CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. GENERAL CONTENT OF THE INVESTIGATION

The Dimasa Kachari people are a traditional community living for the most part in eastern Assam and western Nagaland. This mixed methods investigation will pursue the attitudes of young Dimasas with at least some college education towards their traditional worldview and religious practices. Two related but intertwined questions are addressed. First, do young Dimasas, having attended at least some years of college beyond secondary education, hold different outlooks on these matters than do older Dimasas in the rural villages of Dima Hasao District? Second, what factors carry significant weight in that difference? It will establish through a mixed methods inquiry that the attitudes of younger Dimasas are indeed moving away from traditional beliefs and that this movement, while uneven in scope among different youths, is accompanied by attitudes that are salient to their religious stance, attitudes fall into some rather predictable patterns. It is an exploratory study because, given the dearth of previous work on these questions and the rigors of gathering data, the results will provide a number of areas for further investigation. Further, as an etic study, it can hardly offer a final word on one aspect of a rich and integrated culture.
1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The questions surrounding individuals' attitudes toward any religious aspect of their lives have generated an immense amount of research. This is often in support of various theories. For the most part, these have been undertaken almost exclusively in the environment of Euro-American culture and the Abrahamic tradition. While there are some studies on world religious phenomena, these are confined to studies on major "great" religions such as Taoism, Hinduism, and particularly Islam. The faiths and practices of traditional communities, how religious realities are embedded in their lives and society and how those realities change for individuals or groups are, with a few exceptions, unexplored. This is so much the case that even the vocabulary of religious studies – 'religion', 'aspect of lives' and 'faiths' (to name three mentioned in this paragraph) form an inappropriate stance and outlook for examining the experience of traditional peoples.

Difficulties begin with the very term 'religion.' Wilfred Cantwell Smith in The Meaning and End of Religion (1962) spearheads this awareness. He asserts that the very term, comparatively recent though it be, has survived any usefulness. Machalek (1977) similarly cautions that the term calcifies what is a multi-faceted reality. Claerhout and De Roover (2005) is one of the few studies that place this in the context of the Indian experience, albeit to majority realities that are at best tangential to traditional communities. Difficulties abound in this area, with even such bedrock western concepts such as 'supernatural' challenged (Hultkrantz, 1983). The difficulties visible here are not limited to the difficulties of religious studies of traditional cultures. Even within western scholarship, what precisely might be meant by 'religion' is either ignored, vague, or unique to each researcher.

Two western paradigms that are of interest and that offer possible insight to religious behavior of traditional communities are secularization and rational choice theory. Rather early in social scientific discussion of secularization, Peter Berger's A Sacred Canopy (1967/1990) provided a paradigm for the phenomenon in the West. That same year Larry Shiner (1967) noted with dismay that in his review of the literature the term 'secularization' embraced six contradictory meanings. Thus, like religion, the concept of
secularization appears to be one that everyone knows the meaning of, but that few bother to helpfully define. Swatos and Christiano (1999) quote a certain Edward Bailey, who puts it, "Secular" is really quite easy to define! Its meaning keeps changing yet remains consistent. It always means, simply, the opposite of "religious" - whatever that means.' Their levity reflects a most serious problem for the field as a whole.

Further, some sociologists such as Rodney Stark (1999c) deny the very reality of secularization. Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (2007) provides an exhaustive account of the phenomenon, though Taylor notes with caution that he addresses only North Atlantic (Europe, North America, and presumably Australia) cultures. He isolates the concept of 'subtraction' as a naïve and unhelpful description of what goes on. For Taylor, 'subtraction' in secularization means eliminating divine causes out of explanations of the world and replacing it with the efforts of a positivistic science. Secularization, Taylor asserts, is instead a radical change in a culture's social imaginary. This social imaginary is the unconscious presuppositions of a society, a pre-rational consensus about how the world is. It is the concept of how things go and should go in a community, shared by that community. Taylor also speaks of 'buffered selves', cultures with a "clear boundary between mind and world, even mind and body" (Taylor, 2008). Both concepts will prove helpful in providing a context for contemporary young Dimasas' current world views.

In addition to these possibilities, the work of Robert Bellah (1964, 2011) discusses pre-literate religions, which he unfortunately characterizes as 'archaic'. His conclusions raise a significant difficulty in situating any grand theory in the specific instance of traditional communities. Can a culture that has not, so far as we know, embraced a description of a transcendent, creative, divine authority become 'secularized'? Berger says, 'differentiation', a key concept entailing a split between 'this world' and the 'other world', is occasioned by belief in a transcendent god (Tschannen, 1991). How might that make sense in a religious world view that is neither strongly transcendent nor strongly conceives of an 'other world'. This is certainly the case with the Dimasas, as will be seen.

Rational choice theory can be rooted in Lorne Dawson's seminal paper 'Self-Affirmation, Freedom and Rationality' (1990). Dawson argues that not all human behavior is socially determined; rather, there exist rationally chosen 'free' actions. As developed by
many theorists and researchers (Bainbridge & Stark, 1996; Gartrell & Shannon, 1985), and defended by others (Iannaccone, 1995), the theory appears to provide explanations for much of the religious behavior in the west. For that very reason Sharot (2002) and Carroll (1996) attack it as hopelessly 'American'. Despite serious challenges, the theory is refreshing because it restores human choice and personal agency in sociological considerations.

Like other work in the area, many efforts have been put forth by researchers outlining the elements of religion. In *Religion and Society in Tension* Charles Glock and the ubiquitous Rodney Stark (Glock & Stark, 1965) provide five aspects that comprise religion. Again, this analyzes only western religious experience. Many other characterizations are also available, as will be mentioned in the following chapter. There are many studies as well, also discussed in the Literature Review, of reasons for changes in religious behavior. Since this is the main focus of the present study, such efforts cannot be ignored.

Finally, there is very limited work on the religious cultures of traditional communities. Robert Horton describes African tribal religious practices and theological changes stemming from widening social horizons (Horton, 1971, 1975a). There are many descriptions of the worldviews and rituals of North Eastern traditional communities available as well. More specifically, Deborah Tooker (1992) in a largely neglected paper provides remarkable insights into the religious style of traditional communities. Tooker's perception will emerge as critically important in the discussions that follow.

### 1.3. WHY DIMASAS? WHY NOW?

Why study these people, the Dimasas, at this time? Three opportunities emerge. First, Dimasa society continues to face the pressures of encountering the wider world, and this at an accelerating pace. While there are, of course, Dimasas of the older generation who have pursued higher education and have already entered professional life, they are relatively rare. The present years see the first large cohort of Dimasa youth to be educated outside of the North Cachar Hills. A significant
change was wrought by the founding of Tularam Memorial-Good Shepherd School in Gunjung, Dima Hasao District, Assam, in 1999 by the Society of Jesus at the request of several Dimasa leaders. Other schools followed. Graduates of Christian schools in Dima Hasao District have begun successfully entering tertiary college programs in significant numbers. This significant increase in Dimasa youths with the desire and ability to pursue higher education began around the year 2004. In a real sense, then, the present generation now in college or having completed college is the first batch with sufficient numbers that allows an investigation of this kind to be profitably undertaken.

The second opportunity that exists is more fundamental. As the Literature Review in Chapter 2 makes plain, research of this kind has simply not been done previously in North East India. Social science in the region of North-East India focuses on the many crucial social issues that face the many peoples of this land. So far as I can determine, there is very little basic research that directly surveys the attitudes and thoughts in this sphere of people of traditional cultures.

The third opportunity is closely related. As will be seen in the discussion of previous research in Chapter 2, there has been a massive amount of research by western social scientists on aspects of the religious life of western people. Grand paradigms such as secularization and rational choice are hotly debated. Studies on why individuals join, persevere in, change, or leave religious beliefs and practices is extremely common. While there has been some explorations of other Asian populations (Abel, 2006; R. Robertson, 1987; F. Yang, 1998) and some intriguing forays into Muslim (Gonzalez, 2011; Krauss, Hamzah, & Idris, 2007) and Hindu (Francis, Santosh, Robbins, & Vij, 2008) religiosity, there seems few or no basic investigations of the religious traditions of the many traditional societies of North-East India. It is hoped that this enquiry will to some small extent begin to fill that gap.

There are, unfortunately, few sources for entry into the Dimasa religious world. Dipali Danda's classic Among the Dimasa of Assam: an Ethnographic Study (1978) is the most reliable, but as will be seen in Chapter 3, overlooks at least one important aspect,
purity, and is also quite timeworn. Can a 40 year old book reflect contemporary reality? Other efforts on Dimasa religion, noted but unimportant, reflect the experience of the highly Sanskritized Barmans of Cachar District.

Where, then, do we stand in an effort to understand what is happening among the Dimasas?

1.4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As maintained throughout the brief outline of the background of the problem, there is a wide gap into which this investigation might be inserted. Indeed, the lack of direct study of the Dimasas, of the religious genius of traditional communities, and apparent scholarly nescience with regard to possible religious changes of such groups, provide a wide open field. Indeed, the field is too wide for anything beyond a limited exploration, one that will hopefully set some reliable benchmarks for further study. The gap in the knowledge the inquiry sought specifically to address are four:

- First, what are current beliefs of the Dimasas of the Dima Hasao District? Danda (D. G. Danda, 1978) remarked on the rapidity with which Dimasa culture was already changing in 1978. This study will focus first on what Dimasas currently hold to be true and practice as a result of that stance on reality. While these judgments even among older rural Dimasa people are broadly similar, they are hardly univocal any longer, if ever they were.

- Second, Danda outlines many of the truths that were held and the practices that were performed. Are they embraced with the same strength among the different generations? Are young Dimasas who attend or who have attended colleges more traditional, as traditional, or less traditional as a group than their elders in the hills? The answer seems obvious, but has never been systematically explored.

- Third, what are other components of a more traditional worldview among young people, and what accompanies a less traditional approach to life?
• Fourth, is there some overarching characterization of this process? Is this secularization? Rational choice? What way of thinking about what is happening honors the reality of Dimasa experience?

What, then, is the general method best suited to provide answers to these questions?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My hope is that the information gained through this study will provide valuable baseline knowledge for scholars whose interests lie in North East India. Serious challenges arise in gathering data in traditional communities, which will be specified in Chapter 2. Efforts in this study to overcome these difficulties will be documented and evaluated. More importantly, I hope that when the results of the study are shared with Dimasas in various forums, it will lead to their own reflection on the findings and so provide insight and an opportunity to exert more control and direction to the cultural changes they are currently moving through.

1.6. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The inquiry into the attitudes of young Dimasas is not suited to a one-faceted approach. In view of the desire to invite sectors of the Dimasa leadership to reflect on the direction of their culture, the first requirement seemed to be to provide clear evidence that young people actually do approach traditional Dimasa religious beliefs and practices differently than do their elders. To accomplish this, a quantitative approach centered on a survey to highlight possible differences seemed most appropriate. In addition, such quantitative measures, while not providing truth in themselves, can provide extremely useful 'snapshots' of social realities. These can be shown with relative ease to provide a clear indication of 'what' is the current situation. Approaching the 'why' questions in the study was more complicated. Given my philosophy, which will be outlined soon, personalist critical realism, I had serious doubt that anything so intimate and personal as
this aspect of life could be approached best by survey. That highly personal realm demanded human interaction – dialogue – as the best way to tap another's experience and outlook, and the thoughts and feelings behind that outlook.

In view of those two realities, the study used a sequential mixed methods approach to answering the questions. This allowed, in the words of Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 33) 'a more complete picture by noting trends and generalizations as well as in-depth knowledge of participants' perspectives'. In short, the mixed methods approach best allows insight into both general trends and subtleties of the problem. It also permits the two different approaches to cross-validate possible findings.

Brief mention should be made of the mechanics of the study. As will be seen in Chapter 3, Dimasas themselves distinguish four main groups: Dezuasa of Dimapur District of Nagaland; Dembrasa, living in Karbi Anglong and Nagaon Districts of Assam; Hawarsa of the Cachar District referred to themselves as Barmans or Burmans; and Hasaoosa, Dimasas of the Dima Hasao District. Subjects were Hasaoosa Dimasa people. Older rural Dimasas of the district and younger Dimasas scattered variously were subjects of the survey. I initiated conversations with older rural Dimasas to gain confidence about the present shape of Dimasa religious culture. This was accomplished with the help of on-site translation by a native speaker assistant and an immediate debriefing that allowed examination of the knowledge so gained. I also held conversations with college-age and slightly older college graduates in Delhi, Guwahati, and Haflong, Dima Hasao District. These were guided by a prepared agenda of questions from which items of interest were pursued, though changes were made in the prepared agenda as individual areas were found unhelpful and as unexpected material emerged in early interviews. Specifics on these areas will be developed in Chapter 4. Interviews were recorded on an iPad Mini and transcribed with the help of the ExpressScribe computer program. Analysis of the interviews was aided by coding with the help of the MaxQDA 12 program.

The survey employed was created for this inquiry based on the previous conversations with older Dimasas. Statistical analysis of the returned surveys was performed in the SPSS statistical program under the guidance of the Laerd Statistics website (Laerd Statistics, 2015b). As a mixed methods research project, quantitative and
qualitative phases of the inquiry were not kept hermetically sealed from one another. Survey results helped focus interviews with college students; responses in those interviews suggested new ways to examine the survey results and generated the need for an additional survey.

1.7. PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

At the risk of repetition, three research questions emerged. What techniques could help overcome methodological challenges, such as those Wuelker (1983) outlines? To name obvious difficulties in this area, older members of traditional societies are often illiterate and sometimes suspicious of outsiders asking personal questions or, actually, asking questions at all. Second, could a difference of attitude towards traditional beliefs and practices be discerned between older, rural Dimasas and younger, college educated Dimasas? The survey that seeks such discrimination was constructed to have as its null hypothesis 'There is no statistically significant difference between the groups'. Third, what differences arise in the thinking and behavior of college-educated Dimasas?

1.8. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Because of the underlying approach to this investigation, it will be helpful to elaborate very briefly on my basic perspective. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 23) recommend a pragmatist worldview to support mixed method inquiry. Critical realism is perfectly suited for this and embodies my established outlook on the world. As described by Christian Smith in What is a Person? (2010) critical realism gives priority to ontology over epistemology. It focuses on the (possibly) known rather than the creative knower. Much of reality exists independent of human consciousness: it is not constructed. Further, reality is open and complex, comprised of layers that have a certain autonomy. Smith's example of this is water, composed of and emerging from hydrogen and oxygen but a reality not reducible to its component parts. Further, what is real includes non-material phenomena, including social entities – a northeast Indian traditional community springs to
mind – that though they might remain unknown are seen to be real because they embody causative agencies. Causation is real, (unlike post-positivism) but also depends on the context. Moreover, it varies in its real influence on outcomes. At the same time, because reality is an open system, there are often many causative agents: the world is complex; people are fallible, and constant awareness of that fallibility demands openness to revision in any statement of 'fact'. Smith concludes:

As to method, social sciences should embrace methodological pluralism, transcending old assumptions that have given rise to the sterile quantitative versus qualitative divide, and instead focusing on the choices involving 'extensive' versus 'intensive' methods drawn pragmatically by the particular subject and question under study. Whereas critical realism is principled in matters of ontology, it is pragmatic on questions of method. (Christian Smith, 2010, Loc.1044)

Further I approached the study holding to a personalist philosophy. Central ideas here, again articulated by Christian Smith (Christian Smith, 2010; 2009) include the belief that human beings are persons. They can be reduced neither to the computers of positivism nor the piecework of shifting identities of postmodern philosophies. Persons are envisioned with capacities of consciousness and with socially uncovered yet durable identities. They are all of immense complexity. Smith also acknowledges social realities as causative agents. It is here that he proposes the innate moral nature of human beings, that they always exist in some moral universe. While implications of this stance will emerge throughout the study, the very possibility of undertaking the investigation rests on that foundation. The attempt to understand people of such a different experience and grounding is difficult and must remain very open to more and better information and, so, reinterpretation. Critical realism gives confidence that there is some bedrock that can be understood. Personalism invites such an attempt for two reasons. First, belief that persons have similar complex mixtures provides a basis for understanding, arduous though the course will be. Second, unlike a post-modern approach where created identities shift and emerge kaleidoscopically, there is indeed something real and enduring to grasp. Further, contrary to a scientism that flattens human persons to the level of moss or monkeys, the search is truly worth the effort.
Studies such as this can be approached from either an 'emic', within-the-group viewpoint, or from an outsider's 'etic' stance. As I joked with my translator, in terms of Dimasa society it is difficult to be more 'etic' than I am. I undertook the study as a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest from the United States with some previous knowledge of Dimasa culture, but scant knowledge of the language. My inability to speak directly with people, old and young, in their native language was an obvious handicap, most seriously in the in-depth interviews where young people were forced to talk about complex things in their second language. My original plan was to first spend time learning Dimasa. I soon realized that, given my advanced age, should I learn the language to a degree needed to conduct interviews, I would not have time to actually do the project. Still, it would be hard to overestimate the strength of this limitation.

In the quantitative area, my last and only academic course in statistics was some 25 years ago, and any knowledge gained there had to be restored through intense review. To be clear: I let SPSS do the statistics under the guidance of the Laerd website. Despite that, I am quite confident that the analysis of the surveys is reliable, not least because the ordinal data argued for a simple interpretive approach.

Oddly enough, my Jesuit identity seemed to be an advantage. Jesuits have established several reputable schools within the Dima Hasao District. While there was reportedly initial distrust of these schools among the people, particularly that their children would become Christians, that has eased with time and the singular lack of conversions from traditional practices among the children. Certainly I was always greeted with warmth and courtesy. My impression was that people trusted Jesuits, enjoyed conversing with me, and were actually quite open and eager talking about this area of their lives. Equally important is whether my background is a source of bias. Throughout the project I made every effort to treat the person being interviewed with sincerity and trust. More positively, my career as a secondary school counselor prepared me well for the interviews I engaged in: I feel very confident about my ability to draw personal information out of people and to have interpreted that in a non-judgmental way. Despite this, unconscious bias might of course have been present.
1.9 ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Simple assumptions often proved wrong. I assumed that older Dimasas would be knowledgeable about their own outlook and practices. Not all were and they were far from univocal in their answers: different people held quite different views. As an example, people in Didambra village asserting a different creator, the god Hamyadado, rather than the god Brai Sibrai which is held in the rest of the hills, (with the further exception of some people who held the original gods had no part in creation). Before constructing the survey instrument I assumed people would answer honestly and that everyone would have an opinion about the matters covered. Readings in methodology convinced me that this was not always the case, and that great care had to be taken in this area. I assumed that young Dimasas would be eager to have conversations with me. This was usually not the case, as will be detailed. I assumed there was such a thing as a 'tribe'; that beliefs of one such group were more or less interchangeable with another; that describing them as 'animists' had some actual meaning. In sum, my assumptions were quite quickly eradicated. This certainly lent more interest to the inquiry.

Limitations of the study over which there was little control included the constant awareness of language issues, previously mentioned. Further, males are over-represented in the survey and interview samples. While I made effort to balance this, the simple fact is that fewer young women have been educated past higher secondary school, an issue that will be discussed briefly in the description of results. Further, in the quantitative field, sampling is suspect for reasons that will also be addressed in Chapter 4, along with other possible faults in the data gathering process. Finally, an obvious limitation is any implication that religious practices of a traditional community are compartmentalized or detachable from the rest of culture, even though this was necessary methodologically. As will be seen in the discussion of the findings, a more adequate approach would be to enquire into the entire traditional culture. Within this whole, religious ideas and practices are an integrated aspect rather than a detachable segment. Given the admittedly exploratory nature of the study, I settled for what seemed accomplishable at risk of simplifying an indissoluble reality.
Within the parameter of Hasaosa Dimasas of Dima Hasao, the scope of the study was as wide as I could make it. In gathering basic information from elders about Dimasa beliefs and practices, efforts were made to validate responses between respondents, though not expecting uniformity here. The study investigated respondents in different areas of the North Cachar Hills area. Similarly, every effort was made to secure a workable sample of young Dimasas to return the survey, again in various locations and across different ages and education levels. This is also true of the interviews with young Dimasas. The rule I had heard was 'Stop interviewing when you hear nothing new.' I did, and do not think I was premature in drawing that phase of information gathering to a close.

As a mixed methods investigation, the study is not intended to be widely generalizable. Dimasas are in a unique stage of interaction with different religions and with a broader scope of their perceived reality: they are as a people entering a larger world. While trustworthy judgments have been made as a result of this examination, to assume the results of this study might be applied to other traditional communities elsewhere, even in North East India, would be unsound. The inquiry is about a portion of the Dimasa people and, while it has produced some light there, it invites more comprehensive investigations even among that small society.

1.10. LANGUAGE, TERMS, AND NAMES

I have found it quite important, beginning for my own clearer understanding of the Dimasa world view, to avoid commonly used words that are, in fact, not at all helpful in understanding things. Perhaps the most important of these is 'religion'. Dimasa beliefs and practices directed towards their madais are radically different than my western, Abrahamic faith. Hesitancy in using the term helped keep this clear in my own mind. At the same time, those beliefs and practices are centrally important to Dimasa life; not using a western label for that outlook and those activities in no way implies a lack of respect for them. Clifford Geertz's definition, though complex, is the most useful available in reflecting a wider reality. In his essay 'Religion as a Cultural System', Geertz outlines the definition thus:

1. a system of symbols which acts to
While many objections to this definition are possible and have, in fact, been raised, the value of Geertz’s definition lies most of all in providing a very broad frame for the main areas of life that human beings seek to address through religious systems. Geertz outlines these as 1) making explicable events generally beyond the limits of our analytic systems such as 'death, dreams, mental fugues, volcanic eruptions, or marital infidelity' (p. 55); 2) forcing confrontation with the reality of human suffering and providing a means to endure that suffering; and, 3) addressing in some way the problem of evil, 'the gap between things as they are and things as they ought to be…the dumb senselessness of intense or inexorable pain, and the enigmatic unaccountability of gross iniquity…' (p.59). I have in general tried to avoid the term 'religion' completely, substituting such words as 'worldview', 'beliefs', 'practices', though, as will be discussed later, even such a term as 'belief' is suspect and probably not helpful.

These difficulties extend to almost all of the language usually used by studies of religion. An example is one so basic as 'spirit'. Dimasa madais, the beings whose forgiveness, aid or protection is sought through sacrifices, are generally translated as 'spirits' or 'gods'. Madais are certainly powerful, personal, desiring and invisible entities. To call them 'spirits', though, introduces a plague of attendant western, Abrahamic associations. In that light, the term can be connotatively much more misleading than helpful. Other words of this type such as 'supernatural', 'transcendent', and 'sin', have little or no meaning in the Dimasa world view. Translating from Dimasa also provides great quandaries, for instance in the concept gathar. English-speaking Dimasas translate this as 'purity' 'cleanliness' or 'holiness', three very different areas of thought in (Western) religious studies.

Further complicating things is the fact that Dimasa is far more a spoken language than a written one. Until perhaps 25 years ago, it was written in Bengali script, a result of
the importation before Independence of Bengali teachers for the few Dimasa schools. Roman-script Dimasa is thus relatively new and its orthography is unsettled and capricious. Even educated Dimasas when reading the Dimasa language generally whisper the words so they might be heard. Efforts will be made throughout the investigation to provide as accurate a pronunciation as possible while avoiding puzzling characters of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and, more important, to provide as clear a meaning as possible for words in Dimasa or English.

Beginning in Chapter 3 we will hear the actual voices of young Dimasas. As mentioned earlier in the Preface, public statements can often be a source of great friction within the Dimasa community. Because of this I have not included the names of my Dimasa sources. In the cases of older Dimasas I have given only dates for individual interviews with them. In the case of young Dimasas I have been very careful to conceal their identity. At the same time, providing names for the young speakers seemed the right thing to do, so I provided pseudonyms for all. I have given their names in quotes (e.g. 'Pritam Hakmaosa') to distinguish individuals. Most are likely names but not in any way related to the actual person. Further descriptions provide analogous careers and settings. Following contemporary usage, young women are (falsely) identified by their father's sengphong clan name rather than their mother's jaadi clan, which was done at one time. Obviously best academic practices would demand using real names as traceable sources. This was impossible if I was to secure the openness and honesty people gave in the interviews and conversations.

1.11. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

I can not imagine any possible harm that the study might cause for the subjects of the inquiry, either young or old. While it might be novel for older rural Dimasas to be asked for their attitudes about the subject, such reflection was, one hopes, of some actual help to them. Indeed, as will be seen in Chapter 5, dealing with results of the study, some actual benefits seemed to occur. For the younger Dimasas, too, clarifying their own stance toward their customary beliefs and practices might have been novel, confusing, mildly revelatory, and so, possibly, mildly disturbing. My
hope is that this study can empower Dimasas to better control their own future. I hope that probing people's stances toward their cultural heritage would increase self-knowledge and so individual empowerment.

I saw no conflict of interest involved in the study. While I am known as an ordained priest of the Roman Catholic Church, this fact was not publicized in relation to the study. Further, I subscribe to the current stance of the Catholic Church that the most proper and helpful approach to interfaith dialogue is through real understanding of the dialogue partner’s religious stance. This exploration held the religious stance of the Dimasa people in great respect, and, indeed, hopes to offer the Dimasa people in some small way an opportunity to take greater ownership of those beliefs.

1.12. GOING FORWARD

The following chapters will broaden many of the facets of this study that have only been touched on in this introduction.

Chapter 1 has laid out the problem the study seeks to address, the questions to be answered to successfully achieve that. It has also provided a glance at important background to the study, with regard to previous work done in this area of study to show how this dissertation fits into a gap in knowledge. It has addressed the philosophical stance from which that gap will be addressed. It has included the scope and limitations of the study and the researcher.

Chapter 2 presents a more intense review of the areas of previous academic investigations that touch upon the research pursued here. It will also provide source material that helped to determine and implement the study's methodology.

Chapter 3 provides a brief look at Dimasa history and a more extensive look at implied Dimasa beliefs and practices. Given the scant knowledge about the Dimasa people in the
North East and even less awareness elsewhere in India and abroad, this provides a groundwork for understanding subsequent methods, findings, and discussion.

Chapter 4 describes the methods used in both quantitative and qualitative aspects of this mixed methods inquiry.

Chapter 5 unveils the findings from that inquiry.

Chapter 6 seeks to see how the results of the study might fit together, and fit into some larger context. It also provides suggestions for further work in the area.