CHAPTER V
Advent of Christianity: Its Impact and Modernization
Chapter-V

ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY: ITS IMPACT AND MODERNIZATION

During the pre-Christian era, Mao's possessed their own primeval religion generally known as animism like other Indian tribes. As such, it is pertinent to discuss the belief and practice of animism very precisely before dealing with Christianity among the Mao tribe of Manipur. They believed in the existence of a Supreme Being who has control over all things.¹ There are also other spirits believed to have existed and such spirits are of two kinds i.e. Malevolent and Benevolent spirits.² These spirits are said to dwell in rocks, forest, streams and rivers, because amongst the Nagas there was a conception that God was manifested in nature. There were household deities who helped in the family welfare, paddy field deities who protected and blessed the field and crops, sky deity who provided rain. In contrast to these benevolent spirits, there were malignant spirits who were held in fear by the people because such spirits were capable of causing great harm. They could ruin crops, bring famine and epidemics, and also cause various calamities. Therefore, for fear of these gods, people offered sacrifices in order to propitiate and exorcise them. To appease these spirits the Mao ancestors generally offered animals such as fowl, cow,

cat, dog and pig, etc. on specific occasions. Other things such as traditional rice-beer and egg were also offered on some occasions.

Apart from sacrifices and offerings, they also performed gennas, rituals and ceremonies to ward off evil and bad luck. The Maos believed that there is life after death and for this reason, they strictly observed traditional gennas, performed rituals and ceremonies so that they lead a similar life even after death. In connection with this belief, the Maos erect stones as a part of ancestor worship asking them to invoke good fortune and prosperity on their surviving descendents. But the introduction of Christianity brought a tremendous change in the belief system, customs and practices of the people. These changes brought both positive and negative impact on the Mao society. Nevertheless, Christianity has brought with it, for one thing, an altogether a new sense of human life. Christianity is therefore responsible for the way the society is organised and for the way in which the people live today.

In the pre-Christian period, the Mao Nagas remained isolated from outside civilization though they possessed rich culture, traditions and value system, which were deeply rooted in all aspects of their life. But introduction of Christianity had pushed the Nagas out of the seclusion of centuries into open ideas, ideals and civilizations of the peoples of the world.³ The transformation

of people because of Christianity is also closely associated with modernization. Modernization then includes transformation of society including such aspects as the political, the social and economic. The British Rule in Manipur had played a prominent role in introducing the new religion by opening doors for Christian Missionaries to carry out their activities especially in the hill areas. It is therefore appropriate to mention that study of the history of Christianity is always relevant while an understanding of the political context especially in the North East is concerned. From this perspective, it becomes necessary to study the coming of Christianity in the region and particularly among the Mao Nagas because it is a major factor in the upliftment of the tribe in all spheres including administration.

ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN MANIPUR

Before embracing Christianity, the Mao Nagas continued to adhere to their indigenous religious practices and beliefs. Perhaps Christianity was still unheard of before the advent of colonial rule. Therefore, ancestral religion continued to survive until political expansion of the British to the hill areas of Manipur. The arrival and activity of Christian missionaries in Manipur began only in the aftermath of the Anglo-Manipur War in 1891. Nevertheless, in the initial stage of British occupation no missionary was allowed to enter Manipur. Lal Dena observes, “Because of the strong opposition both from the ruling

---

princes of the state and the British political agent, no missionary was allowed to enter Manipur. The British officials did not allow missionary activities among the Hindu Meiteis and they decided to maintain status quo in the valley because the Meiteis had come under the strong influence of Hinduism.

In 1890, William Pettigrew who was a member of the Church of England came to Dacca under the sponsorship of the Arthington Aborigines Mission Society, an organisation solely funded by Robert Arthington, a millionaire at Leeds. During his stay in Dacca, he accepted Believers Baptism from a missionary of Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) Rev. R. Wright Hay, as he was convinced of the inadequacy of Infant Baptism. Thereafter, William Pettigrew arrived at Cachar in 1891 where he learned Manipuri. There he was taught Manipuri and Bengali by one Janmajoy Singh while waiting for the appropriate time to come to Manipur as a missionary.

On 12 September 1892, Maxwell the British Political Agent of Manipur received a letter from Mr. Dalmas, Secretary of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary and the Aborigines Mission, asking permission for William Pettigrew to start missionary activities among Hindu Meiteis but the request was denied. Though the British imperialism was established in Manipur after the Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891, the right to establishment of native rule under a minor raja on suitable grounds was offered to the Manipuris. And during this

---

period of regency administration the British authorities brought several changes in the administrative system of the state.\textsuperscript{6} But in the beginning of regency rule Pettigrew could not get permission for his missionary works among the Manipuris. It was not until A. Porteous who briefly took over as the acting political agent in the absence of Maxwell who was on furlough gave him permission. On 6 February 1894, after three years of waiting Pettigrew arrived at Imphal and soon he was able to establish a school in the capital where Manipuri was used as the medium of instruction. He thought that his call was among the Hindu Meiteis and therefore without any delay Pettigrew began to preach the gospel of Christ among them.\textsuperscript{7} Consequently, when Major Maxwell returned from furlough and resumed his position he was compelled to tell Pettigrew to desist from preaching to the Meiteis and an ultimatum was served to leave Imphal valley to avoid antagonism that might arise from the orthodox Hindu Meiteis, who were alarmed with Pettigrew’s work. However, Maxwell suggested that Pettigrew should shift his missionary work to the non-Hindu hill tribes who still practiced primeval religion with its own set of beliefs. Apparently, Pettigrew acknowledged the suggestion and began to search for a suitable location in the hill areas to establish his new mission. Meanwhile the Arthington Mission that sponsored Pettigrew had to withdraw its support because it was not willing to establish a permanent mission station in any

particular place. Moreover, William Pettigrew had already completed five years service which was more than the three years limit in a particular place. During this time he applied for membership to the American Baptist Missionary Union in Assam. After the Triennial Conference of the American Baptist Missionaries of Assam held at Sibsagar during December 1895, and the Executive Committee at Boston in January 1896, it decided to take over the work in Manipur, which had already been commenced by Pettigrew under the Sponsorship of the Arthington Mission. As a result, William Pettigrew was accepted as a member of the Sibsagar Baptist Church, Assam after which he was ordained and named him the first missionary to Manipur. He became the pioneer Christian Missionary of the hills in Manipur.

ARRIVAL AND GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE MAOS

When the door for Missionary work in the valley was closed William Pettigrew turned his field to the hills. He first chose a place in Mao to set up his missionary headquarter. However, missionaries were strictly prohibited from entering there because that area was of strategic importance to the Government insofar communication was concerned. Therefore, all evangelistic activity was discouraged. In 1895, Pettigrew’s attempt to establish a centre there was denied

---

because the Maos themselves were strongly opposed to Christianity.  

K. M. Singh observes, “The hill people during those days were too wild to be dealt with”.  

Pettigrew still wanted to purchase land in Mao Songsong village for the mission from one Mr. Sani Kapani, a Government Interpreter.  

However, Mr. Sani Kapani could not sell his land to Pettigrew because he was apprehensive of outside interference and its consequences. Therefore, elders of the 16 Mao villages were called together for discussion in connection with Pettigrew’s request for permission to buy a land. But the 16 Khulakpas (Chiefs) refused permission telling him that they had nothing to do with his religion.  

Pettigrew was not welcome in their area as they considered him a threat to their deep-rooted traditional belief system and practices.

Pettigrew could have possibly considered various factors before he first proceeded towards Mao area where he wanted to establish his mission centre. He must have thought that the Maos may more readily accept the new religion like their counterparts in Nagaland where proselytization had started. Moreover, Mao Song Song is located along the Imphal, Kohima and Dimapur road where communication is easy. However, Pettigrew was unsuccessful in his attempt to persuade and obtain permission from the chiefs and elders of 16 

---

villages who remained intact.\textsuperscript{14} After having been rejected by the Maos, Pettigrew proceeded to other tribal villages in search of a suitable land. Finally, he chose Ukhrul the most central village of the Tangkhul Naga tribe as his mission centre and established himself under the American Baptist Mission, in February 1896.

In 1903 Pettigrew had nevertheless been successful in starting a school at Mao village in his capacity when in 1897 he was appointed as State School Inspector by the British Government. As in other Sadar areas the teaching of Christianity was not permitted in this school.\textsuperscript{15} The school did not run smoothly though many boys studied up to class IV and had gone to Kohima Mission School to continue their studies. Pettigrew believed that through education he could illuminate the minds of the people and slowly orient them towards the new faith. By 1901 twelve students were baptized in Ukhrul and in the following year the first church in Manipur, Ukhrul Baptist Church was established. From 1901-1907(Ukhrul), seventy members were converted to Christianity. Thus, Christianity continued to be spread gradually in the hills. But one of the last tribes to respond to the gospel was the Mao Naga tribe. In the words of F.S. Downs, "Christian evangelism activity among the Maos did not begin until 1923 when as a result of the Manipur Revival- Tangkhul

\textsuperscript{14} Interview with A. Kholi, Writer, at Imphal on 7 March 2010.
\textsuperscript{15} F.S. Downs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 180.
Christians began to visit the area.\textsuperscript{16} Nevertheless, two Mao students, Neni Kapani and Kollo Lokho who were studying at Kohima got baptized in 1922. But the first two converts had joined Government service and thus they failed to spread the gospel among the Maos. But in the course of time a group of students from Punanamai village had gone to Kohima Mission School to pursue their studies. Three students from this group, Kholi Puni, Hepuni Ashikho and Kholi Adahrii were baptized in 1925 at Kohima Baptist Church. Consequently, they became associate members of the Kohima Baptist Church.\textsuperscript{17} Two years later Kaisii Kaikho and Mikri Lohrii were also baptized at Kohima. Thereafter, they began to propagate the new religion in Mao region despite strong opposition from the village Chiefs and elders.

Since the Tangkhul Christians revival of 1923, the Gospel was preached off and on by them in Mao area.\textsuperscript{18} In 1927, Kholi Puni, Hepuni Ashikho and Kholi Adahrii had returned to their village from Kohima. These Christians faced a lot of hardships and hurdles in their effort to preach the Gospel among their own people. As such, the mission work of the new converts was fraught with difficulty. At this time, five Tangkhul Christians visited Punanamai village to help in the spread of Christianity. The Tangkhul Christians proposed to establish a school in the village to which the village elders were acceptable.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 180-181
\textsuperscript{17} Loli Kape, 2006, Biography of Kholi Puni (1906-1956), in \textit{Souvenir of MBCA Association Formation}, Tadubi, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{18} Milton S Sangma, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 285.
In the same year, the village constructed a house for a dual purpose, as a school and as a church. As the village elders showed keen interest in the new religion, they were able to complete a teacher's quarter in the same year. Many people of Punanamai village had readily accepted the new faith and more importantly the village Chief himself had become a Christian. The Chief and his elders felt the need for more evangelistic work in the village, so they presented a petition to the Political Agent along with the petition by a small Christian community saying that they would be willing to have the Christians remain with them, allow others to join them and allow the Superintending Pastor to preach Christianity to them. But the State Durbar rejected their petition, and they were made to understand that no Christians would be allowed among them.

On the request of Pettigrew for a second missionary, the state government permitted Dr. Crozier to work in Manipur. His appeal was accepted because of the service rendered by him to the Government during the First World War. In 1921, he joined the new mission centre at Kangpokpi. When the Governor of Assam visited Manipur, Pettigrew personally pleaded that restrictions on evangelistic work in the north of Manipur be revoked. Pettigrew's appeal was finally approved after talk with the Maharaja of Manipur and consequently the Governor of Assam issued orders, that all the restrictions should be removed. Hence, Dr. Crozier began to launch missionary activities to all the hill tribes. He even went to the outermost parts of the hill
areas. In 1928, when permission was granted to all the missionaries to work in the entire hill region of the state, Dr. Crozier went to Punanamai and baptized 20 new members, of which 12 were men, and 8 were women.

In 1917, the first Manipur Christian Association was formed. All the churches in Manipur were included within the Association.\textsuperscript{19} Since 1920, Manipur had been divided into two fields or Associations with one Missionary in-charge of each field. The division of fields or Associations were rather regional than tribal.\textsuperscript{20} With the increase of Christian communities in the north of Manipur and the vastness of field with believers scattered all over the region, Punanamai Christians decided it in 1927, to appoint Kholi Puni to evangelise the Mao-Maram and Poumai areas. The following year Manipur Christian Association was renamed as Manipur Baptist Convention within which the fields were divided into three, Northeast, Sadar and North West. In 1930, Kholi Puni was ordained as the first Evangelist in North Sadar region. A year later, Mikri Lohrii was also chosen as an Evangelist to preach in Mao-Maram and Poumai region. In 1946, the Sadar Association was also divided.\textsuperscript{21} Consequently the Manipur North Sadar Association was formed. On 12\textsuperscript{th} October, 1956 the Manipur Baptist Convention approved the formation of Manipur Baptist Association No. 8 which was predominantly an association of

\textsuperscript{19} R.R. Lolly, 1985, \textit{The Baptist Church in Manipur: A historical survey of the mission strategies and development of the Baptist Church in Manipur-N.E.India} (1894-1983), The Manipur Baptist Convention, Imphal, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{20} Milton S Sangma, \textit{op. cit}, p. 287.
\textsuperscript{21} F.S. Downs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 159.
Mao-Maram Churches. In the same year Manipur Baptist Association No. 8 was renamed as Manipur North Naga Baptist Association (MNNBA) until the formation of a separate Poumai and Maram Associations in 1978 and 1987 respectively. With this split MNNBA was finally rechristened as Mao Baptist Churches Association (MBCA) and it has celebrated fifty years of its inception in 2006.

The Catholic Missionaries arrived much later in Mao region. It was in 1950s that the Maos first had contact with the Catholic Missionaries at Imphal. They requested Fr. Bianchi to take over the private school in Punanamei village. In 1956, Fr. Bianchi visited Punanamei village and promised to grant hundred rupees a month towards the running of the private M.E. School. Seeing the amazing growth of the church, the Bishop promised to construct a church. This promised was fulfilled in 1958 and it was blessed by Fr. Wollaston in 1959.22 Towards the end of 1960, a lower primary school and an upper primary school were also established at Makhan village and at Makhel Kaibi respectively. The Catholic Missionaries opened new schools to educate the people and to propagate Christ faith to various villages of the region. This was the beginning of Catholic Church in Mao areas.

---

The beginning was difficult for the newly converted Christians, as they had to face strong opposition and persecution from the non-Christians who were deeply rooted in the ancestral religion. For instance, Kholi Puni and other pioneer Christians were compelled to leave their village and establish a Christian colony at Ashufii (present site of the Exotic Juice Limited, Punanamei) because of opposition from the non-Christian villagers.\textsuperscript{23} And the progress of Christianity remained very slow in Mao-Maram region before the end of Second World War. As such, Christian activity was largely hampered by the world wars especially by Second World War, part of which was also fought on the soil of Manipur and Nagaland. Nevertheless, after the war ended large scale conversion took place as even the non-Christian villagers and many village Chiefs who strongly opposed the new religion accepted Christian faith and became ardent Christian believers. Because of the untiring and fearless evangelization by the pioneer Christians more than ninety percent of the Maos have embraced Christianity and thus they have brought the light of life to the region.

**IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY**

The arrival of Christian missionaries is a landmark in the history of the Maos. Perhaps it is the beginning of confronting with a much advanced race that propagated new religion among the tribe. Eventually, but inevitably, the

\textsuperscript{23} Loli Kape, *op. cit.*, p.28.
old religion of the tribe could not survive because of the strong influence brought about by the new religion. Thus Christianity was gradually spread in the region because of the relentless activities of the western missionaries and the local pioneers. It has a tremendous influence on the ignorant tribe as they would have continued to remain under the shadow of civilization and modernization had they not embraced the new religion. Some Naga tribes accepted the new faith more readily, whereas some others, like the Mao Nagas showed strong resistance because they were by nature more conservative and resistant to change. Another factor responsible for resistance was from village chiefs and elders, who were treated according to their custom as religious heads of the village, took it as an attack on their privileges and powers, which they enjoyed over their respective villages. But in course of time they were convinced by the welfare activities carried out by the missionaries to propagate the new faith. The methods adopted by the missionaries to preach the gospel were: (1) maintaining good relationship with the colonial authorities, (2) establishment of schools, (3) Medical and philanthropic works, (4) learning of local dialect to communicate, (5) polite, tolerant and compassionate approach, (6) use of local students and first converts. Of all these methods, establishment of schools and educating the people played the most effective role. It has brought political, social, economic and religious consciousness among the people.

24 N. Joykumar Singh, op. cit., p.61.
The conversion into Christianity had profound impact on every aspect of people's life. It had both positive and negative impact on the society. On the negative side Haimendorf states, "the Christian Missionaries were responsible for the adulteration of Naga culture. The discontinuance of the feasts of merit, the loss of the knowledge of wood-carving as an art and means of subsistence, replacement of the rice-beer for tea were the negative developments".\textsuperscript{25} It cannot be denied that the process of Christianity has adversely affected the cultures of the Mao Nagas. It had become a subversive force against their traditional life.

However it is also evident that without the introduction of Christianity the head-hunting tribe who were engaged in blood feuds would remain isolated from any contact with outside civilization. It has also protected them from the possible influence of Hinduism which was deeply rooted among the Meiteis in the valley. The spread of Christianity has paved the way for westernization and modernization among the Mao society. It has helped to develop a sense of community feeling among the people as they become a conscious society. Despite criticisms, the contribution made by the process of Christianity is undeniable as it has contributed to the overall development of the people.

\textsuperscript{25} Christoph Von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1976, \textit{The Naked Nagas}, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, pp.51-52
Impact on Political Life:

Since time immemorial, religion formed the basis of every political order among the Mao society. The traditional concept of ethics and supernatural belief of the people regulates their own activities. It is for this reason, religion is considered inseparable from political life of the people. And so Gandhiji’s concept that religion and politics are not two separate things can be substantiated through community life of the Mao tribe. It should be mentioned that the coming of Christian missionaries accelerated the process of creating political consciousness. The church organisations brought members of different villages and tribes within a common structure.\(^{26}\) Thus, the inspiration and morphology of modern political organisations and structures came at least in part from Christianity. So it can be pointed out that Christianity brought with it the seeds of true political consciousness. As a result, the tribals were able to discover their tribal political identity, create political leadership, claim their political rights and contribute towards the political and administrative reorganization of the whole of North East which is still in the process.\(^{27}\)

During the time of William Pettigrew, he helped the government in the recruitment of many people from the hills for service in the Labour Corps who were sent to France during the First World War. There they saw a world quite


different, which motivated them to change when they returned home. There were new models, new ideas and new wants as a result. Very significantly, a modernized tribal elite, mostly Christians was emerging with increasing political consciousness.\(^{28}\) And as the people became more conscious of their identities, it gave birth to the emergence of various socio-political organisations to pursue their natural rights. Thus, the first Naga organisation called Naga Club was formed in 1918, which subsequently submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission expressing their political aspirations. However, in 1945, Naga Club was reorganised into the Naga National Council (NNC) to carry on the Naga movement process. On August 15, 1948, the Mao Nagas also launched a no-tax campaign against the Government of Manipur and demanded that the Naga areas be merged with Naga Hills, which was then a district of Assam.\(^{29}\)

Christianity has a tremendous impact on the political awareness of the Mao Nagas till today. Unfortunately, but evidently, the people’s demand is yet to materialize. As a matter of fact, people send their representatives in the regional and national politics to serve their interest. Besides there are many non-political organisations such as the Mao Council, Mao Naga Women Welfare Association, and Mao Students’ Union (MSU), etc. to unify and serve

\(^{28}\) Frederick S. Downs, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 25.

the needs of the tribe. It is therefore evident that Christianity has played a major role in making assert a collective political identity.

**Impact on Economic Life**

Economics is the science that studies the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Every individual is engaged in economic activity to earn for his or her own survival. As for the tribal people, they were content with the resources available to them prior to the advent of Christianity. Their wants were few as they were satisfied within the boundaries of their villages. They were unaware of economic problems for they had no knowledge of economic analysis at that point of time. In the context of the Mao Nagas, Christianity should receive special attention because of its influence to the economic development of the people. Christianity is concerned about the well-being of every human being. In fact, it is the moral obligation of every Christian to contribute and render support to the poor and needy through material, physical, intellectual and spiritual help, etc. Christians therefore believe that when such oppressed and downtrodden people are helped God rewards them more generously.

In the early days, Mao society was governed by superstitious beliefs, which in turn resulted in an unnecessary waste of wealth and energy. As such in the pre-Christian period, many animals were killed as sacrifices for performance of various rituals and ceremonies. Gennas and taboos that prohibit
the people from going to the fields for work were strictly observed. However
the tribe discarded such observations after accepting the new religion. This
means in other words that the people have given up the old ways to live a more
meaningful life which is being taught by the new religion.

Previously there was no individual ownership and the entire land
belonged to the village. Menfolk were mostly engaged in blood feuds to protect
their village. Under such circumstances, there was no room for economic
planning. In other words, human resources for production were not utilized
efficiently. People used to cultivate their lands through old methods of
agriculture. But with the advent of Christianity the process of modernization
was gradually introduced among the Maos. Consequently, the people begin to
use modern methods and technology such as tractors, chemical fertilisers,
 Improved variety of seeds and irrigation system, etc.

Christian missionaries have also created employment opportunities for
the people. Local church leaders and mission workers are employed to work for
the ministry. Mission schools are established to impart education and create job
opportunities. Apparently, these schools have produced many bright students
who are working in both government services and private companies. This has
resulted in an increase in the per-capita income and wealth of the tribe. In
present times because of economic consciousness, people prefer to settle down
near the highway for purpose of communication and economic advantage. This
led to modern access giving conscious effort towards modernization. Christianity has ushered the Mao society in their process from traditional to modern stage. Today, there is a drastic change in the life standard of the people.

**Socio-Cultural Impact:**

The advent of Christianity marked the beginning of socio-cultural transformation. Christianity has been a powerful agent because it has almost entirely transformed the life of the people. However, the pioneer missionaries had faced rigorous hardships when they made relentless effort to introduce the new religion. History also reveals that the first Christian missionary in Manipur had initially failed to persuade the Mao tribe because of strong resistance. Despite such obstacle at the time of proselytization, Christianity became an inevitable phenomenon. Gradually the belief system, values, practices and cultures of the people were influenced which ultimately altered the life pattern. Most of the Scholars are of the opinion that Christianity has contributed more to peoples’ development than otherwise. Nevertheless, with the introduction of Christianity an era where the old gave way to the new began.³⁰

Education is one of the significant factors contributing to the overall development of the Mao Nagas. Burman observes, “One of the most striking

---

features of the impact of Christianity on the social and political life is the introduction of modern western education. In the pre-Christian period, the Mao tribe had no written language and they remained illiterate for centuries. Nevertheless, in the absence of schools during those days Morung was a training ground for all lessons where they were taught important and invaluable lessons of discipline, hard work and the spirit of service. But due to the absence of modern knowledge and education they remained servants of blind beliefs and ignorance. Along with the new religion, the institution of Morung died down and western education was introduced by the missionaries to illuminate the primitive minds of the people. So when people received education their outlook underwent a sea change and became more open and receptive to new ideas and beliefs. It is also pertinent to point out that education has been instrumental in propagating the new religion. But one should remember that the credit for modern education system in the North-East India goes to the British and Christian missionaries.

The traditional marriage system, which involved a series of rites and ceremonies, has given way to Christian holy marriage. The introduction of Christian marriage as a sacramental contact before God and hence inviolable is

---

32 M. Horam, 1992, Naga Polity, Low Price Publications, Delhi, p. 68.
beginning to add stability to the tribal family structures.\textsuperscript{34} It has strengthened the importance of nuclear family.

In the pre-Christian period, women were centred round household activities. They were unconscious of their role and position in the society. But with the arrival of Christianity and introduction of education there is a fast growth rate in female literacy. Their role and contribution have been given much importance in the modern society. So they have earned a prominent position because of their conscious effort and participation in every field.

In the old days, Naga tribes and even villages of the same tribe were at war with one another. But with the dawn of Christianity the practice of head-hunting gradually began to disappear which was finally discarded by the believers of the new religion. The prestigious ‘feast of merit’ performed by wealthy persons involving lavish expenditure has lost its significance. The favourite Naga rice-beer consumed on all rites and ceremonies is now considered immoral particularly by Protestant denominations. Likewise, many old cultures and practices have been denounced by the new religion. As a result, the socio-cultural life of the people has undergone a tremendous change.

\textsuperscript{34} Sebastian Karothemprel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 37.
Impact on Village Administration:

After the Anglo-Manipuri war the whole of Manipur including the hills were administered by the British rule directly or indirectly. The establishment of British authority in Manipur paved the way for Christianity. With the imposition of British administration in the state, the government had to evolve a separate system of administration for dealing with the hill tribes. Consequently, the hill tribes of Manipur were administered by the President of Manipur State Darbar assisted by one or more officers on His Highness's behalf in accordance with rules approved by the Government of Assam. But the British rule preferred not to meddle with the existing institutions and endeavoured to remain aloof. Thus, the British colonial administration left the hill areas untouched. Very significantly, they recognized the institution of tribal chieftainship, which was a unit of tribal system. However, the regard by the British for the tribal customs and traditions began to erode because of the attitude of the western missionaries who regarded many traditional practices and beliefs as undesirable. As such, there was an interface between the traditional system and the formal system introduced by the British.

The chiefs and elders who were regarded as religious heads in their respective villages took the advent of Christianity as an attack on their

---

37 Lal Dena, 1988, Christian Missions and Colonialism, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, p. 40.
privileges and powers endowed on them by the Supreme Being. However, in some villages, the chiefs who first strongly objected to the spread of Christianity later became ardent Christians. The British rulers and the missionaries were will welcomed during their visit to those villages. While in many other villages, the new converts had to face confrontation with the village administration, which was under the traditional chief. It was mainly in the villages traditionally ruled by autocratic chiefs that there was some resistance to the changeover to an entirely new ideology.\textsuperscript{38} New converts were considered a threat to the stability and order of the village and there were instances of excommunication of such Christians because they had disapproved and violated the traditional village order.

But it cannot be denied that Missionaries had rendered their services not only in the propagation of Christian religion but the people were taught the meaning of self-government in the church and village affairs. Christianity has not only enlightened but has also earned for them prestige, social status and regard for others which they never had before. Thus, today they are moving towards the construction of a better social order because of the influence of Christianity.

\textsuperscript{38} Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 254.
MODERNIZATION

All societies have tradition, but what we describe as 'traditional societies' refers to a specific historical phase of social and cultural development. Modernization is a conceptual tool, which social scientists have widely used in analyzing the process as well as the quality of social change. Modernization according to Gangmumei means, “Transformation of a society from a traditional, rural and agrarian society to a secular, urban and industrialized society”. Thus, modernization is commonly understood in terms of economic and technical development. However, modernization among the tribes of North East India and particularly among the tribes of Manipur can be mean different. For them modernization is transformation of the society in respect of social, economic, political and cultural patterns.

Modernization and westernization are usually confused terms. Generally, modernization does not entail westernization. But interestingly enough in the context of Mao Naga society the implications of modernization is directly linked with westernization. It must be pointed out that modernization is often treated as synonymous with westernization in Naga society because modernization almost invariably originates from the occident. As for Christianity, since it came to North East and Manipur through western missionaries, it has often been a cause, and perhaps the effect of modernization.

---

among the Nagas. The process of modernization in Manipur hills is through Christian evangelism and western education. From this perspective, it is worthwhile to mention that the spread of Christianity marked the spread of westernization and modernization in Mao Naga society.

For almost a score of centuries Christian beliefs, principles, and ideals have colored the thoughts and feelings of Western man. But the history of Christian missionary arrival and its movement among the Maos- perhaps one of the most dreadful head-hunters had begun in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Therefore, until the arrival of western Christian missionaries the Mao society remained completely isolated from outside civilization. Thus, the history of western culture and western society is inseparable from the history of Christianity of the Mao Nagas, as it has brought the consciousness of modernization and traumatic cultural transition in their society.

The process of modernization therefore means a total transformation of the Mao society including such aspects as the political, the social, the economic and the intellectual. Mao society was unarguably advanced in its own traditional style with well-governed village-states, rich customary laws and culture, religion, festivals, sustainable economic conditions, etc. It can therefore, be proved beyond any shadow of doubt that Mao society too had its own form of perfect culture as any other society of the world. However, modernization brought a complete transformation of the past traditional
society, which had no link with any advanced societies before encounter with the Western Christian missionaries. It is therefore a case of cultural contact between the primitive Mao tradition with the modernized and much more civilized western culture. The latter, which was far more forceful, has led to changes in every aspect of the Mao society. Gradually the traditional order of the tribe such as beliefs and practices, culture, religion, laws, songs, dress, arts, marriage system, food habit, and life-style has been discarded and substituted by the new religion (Christianity); introducing education, technology, medicine and western life-style of living including dress, music, songs, attitude and food habits, etc.\(^40\)

Modernization should be accomplished without abolishing or altering the basic principles and philosophy, which form the heart of traditional society. However, there is a shift from old practices to an alien order of the society among the Maos. This is because of the strong influence of the early Christian missionaries who were from advanced societies entirely different from the Naga society.

With the influx of outsiders and the influence of modernization, the life patterns of the tribal people have dramatically altered. The Christian missionaries considered the tribals as educationally, economically and

---

technologically backward. Prof. M. Horam has also pointed out that, "tribal values, heritage and ways of living were considered uncouth, often associated with primitive and uncivilized by the early White Christian missionaries."\textsuperscript{41}

It is also a fact that the hill tribes would remain backward even today without missionary activity and the influence of modernization. Therefore, it cannot be denied that Christianity is called the primary agent of change among the hill tribes in Manipur and particularly among the Mao Nagas. The change brought about by Christianity has substantially advanced the tribe. It has paved the way and helped them to come to terms with the process of modernization and development especially in the present decade.