemjen, \textit{Studies on Theology and Naga Culture}, Clark Theological College, Mikokchung, Nagaland, 1997, page 129.
intoxicating drinks the missionaries wanted to eliminate the use of it along with opium and other intoxicating drinks within the Christian community. At the annual meeting of the Ao Baptist Association in 1897 the council declared that all Christians should give up opium and liquor. As a substitute for drinking rice beer, black tea was introduced. And we are told: “At one time Christians were called tea drinkers”.14 Tea Became synonymous with Christianity, both were alien to this land.

**Missionary Attempt to Reform Early Christian Congregation:**
In their attempt to reform the early Ao Christian congregation some of the missionaries favored aggressive proslytization. The combative spirit on the part of the missionaries was soon translated into action. Mr. Haggard argued for severe steps and total conformity to Christian practices by church members. Mr. Haggard said that when he arrived in the Naga Hills, the churches were in need of ‘special care’. Haggard tells us that Mr.Clark had long felt that there were some practices to be eradicated from the church but he had not thought it wise to undertake the task until he was reinforced. After. Haggard and the other missionary arrived in the field they was no reason to delay in taking steps to reform the congregation. He reported:

> We began at once to consider the details of steps to be taken. Among other things, a covenant, which will serve both as a standard for individual church and also to define the position of the mission before the people on the great question of idolatry, liquor drinking and opium eating, Sabbath

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14 Ibid,16.
observance, marriage relation and the giving to the Lord's work.¹⁵

Despite the new missionary efforts and a more focussed approach to integrate the natives into the Christian fold, what followed was a period of heightened tension and instability. The consequences went beyond anything they might have anticipated because the new covenant formulated by the missionaries did not meet with an eager and submissive congregation. “As anticipated, it did not meet the approval of the members, but the time had come to rid of the mission of certain evils connected with the questions mentioned above; and a determined stand was necessary”.¹⁶ The missionaries were aware that what they were trying to impose on the congregation was against the wishes of the members; but the missionary zeal to reform the congregation according to strict Christian doctrines made them insensitive to the feelings of the natives.

Consequently missionaries battled over the strategies of proselytization. In the 1895 missionary conference Mr. Perrine reported that Rev. Clark himself had “pointed with sorrow of heart’ how he had grappled with the problem of the ‘evils’ in the church and had not succeeded in overcoming them. When Haggard joined the mission they again talked over the situation and planned reforms. But there were deep differences of opinion regarding the manner in which the members could be reformed:

¹⁶ Ibid.
When Haggard came we again talked over the situation and planned anew. We were practically a unit on the need of reform, but like all reformers found it difficult to unite on the lines of action and methods of work. In as much, therefore as Mr. Haggard and I seemed to be more nearly united on methods, it was finally thought best, that Mr. Clark turn such matters to us.\(^{17}\)

Haggard and Perrine felt the need for nothing short of an entire reorganization of the congregation and accordingly the church in Molungyimsen was disbanded and reorganized. In their quest for a more ordered and spiritualized church almost all the church members were suspended and only four members were found fit to be the members of the reorganized church. Such ‘radical measures’ as Rev. Perrine stated, seemed to have been taken with the approval of the church members. But suspending so many church members and enforcing adopting strict reforms could not expedite the process of conversion. This fact was indeed acknowledged by the missionaries themselves:

In a council of the Molung church we advised the church to disband and recognized. They acted on our suggestion, and the new church adopted a covenant, which takes a strong stand against most of the evils found in this field. Because of this action most of the work came to what some would call a

\(^{17}\) Minutes, Resolutions, and Historical Reports of the Fourth Triennial Conference of the Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union, December14-22, 1895, page, 43.
standstill. The Christians could not walk so fast nor so far as the covenant required, and so they fell away.¹⁸

Among the missionaries in the Naga Hills, Rev. Clark favored understanding and dialogue as a basis for conversion as opposed to the imposition of absolute standards. He was not pleased with the assertive strategy. He wrote: "To take my advice in such matters, and that they were disposed to be more dictatorial in dealing with Nagas than I thought otherwise...I did not object to reform but the way in which it was done".¹⁹ Rev. Clark was appalled by Haggard’s effort to address the Nagas even before he reached the field, and Clark wondered how Haggard could take radical steps to reform the people without even trying to understand their culture. Clark admitted that Haggard was discerning and his judgement based on knowledge was frequently good. But his assertive strategy was counterproductive. In one of his letters to the Home Board, Rev. Clark expressed his disapproval about Haggard’s assertive strategy to reform the natives. In March 1896 he wrote:

I am told that when he was coming to Assam and met a conference of some of our missionaries in Gauhati, he laid down the method of mission work in the Naga Hills though he had never seen the people or the country. Some with more imagination affected to this plan but he insisted that he was right. But on his arrival at Sibsagar he had to confess his mistake. He seems to have a very strong conviction that his judgements are right and that what is right should prevail.

¹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹ Rev. Clark letter to Mr. Duncan, dated, 29 September, 1896, Molungyimsen Church Record, Nagaland.
Also has a low estimate of the judgements of others and dispositions laid down by others.\textsuperscript{20}

Rev. Clark did make an attempt of sorts to grapple with the Aos and their culture in its various expressions. He felt that it was necessary to preserve some of the traditional practices because he understood that not all the Aos would agree to the demands of the missionaries to radically transform their mind to a new way of life. But some of the missionaries meddled with the practices of the Aos. For instance, in the custom of the Aos the elder persons are always given a prominent seat in any social gathering. The missionaries tried to interfere in this practice which the natives took as an insult to their understanding and to the wisdom of their fore fathers. Listen to Rev. Clark:

\begin{quote}
In arraying the public spirited men of the village against the new missionaries, who were irritated because the leading men were not meekly submissive, and yet they continue to occupy a prominent seat in the chapel, by which the consent of the people were reserved for them, because of the old it has been the custom among the Aos to respect old man especially those in authority.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

In the midst of all these tensions the Christian message appeared both puzzling and disconcerting for the Aos. They could not comprehend the missionary insistence on sobriety and the denunciation of rice beer, a drink they relished. The traditional practices and customs the

\textsuperscript{20} Rev. Clark’s letter to Mr. Duncan, dated, 18 March, 1896, Molungyimsen Baptist Church Record, Nagaland.

\textsuperscript{21} Rev. Clark to Duncan, dated 29 September, 1896, Molungyimsen Baptist Church Record, Nagaland.
missionaries sought to abolish needed to be examined, but the form of inquiry into them was problematic.

Forcible changes in cultural practices thus entailed much tension rather than expedite the process of conversion. By the end of the Nineteenth Century missionaries changed their policy and resorted to methods of persuasion. To achieve this end they had to get a common platform with the natives. The missionaries tried to make the people realize that their present state of life was due to a separation from God and the natives were told that eternal life is freely offered to all ‘who will return to our Father and accept his loving terms’. Rev. M.C. Mason in his speech “Methods of Work Among Hill People” at the 1900 missionary conference stated:

I would not say you all are sinners, full of drunkenness, lying, cheating and adultery, and will suffer a punishment. I would rather lead the listeners to admit that things exist, we live, we are subject to law, causes produce results, our present condition is the result of the helpless creature being separated from his almighty and loving father. But that loving father would restore to us all that has been lost, and now begs us to leave the sin which is causing our ruin and accept of righteousness from him.\(^\text{22}\)

In the process of interaction between the Aos and Christianity, forcible conversion lost ground. To carry forward the project of conversion, it was necessary to accommodate the cultural practices of native society

\(^{22}\) Minutes, Resolutions and Historical Reports of the Sixth Session of the Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, December 22-31, Gauhati, page 62.
and persuade the local Aos into believing that Christianity was not opposed to their ancient religion.

Educating the Natives:
Individual missionaries began to have doubts about attempts to push forward with their project large-scale conversion through preaching alone. Education soon came to be seen as a means to remove obstacles in the way of prosleytization. The Baptist Missionary Union in their original constitution had recognized education as one of the means to be adopted for introducing Christianity in India. It was considered that one of the greatest instruments of Christianity will be the diffusion of Christian knowledge and missionary schools became as Dufferin wrote in 1830, ‘highways to the general success of Christianity’. 23

Through education missionaries hoped to appeal to the mind of the people through the power of word and knowledge, reshape their mind. The Christian outsider saw that the Aos were attracted by the printed word and thus education was recognized as a possible agency through which the ideals Christianity could be communicated. The Aos, we are told, stood peering, manifesting much interest at the school conducted by the Christian missionary in Assam. The type setting, printing and binding of books were part of a new world of wonders for the Aos. Rev. Clark narrates an incident of how the Aos came to see the school conducted by him in Assam:

They stood peering at all the children who were studying and reciting; ‘see’, said one smiling, “These children talk to the

white and black things they hold in their hands!” The black and white things were books and slates. Aiao! They tell the grown up men the things they say also. It is most wonderful.24

The educational programme carried out by the missionary continued to attract the attention of the Aos. Time and again the Aos invited the missionaries to teach them the “way of knowledge and teach them the new way”. Rev. Clark again tells us how he was persuaded by the Aos to teach them after they had seen how the school was conducted in Assam:

During the next few months the members of parties to see the school increased. Time after time they called on me and insisted that I go with them to the hills. I saw that they were anxious for something better for their children than they themselves knew, and they believed that they saw the ideal work, which was being for children on the plains.25

The representation of the Aos as deficient in knowledge justified missionary intervention Gauri Viswanathan argues that such representation is linked to the changing structure of “relationships between those for whom educational prescriptions are made and those who arrogate to themselves the status of ‘prescriber’”.26

The Assam Mission Conference of the American Baptist Missionary Union held in 1886 looked at education from different angles. Rev.

26 Gauru Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest, Literary Study and British Rule in India, Faber and Faber, London, 1990, page,4.
Burdette in his paper “The Claims and Conduct of Mission” Schools shifted the emphasis from direct evangelism to preparation, which was more of a question of shaping mental attitude as a prerequisite to conversion. He said, “If knowledge is man’s supreme need and the chief prerequisite to conversion, than surely, those who know the most are nearest the kingdom and are fittest subjects for preaching and exhortation, and the first step of evangelization must be, the increase of knowledge”.\(^{27}\) According to the missionary argument, the Aos in their state of ignorance were indifferent to the virtues of Christianity and thus education was absolutely indispensable for intelligent and growing Christian community.

Some missionaries were skeptical of this increased concern with education. During the course of discussion that followed, the missionaries debated about the extent to which the intellectual cultivation was needed for conversion. Rev. Clark expressed his apprehension about an ‘error creeping into many missionaries’ minds, as to the power of education to mould character. Though he saw education as a possible agency for communicating Christianity to the people, he stressed the need of the work of the ‘Divine Spirit’ and made it known that school alone cannot do the work of evangelization. “Education, as ordinarily understood and conducted, does not, I feel confident, foster spiritual life” he said.\(^{28}\)

\(^{27}\) Papers and Discussion of the Assam Mission Conference of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, page,166.

\(^{28}\) Ibid, page,181.
Mr. Mason agreed with Clark that secular education was powerless to mould man’s character. While he recognized the need of education for developing a person’s mind, he cautioned his fellow missionaries not to be led into error by their own preconceived ideas. Miss Bood disagreed speaking more from an evangelical point; she fervently maintained that education was needed to help the mind to develop so that it would be more receptive to the Holy Spirit.

Two main themes characterized the debates of the missionaries at the 1886 missionary conference. While it was claimed on the one hand that education alone cannot develop the minds of the natives, the missionaries maintained that education would lead to enlightenment and loss of faith in pagan practices and this would begin to distance the Aos from their past and persuade them to look at the world from different perspectives. Most importantly, the missionaries recognized that for Christian faith, to gain a more lasting foothold in the Naga Hills, the situation required a demonstration of the religious and moral principles, which would validate their position and the legitimacy of Christianity. Ideally school education was one means by which this could be achieved.

Vernacular in Mission Strategy:

Presenting the gospel in the vernacular language figured as an important strategy in the Baptist mission work. Gauri Viswanathan has argued: “Far from being an annoying nuisance, the native languages
were regarded by the missionaries as absolutely crucial to the determination of truth".\textsuperscript{31} The missionaries in the Naga Hills pursued the policy of presenting the gospel in local language to relate to the people that they sought to minister. Rev. Burdette talked about the ‘Selection of a Dialect’ while presenting the paper on ‘Claims and Conduct of Mission Schools’ at the 1886 missionary conference. He stated: “It is quite indispensable that the people should hear in their tongue the wonderful news of God, and therefore, that portions of the scripture should be issued in every considerable and considerably distinct dialect”\textsuperscript{32} The alien could be made familiar when introduced in a known language.

Knowing language became a process constituting its structure. To know it had to be made knowable. The immediate step required was to reduce the Ao tongue to writing since the Aos did not have a script of their own. At the Third Triennial Conference of the Assam mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union held in Tura in 1893, it was resolved to introduce the Roman alphabets in writing the languages of the tribes of the Naga Hills. S.A. Perrine’s report of the Naga field at the missionary conference in 1895 reveals the way in which every detail was looked into in understanding the Ao dialect:

Much work has been bestowed on the Ao dictionary. It has been written again, and thoroughly revised. The cross-references are numerous, the many synonym or partial

\textsuperscript{31} Gauri Viswanathan, \textit{ Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India}, page, 104-105.

synonym are noted as the different ideas peculiar to each. The origin of many words is indicated where it can be satisfactorily ascertained. These varieties of work in addition to the giving of definitions increase the labor. But it is hoped that the dictionary will be all the more valuable for one and who wishes to study the language and master it”.

It was as if the hard labor, the cross references, the detailed etymology of word transformed the work into authoritative text. The Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta published the Ao Naga Dictionary complied and written by Rev. Clark in 1911. In the collection of material local pundits helped the missionary and for the study of language every missionary was given language allowance. The missionaries had to give at least two annual examinations and they were obliged to send report of the result to the Home Board. Tedious effort went into the revision of the Ao dictionary. Rev. Clark himself reported:

Before my time no mission work had been done in the tribe and no effort had been made to reduce the language to writing. For the dictionary, correct spelling as well as the meaning of every word has to be carefully considered...In writing the dictionary the third time, I am now in the letter O of the alphabet. New words and new meanings to word already obtained are constantly being added. This is, of course, true of every living language, but all the more Ao is it in a first attempt to compile a dictionary in a language.

33 Minutes, Resolutions and Historical Reports of the Fourth Triennial Conference of the Assam Mission of the ABMU, Sibsagar, December, 14-22, 1895, page,42.

In the process of reducing the Ao tongue to writing the dominant dialect of the Aos, Mongsen, was replaced by the Chungli dialect because the missionary started their literary work in Chungli speaking area. Panger Imchen an Ao scholar says that mongsen is literary, original and poetic. “All the ancient songs, poetry, and literary creation were performed in mongsen. Today, even a Chungli speaking man sings his cultural songs and literary pieces in Mongsen true to ancient Ao literature”.35 Imchen feels that the present literary system should combine both together. He further suggests: “If Ao literature has to prove its richness, it should be in such a way that the structure of a sentence should be a combination of Chungli and Mongsen dialects. That is the best way of reviving the rich ancient Ao literature for the Chungli dialect alone cannot serve the purpose”.36 There again we see Ao Christians being more sensitive to tradition. Even on the question of language ancestor tradition had to combine with the new.

School as an Agency of Evangelization:

Schools were important in mission strategy for several reasons. The establishment of schools accompanied the founding of a new church. These schools were called mission schools. Mrs. Clark established the first formal school in Nagaland in 1878 at Molungyimsen, which was a girls school. Rev. Clark started the second school in 1880 at Merangkong with the assistance of Godhula and M.D. Burnath. In the month of July, Rivenburg entrusted Zilli to open a school at Lerumen. By the early 1930s there were about seventy-six mission schools in the

36 Ibid.
Ao, Lotha and Sema areas under the leadership of the Ao Baptist Association.

School was recognized as an agency for making the mission work permanent in the Naga Hills. Rivenburg said, “I believe there is an immense talk about christianizing heathen savages, at least without giving them secular schools to make the work permanent. I am the last, who want to do school work but someone must teach in schools and make books or our work will be transitory”.37 In another occasion again he stressed the need of schools for mission work:

I think who work in the hills will agree with me when I say that with hill men no mode of missions can compare with education. Through schools the Gospel is made to reach the mountaineers more rapidly and permanently than by any other means. The importance of schoolwork then, among the hill tribes cannot be overestimated. We have therefore made school work a specialty.38

Schools also brought the natives under the discipline of an institution where Christian ideas could be systematically inculcated in the minds of the natives. At the 1886 missionary conference Rev. Burdette clearly stated the objective of maintaining schools for ‘practical ends’. He said: “If there is anything which the missionary desires to introduce or explain or commend to the heathen people, it seems well to do so

37 Joseph Puthenpurakal, Baptist Missions in Nagaland, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1984, Revenburg quoted, page, 78.

38 Minutes of the 8th Session of the Assam Mission of the ABMU, Gauhati, December, 24, 1904-January 1, 1905, page 58.
systematically in a stated place, to enroll pupils under the discipline of school as in other ways”.

The missionary by assuming the ‘respectable title’ of a teacher was to have the advantage to “have access to the minds of heathen, old or young, while in the receptive, trustful attitude of a school”. A lesson in the form of responsive reading from one of the late nineteenth century textbooks taught in the mission school shows how the missionaries tried to change the minds of the natives to look upon school as a place for learning and disciplining oneself. The full text is worth quoting:

Na kechiba kakvt asidake aor?
Ina, ni laishiba zvngdange aor.
Kaket ashidak alidang na asaiya asu?
Ken kenbo nema-nema asaiya menvr.
Azibo majung. Kidang alidang asaiyangma.
Tanur tajungibo kaket ashidak masaiyar.
Na pei lashiba nung temulung tenok tenoka ashir asv?
Au, o azak azvngtsvbo shidage.
Azibo zunger.
Na pei saiylutsungir dang kanga meimang, pa o angang
Aser pae kechi shidir, azi temulung nung tenok-tenoka bilemang ma.

[Why do you go to school?
To learn how to read the Bible.

Do you play in the school
Sometimes.
That's bad. You play at home.
A good child does not play in the school.
Do you concentrate in learning the Bible?
Yes, I am learning to read the word.
That's good.
You should love your teacher,
Whatever he teaches you, you should keep in your heart.]

In the text several themes that were aimed at inducing the minds of the natives are visible. It was clearly stated that the school had to be viewed as a place for learning the Bible, as well as for disciplining the pupils according to Christian values. It was not a place for play. Students had to respect teachers and listen to his words. Christian ideals fused with disciplinary pedagogy in defining the content of school texts.

The need for native teachers and preachers to expedite the process of proslytization was recognized by the missionaries from the very beginning. Re. P.H. Moore in his speech ‘The need of a native ministry and how to supply it’ at the 1886 missionary conference defined native ministry as “the native human agency for ministering to the spiritual needs of the people, including pastors, evangelists, deacons and deaconess or Bible women”.

The mission school was to for produce the native teachers and preachers. Rev. E.W. Clark said in 1888:

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41 Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference of the Assam Mission of the ABMU, Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, page, 158.
The main object of these schools is the proclamation of the
gospel to the people of a village where the school is located.
The first converts are usually from the men of middle life.
Later, as the children grow up, we reap from the schools; and,
as these know how to read and write the scriptures, we have a
better foundation for church membership and for preachers. 42

The educators had first to be educated. Preachers had to know His
Words.

The Politics of Curriculum:
The educational policy of the Baptist mission in Nagaland during the
initial years was geared towards the preaching of gospel. The schools
that were established were to be concerned mainly with imparting
Christian education. In the 1886 missionary conference- a threshold
one with regard to education, the missionaries discussed the nature of
curriculum to be followed by the mission school. Rev. Burdette said,
"The one thing needed, the peculiar thing to be imparted by the schools
is knowledge of the word of God". 43 The need to use secular education
as 'bait' was also emphasized. The best course of study for the
accomplishment of this purpose was to honestly select the subjects on
approved pedagogical principles. However he fiercely stated that as
soon as the pupil was able to take up memory studies and logical
exercise, scriptural studies had to be introduced in the course. He
further said, "As the class nears the close of the contemplated course of

43 Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference of Assam Mission of the ABMU,
Nowgong, December 18-29, 1886, page, 177.
general instruction, the course in the mission school should become more purely religious and scriptural". 44 No elaborate instruction was to be given in other specialties at mission expense.

The works of the missionaries which were part of what was labeled as literary curriculum were: Ao Naga Premier No.1, [1877], Naga Catechism, [1878], The gospel of Matthew, [1882], The gospel of John, [1884], Life of Joseph, [1884], Ao Naga Grammar with Illustrative Phrases and Vocabulary, [1893], Ao Naga Premier no.2, [1893]. The intention of teaching such books as part the of curriculum in the mission schools was to convey theological messages more effectively even before the Bible was taught as an authoritative exposition. In one of the textbooks used in the school, *The Second Ao Naga Primer* there were lessons on science such as the shape of the earth, Ao folk tales, lesson on discipline, the importance of going to school, etc. Interestingly in the lesson on the human body, the text discusses the number of bones in the body and the functions of all the parts of the body, but at the same time in this text the student is made to read that human beings are God’s creation and thus they should give thanks to him. 45

The stories and lessons established the authority of the Bible, even when the Bible was not taught. Listen to the way the missionaries taught the lesson on Bible:

Ina, Taribi, ni laishiba tasen ka angu,

Kong angu? Shibai aguttsu?
Sayutsungir tazungba agvtsu.
Laishiba nung kechisa aket?
Kechisarena aket.
Laishiba azungtsu shira, tesangra akvmtsu, shisa jenti anguts, iba seir Tsungrem laishiba mela mela shitetsu.
Tsungrem laishiba shira kechi asvtsu?
Ina, kvmtetsu lemang angutsu.
Ya atangji na? Auhae, Nae kv den kaket ashidake arungzo; idakzi sayutsungir lir, koda meima saiylutsu.46

[I have got a new Bible.
Where did you get it?
The preacher gave it to me
What is there in the Bible?
Everything.
If we read the Bible we will become wise,
Our knowledge will increase,
We will be able to preach the word of God.
What else do we learn if we read the Bible?
We can come to know the way of salvation.
Is it for real?
Yes. You come with me to the school,
There is the teacher and he will love you and teach you.]

The politics of educating the Aos is very clear in the dialogues of the responsive reading texts. The Bible is introduced as the source of

46 Ibid, pages, 6-7.
knowledge and wisdom and the way to salvation. School is seen as a place of acceptance where the teacher teaches the pupils with love and care. The teacher was there to tell the students all that he needed to know, he was there to guide him in the path of salvation.

Instruction in the knowledge of the word of God in successive stages was to be the conscious purpose of the missionary teacher. Mary Mead Clark tells us: “In our school the Bible is the text book, with such other books as directly bear on the Bible”. 47 This was concerned with the Bible making its impact on its readers, both logically and emotionally. Rev. S.A. Perrine at the 1895 missionary conference reported: “In reciting orally the Bible narrative—more especially the Old and the new Testament stories improves the students in their English rapidly, fixes in their mind what the Bible really says and give them a fund to draw from in preaching which is of the highest value”. 48

The clue to the mission strategy in using the Bible to make an appropriate impact on its readers both logically and emotionally lies in the power of the Bible in its images Viswanathan points out as:

The power of the Bible lies in its imagery. If images could be regarded as arguments, reasons, and demonstrations that illustrates and reinforce the truth, the best means to conversion was, accordingly, through an appeal to the imagination. The horrors of sin and damnation were not to be understood through reasons bit through images that give the


48 Minutes, Resolutions and Historical Reports of the 4th Triennial Conference of the Assam Mission of the ABMU, December, 14-22, 1895, page, 45.
reader a “shocking specter of his own deformity and haunt him, even in his sleep”. The truth of Christianity was presented in vain unless it was seen, unless it was felt. To read the Bible well, to be moved by its imagery, to be instructed by its “dark and ambiguous style, figurative and hyperbolical manner,” the imagination first had to be fully trained and equipped.49

Despite all the spadework done by the missionaries in introducing education to the Nagas, they could not do much to promote higher education. It was only in 1904, twenty years after the establishment of the first school in 1878, that the first government lower primary school was established in Molungyimsen by Mr. William who was the Sub Divisional Officer at Mokokchung. Government schools increased significantly during 1930s. In 1938, out of 167 educational institutions, 115 were government lower primary schools, 10 government aided primary schools, 2 upper primary school, and 2 upper primary standard mission aided schools.

After the Ao land came under the jurisdiction of the British administration, educating the natives ceased to be a monopoly of the missionaries. In this regard Mary Mead Clark writes:

New arrangements have been made by which the government educational department takes over the village schools, thus far without seriously affecting the faithfulness of the teachers as church leaders. Such government inspection unquestionably stimulates both teachers and pupils to greater thoroughness,

49 Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest: Literary study and British Rule in India, page,55.
while at the same time it places at the disposal of the mission the experience of trained educational leaders and diminishes financial burden by grants-in-aid.\textsuperscript{50}

Till 1904, the interest of the British administration in promoting education in the Nagas Hills was lukewarm. It was mainly limited to pecuniary grants to the Christian missionaries. After 1904, the British administration changed its policy and took up the task of promoting education in the Naga Hills on a larger scale. This change of attitude is noted by Rev. S.A. Perrine in his report at the Missionary conference in 1905: “On returning from furlough I found the government greatly interested in education, where as formerly it seemed decidedly lukewarm”.\textsuperscript{51}

The educational policy for the Nagas was an extension of the policy that the British pursued throughout India. After 1857, they followed a cautious policy of dissociating literature from religion. British administrators wanted to avoid all imputations of inference in native religion. The government was apprehensive of the content of Christian education. The utilitarian influence in educational policy of the British meant a break in the relationship between the religious and secular motives. Viswanathan argues:

Rather the return to secularism is less a rejection of an earlier pedagogical approach to stressing the identification of literature with religious value than a secular re-inscription of ideas of truth, knowledge, and law derived from one sphere

\textsuperscript{50} Clark, \textit{A corner in India}, page, 165.

\textsuperscript{51} Minutes of the Eight Session of the Assam Mission of the ABMU, Gauhati, December 24, 1904 to January 1, 1905.
after another; the setting up within each of these spheres, of a secular orientation and autonomous explanatory laws; and ultimately the confinement of religion to matters of religious faith alone, excluding even morals.\textsuperscript{52}

The British adopted a policy of non-interference for reasons of expediency and there was a subtle shift in purpose from an assertion of Christian truth to an endorsement of British laws, institutions and government. This policy according to Viswanathan, generated an image of the English as benign, disinterested, detached, impartial and judicious.

The different ways in which both the missionaries and the colonial rulers launched the educational programme for the Nagas lead to several conceivable arguments. They had different interests at stake. For the Baptist Mission the educational measures were necessary to enable Christianization. They appealed to the Aos through the power of word and knowledge. This was a response to tension that had besieged the individual missionaries in their proselytization. The policy of the British shows how the vulnerability of their position in regard to Naga Hills was camouflaged to legitimate their intention to rule. The use of coercive force was not the dominant policy. Education was evolved as one of the agencies to disseminate Christian values and legitimizing western authority and hegemony over the mind of the natives.

The legitimation of western authority over the mind of the natives can be further discussed by looking at how pedagogic action entails the

\textsuperscript{52} Viswanathan, \textit{Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India}, page, 95.
hegemony of the dominant culture. According to Pierre Bourdieu, all pedagogic actions whether it is diffused or exerted by educated members of a social formation or group or by the system of agents explicitly mandated for this purpose by an institution, directly or indirectly produce the cultural arbitrary of the dominant culture or the dominant group. Pedagogic action legitimizes its authority by drawing out the implications of its acceptance by any group of people upon whom it is exerted. Bourdie writes:

In any given social formation, because the pedagogic work through which the dominant pedagogic work is carried on tends to impose recognition of the legitimacy of the dominant culture on the members of the dominated groups of classes, it tends at the same time to impose on them by inculcation or exclusion recognition of the legitimacy of their own cultural arbitrary.\textsuperscript{53}

Thus it can be argued that the power that pedagogic action exercises upon a society is more than the widening of mental horizon of the people. Christianity and education legitimized their power when the Aos bowed to the power of word and knowledge. However it was the western education that displayed its legitimacy explicitly. As Viswanathan would say:

Its power rested on the idea that European disciplines, being products of human reasons, were independent of systems of beliefs based on pure faith. Therefore, by proving that faith merely proposed, they confirmed for more than mere truthfulness of Christian belief; more important, they

demonstrated the power and authority of the western mind to penetrate the mysteries of the natural and phenomenal world.\textsuperscript{54}

The British and the missionaries with their powerful hegemonic vision saw the Naga society as being uncivilized. So what they did was to reclaim, refine, educate and enlighten the natives and incorporate them within the fold of western ideas. The Nagas began to see education as a process of enlightenment. Education enabled the Nagas to accept the trend of changes as well as recognize the necessity to retain certain values. Selective elements of the past and present intermixed. In the process the Aos themselves grafted the new on to the old order.

\textsuperscript{54} Viswanathan, \textit{Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India}, page, 109.