CONCLUSION.
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While presenting the Ao Naga religion as a total cultural system, I have referred to writers like J.P. Mills, W.C. Smith and others who gave a distorted picture of the Aos in many respects; and missionaries who totally rejected the traditional religion resulting in the disintegration of the Aos, threatening them with complete loss of their identity. Their misinterpretation of the Ao Naga world view is based on a wrong assumption that there are two qualitatively different cultures: one which may be called 'civilised' and another which they term as 'savage' or 'primitive'.

Religion is a total cultural system for the Ao Nagas. The outsiders regard their own culture as civilised and in contrast to, and as distinct from their own, appears the tribal world view which is hastily referred to as primitive or savage. There are diversities of cultures in the world. The various human cultures differ from one another and every culture is best for its adherents. There are, no doubt, differences in economic conditions, social environments, technological devices and political systems. But such differences do not carry any distinctive mark of a better
culture. It is unfortunate to note that, on the basis of
technical and other scientific inventions western culture
has demonstrated a superiority over the rest of the world
as if the western people possess a superior innate racial
aptitude. Anything that is ancient or indigenous is
condemned as 'uncivilised', 'uncultured' or
'barbarous'. C. Levi Strauss writes: "... the more we
claim to discriminate between cultures and customs as good
and bad, the more completely do we identify ourselves with
those we would condemn.... The barbarian is, first and
formost, the man who believes in barbarism"¹. He argued
that humanity is same everywhere and the various condi-
tions of human societies down through the ages are the
phases or stages in a single line of development. He
asserts that:

"No single culture stands alone; it is always part of
a collage including other cultures"²

He is against imposition of an outside culture causing a
revolutionary upheaval in a traditional way of life, to
quote his own words:

"...either by imposing customs, or by creating
such conditions as to cause the collapse of the
existing native patterns without putting anything
else in their place"³.

¹C. Levi-Straus, 'Race and History', Race Science and
1975. p.101
²Ibid. p.126
³Ibid. p.117.
Undermining and ignoring of a prevailing culture of a people has destructive effect of a far reaching nature. Modern developments and education amongst the Ao Nagas has created a new cultural and religious situation, but civilization is not mechanical. When a people is forced or induced to bear an outside fruit it is apt to get morally weak and lose its self-respect. This I can safely say has happened in case of the Aos.

Changes that have been taken place among the Aos indicate that the change has not been because of adherence to some given rational pattern. The change has been too sudden and if any sudden change comes in the social organization the norms which control the individuals become disturbed and they become disorganised and uncertain in their behaviour. The means of satisfying the primary wishes of the Aos have been substituted by force, imitation and suggestion initiated by western culture. Abrupt change took place with a decline in quality in various fields. I have tried to show that the Ao Naga view of life was conceived in their traditional religion as an all comprehensive framework like all other religious framework. Consequently a sudden rejection of it completely is logically bound to leave the people on an unstable ground.

The crux of the misunderstanding rests on a mistake.
That is to assume anything that is tribal to be somehow inferior. Tribals have their own view of life conceived in their philosophy of religion. It may not have answers for all questions but it is a fact that no philosophy of life can fit the people better than the indigenous one.

Therefore, making a qualitative distinction between different cultures or different philosophies of life, as advanced and backward, civilised and barbarous, good and bad, primitive and enlightened, will surely miss to understand not only the tribal culture, but also the human development as a whole.*

Any view of life or culture apart from the western culture has been termed as 'primitive' as without having any idea of civilization nor conception of any development. Such a view is advocated by L. Levy-Bruhl. Though he latter abandons some of his concepts, his theory still has a great influence on the study of various views of life. I, therefore, feel the need to present a critical assessment of Levy-Bruhl's concept of his 'primitive mentality' in the conclusion.

*The so called advanced western culture itself is based on the civilization which is a combination of various traditional cultures e.i. Greek, Roman, Arabia, China, Anglo-Saxon and others.
Levy-Bruhl, in his book "The soul of the primitive" expounded the thesis that primitive mentality, unlike advanced mentality, considers and feels all beings and objects as participating in the same essential nature. Accordingly the primitive people did not comprehend the law of causality. He maintains that the primitive people had not an independent notion of soul, personality and individuality of a person. The primitive put the supernatural forces, human soul, animals and natural objects in the same level, as they all participate in the same essence - the 'Soul'. The soul is considered not as a religious concept but as the spirit of man, animals and objects, a common underlying principle like that of Plato's 'Idea'.

"To the mind of the primitive there is existent and permeating, on earth, in the air and in water, in all the diverse forms assumed by persons and objects one and the same essential reality, both one and multiple, both material and spiritual."¹

This mystic reality permeates everywhere, every individual shares this.

Levy-Bruhl attempts to explain primitive beliefs in terms of individual experiences and holds that all primitive people present uniform patterns of thought which are mythical and not logical. In order support this view he

collected maximum concrete materials from field reports of anthropologists and missionaries who already were committed to the assertion that primitive people cannot think in a well organised and discursive way. This collection of reports form the greater bulk of his book. There include consideration of the functions of clan in marriage, blood revenge, the external soul, witchcraft against enemies, communication with evil spirits, theories and practices about death. He concludes his commentary on all these phenomena with the assertion that there is an underlying all-pervading essence (Soul) which all individual share.

"As a matter of fact, the primitive's mind does not picture either the individual or the species exactly, but both at the same time, one within the other".

Levy-Bruhl refers to the instances of how primitive people addressed themselves to objects and things as if they e.i. the objects understand man's asking for their loyalty. Plants and trees were considered as human beings, man addressed to them with regard. Similarly he had close relationship with animals. Levy-Bruhl lists a series of testimonies of half human and half animal beings, about possession and lycanthrophy. He refers to cases of animals

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Ibid. p.60.
whose behaviours and language correspond to that of human beings. He also discussed the duality of the individual and the group soul inherent in the individual and how human beings at will assume diverse forms. He explains these phenomena with the hypothesis that both the individual and the species of animals plants have the same essence as the human. This oneness of the soul essence makes a person to assume different forms of animal and other material objects.

"Moreover, these mythical beings, half human and half animal, but at the same time superhuman and super animal, which are both source and stay to the social group, are, as we know, the most copious well-springs of mystic force which the primitive mind can conceive...these representations of them is in a certain sense their very selves. It participates in their mystic power, and causes it to radiate an all round".

The theory of the 'Soul' of the primitive is based on the following principles (1) That, primitive people did not know the law of causality and differentiation. For them the only law is the law of 'participation' in the same mystic essence. Thus, they made use of their intellect in a very different and strange way, and so (2) the primitive mentality is 'pre-logical'. This made Levy-Bruhl

1Ibid. page 55.
to view the primitive culture to be more mythical than logical and so different from modern civilised thought which is more rational. In my view, Levy-Bruhl failed to explain the primal (primitive) culture and belief logically. It may be true that primitive mentality was dominated by emotional elements, myth and magic, but this of course is not peculiar to the so called primitives. The same mentality is still seen in our certain realms of life, especially in poetic and religious spheres. In many situations like in times of war and revolution, calamities and unexpected occurrences modern man too is led more by emotion than logic. We find magic, horoscope and palmistry flourishing against rational sobriety, even today. The modern craftsman too hopes for the best depending on luck. Modern scientific research has not diminished the mystery of man's spiritual and physical existence and no answer has been devised by rational thought that would transcend the ancient (primitive) thought and culture which itself is a mystery to the logical mind. At any rate, all men are prelogical (to use Levy-Bruhl's term) in circumstances where logic has no access, and so logic becomes insufficient.

Levy-Bruhl's principle of 'participation' of a common mystic essence by every human, animal and material objects
does not go along with the Ao Naga concept of soul. (Though he mentioned few case histories of the Nagas)

It is not the universal soul which is shared by the human being, animal/inanimate bodies as he interprets, but rather it is the human soul that controls and directs other external forces by possessing them and exercising power over the animals and objects. Superiority of the human spiritual power is ignored by Levy-Bruhl in his comments and interpretations of the phenomena of possession and other mystic experiences of the primal people.

Far from the assertion of the anthropologists and missionaries the primal people had strong canons and perceptions of personal growth or progress moving from experience to experience, crisis to crisis and ritual to ritual as my analysis of the Ao Naga religion has shown. The concrete idea of personal development saturated the primal society. They did not lack a general capacity to conceptualize development or change. They did not lack in imagination and clear concepts. The lacking is in the understanding of them by the modern man.

Levy-Bruhl found sharp distinction between the primitive mentality and modern mentality. He considered the primitive mentality as essentially religious and mystical, and the modern mentality as scientific and logical. I have no
objection to the distinction. My only objection is: to the basis of the distinction. For the religious world view need not necessarily be uncultured or illogical and as I have tried to show the mystical element is not totally absent in the scientific logical world view of the modern man.

However, Levy-Bruhl is a sincere realist as he speaks about the 'participation mystique' in nature and in society which is provided by primitive religion and which is also a pressing need, even in modern societies, than the need for knowledge or conforming to logical exigencies. As David L.Edwards put:

"The primitive world view is, paradoxically, more familiar to many in contemporary Europe and North America than is the rather similar world view which was held during most of European history... The paradox is great, but significant. The west destroys primitive religion, but the west believes that it needs primitive religion"1.

The western religion has not led to complete defeat of the traditional religion (culture).

Scholars similarly draw a distinction between civilization and culture. Civilization stands for material advancement whereas culture stands for spiritual integrity.

"The true culture is non-violence, truth, non-stealing, self-abnegation".

In line with this view of culture, I wish to affirm that the traditional culture of the Ao Nagas is the best for the Aos, rejection of which has resulted in the disorganization of the personal and social life of the Aos. A process of personal and social disorganization and reorganization has brought to the Ao Nagas through contact with christianity and western culture, Social disintegration which has amounted to a decay in their social structure. The indigenous habits and forms of social control no longer function effectively, and its consequences are, disappearance of identity as a race, misuse of opportunity and power, increase of crimes and revolutions. By personal disorganization, I mean, a process in which one becomes confused, purposeless, uncertain of the future, resulting in various social evils. With the breakdown of the traditional moral

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order and social system the disorganization of the individual and the society occurred simultaneously.

The mode of expression and symbol of various societies change from time to time but the spirit of their culture is retained because their religion is retained. For instance, take the case of the Ao society, the most imposing structure in an Ao village was 'Arju' (Bachelors' dormitory) and the Big Log-drum. These were abandoned on religious grounds and Aos lost certain distinct architectural values along with their social and other cultural values. At the hands of the pioneer missionaries the abolition of certain so-called 'primitive' practices resulted in more law violating and disintegrating elements in society. Certain Aos isolated themselves from their former environment and as a result of violent proselytization irreconcilable divergent views gave birth to antagonistic parallel social set ups. Many left the traditional religion but could not follow the new religion, and thus according to 1921 census there were 1180 persons who had no religion—in between the two antagonistic religions.

In the process of human development change is inevitable, because a culture uncontaminated by outer contact is not to be found anywhere. However, a gradual process of change avoiding sudden violent conversion would have lead to more desirable results. This fact the
Christian missionaries failed to take into account. The condemnation of the traditional Naga religion was a condemnation of the traditional Naga way of life and they wished to implant on this condemnation a western theology and religion. These pioneers and leaders failed to grasp the approach of political leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and others who respected and gave due recognition and consideration to the aged-long refined traditional culture of the Nagas. It will be helpful here to note W.C. Smith's observation as follows:

"Christianity has extended a considerable influence over the Ao Nagas... But it is seriously to be questioned if these changes, beneficial though they may be, have been brought about as efficiently as they might have been. It may also be added that the changes have not been as great as they might have been... There is a great danger that Christianity as presented to these people comes to be a little more than the adoption of another set of taboos".

With the disappearance of traditional view of life and world, the best traits of the Ao Nagas' character is going to be completely lost. The spiritual strength and ethical values which gave courage and hope to the adherents of the traditional religion is found lacking among the Aos and the Nagas as whole. The traditional religion gave a

1 The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam, p.224
genuine emphasis on spiritual realities behind everyday life and activities pointing to a development of higher values. Every aspect of life was religious.

As I have tried to emphasize in Chapter III, through the series of public and private ceremonies the Aos ascribed a spiritual reality in every activity of life. Every village elder and every head of an household had great responsibilities because they were the priests themselves. With the advent of Christianity such responsibility was transferred to the clergy and naturally people became irresponsible. Moreover, abolishing ceremonies and 'amung' resulted in social incoherence and the devotion, sanctity and loyalty to the belief system was shattered. And their attention and focus was taken from the present day to day encounter to an ideal world where God is conceived as a transcendent entity.

Though Christianity teaches the omnipresence of God, that could not be realised in the lives of the people. Whereas in the traditional religion Aos found God in everything and everywhere. The present adopted religious approach points to the transcendent values away from the existential world of reality.

The activities of the present organised religion, namely
christianity among the Nagas is not connected much with the things which matter most in the life of the Ao Nagas. It may be remarked that the religious vision of the few has been scarcely glimpsed by the mass of the people. The religious ideals and activities of christianity in Ao land remains in the super structure level without coming down to the infra structure level of Ao society, let me put the same in the reverse way, that, christianity touched the infra structure level without allowing it to grow proportionately to the superstructure level. And thus the realities of day to day life do not go along with the professed high ideals which are but an utopia for the ordinary men. Here we may refer to the traditional religion. For instance, when the people had to go to the battle field, the priests or the village elders assured them that gods would fight along with them. In times of sickness their belief either healed or consoled them. When someone was dying he was assured by their religion that he was going to join his ancestors where there will be no cares of life, and thus helped to overcome their grief. Their religion linked every crisis and duties with total life from Cradle to grave. In the traditional tribal religion we find the integration of man within himself and with his environment.

And so those aspects of the traditional culture
which do not run counter to the fundamental teaching of their adopted religion should be restored. The point to be noted here is that even a mere revival of these would not serve the purpose as it is a piecemeal and not as a part of the total religious world view. The various aspects of the Ao culture may be revived and brought back responding to the needs of the situation only through the restoration of the religious framework. By this I do not mean the revival of out dated cults.

Here the review of the present religious life of the Ao Nagas will be helpful. In the traditional religion there was no different social status among the people. When foreign missionaries came, they maintained status without identifying with the people and thus the racial and cultural differences created a gap between the religious leaders and the people. After many decades, though the native church leaders succeeded the foreigners, the situation remained unchanged. The church leaders dealt with the people authoritatively without reference to argument and evidence and the people followed them as a matter of faith blindly. The system of belief became a mere dogma rather than a way of life.

The religious leaders, who alone bear the responsibility of the spiritual welfare of the people withdrew from
the people resulting in a gap between them. * Traditional society was a classless society, for everyone was equal in the society. Now we see many distinctions and divisions among the christians. That is, first, the distinction between the converts and non-converts. Among the converts there is a gap of distinction between the leaders and the followers, even among the converts we find using the term 'Saved' and 'Unsaved'.* Among the saved ones a further distinction appears as 'those having Holy Spirit' and 'those who have no Holy Spirit'.**

All these circumstances resulted in the inefficiency of the adopted religion. It failed to penetrate into other social institutions for with modernisation in any case religion is no more regarded as a total cultural system. With all good teachings and preachings, the church is a silent spectator of all the social evils and political corruptions. I have stated that in the traditional religion an immoral elder was not given the right to rule over the people. Everyone respected the elders with fear of God. * The political turmoil, economic unsteadiness,

*This distinction appeared when Evangelicals preached the possibilities of assurance of salvation.
** This distinction appeared when the Pentecostals preached the possibilities of having received the Holy Spirit.
social disintegration and loss of identity are the result of the rejection of the traditional cultural system. Therefore, the environment which the Nagas encounter today, and the kind of religious philosophy which they profess, demands the revival of the traditional culture with the restoration of its religious framework.