CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present study was undertaken to study the socio-cultural changes which might have taken place in the life of the people of Wokha district as a result of the introduction of British administration and Christian missionaries activities in the district. Prior to the arrival of the British and Christian missionaries in Nagaland, the Lotha tribe lives a simple life. Their way of life including food habits, dresses, house patterns, beliefs, customs and traditions are strictly observed and maintained as the forefathers lived. But their socio-cultural and economic life are changing. The main intention of this study is, therefore, to find out why such changes operating among the Lotha Nagas.

While investigating the social lives and cultural background of the people from remote past, intensive field work was done to trace the way of lives of the people of the past through the existing practices and available information from the various sources. But in dealing with the present situation one cannot simply ignore the past, because the present society is the result of series of changes that has taken place in the past society as rightly stated by Khashim Ruviah:

Each culture can be understood only as an historical growth determined by the social and geographical environment in which each people is placed and by the way in which it develops the cultural material that comes into possession from the outside or through its own creativeness.1

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Many scholars and renown anthropologists have conducted research on primitive tribe and culture in various senses and one of which the most influential is, of course, that of E. B. Tylor. In his famous book, *Primitive Culture*, it is written:

> Culture or civilization taken in its ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society (Tylor, E.B., 1971).

This definition of culture is rather vague, but words like 'acquire' and 'complex whole', which were the key words of the definition means that culture is the product of the social learning rather than of biological heredity. It also means that it includes all social learned behaviours.

In his definition Malinowski also referred culture as "an instrument reality, an apparatus for satisfaction of the biological and derived need." (Malinowski, B., 1960). In this context, culture operates as means of response for the satisfaction of biological derived need. He emphasized on the biological aspect of culture and explained the biological characteristics of human behaviour. However, Radcliffe Brown did not agree with him when he used the word "social structure" for culture, a wider perspective of culture, in analyzing social organization. He refers culture as a process by which a person acquire from contact with other person or from such things like books, or works of art, knowledge, skill, idea, belief, sentiment etc., (Radcliff Brown., 1952).
Now culture is understood as the whole human reactions and responses to existence. In other words, culture is all that a man creates in order to adapt himself to the environment for survival, which includes customs and traditions, beliefs, ideas, social institutions, habitual attitude of mind, artifacts and techniques etc., that can be transmitted from one person to the other through speech and symbolic actions. However, it is a product of social learning rather than biological heredity. All these acquired products serve man to maintain in the struggle for existence.

Culture is dynamic and rapidly changing. Thus any modification or change in the life of the people, material or non-material, whether consequent innovation and acculturation can be termed as culture change. In the process of culture change, however, only some aspects of cultural traits may be changed or it may even take another form of modified cultural pattern, but retains the basic elements of the original cultural traits which may remain unchanged.

Sometimes culture change is closely related to many social change and their distinction is very crucial. But culture change is the conceptual formulation that refers to the many ways in which societies change their patterns of culture. It mainly refers to the change in cultural meaningful symbols produced by human being whereas social change refers mainly to the change in actual human behaviours and relations (Moore, W.E., 1968).

In the study of culture change anthropologists like Tylor, Morgan and Frazer tried to explain the origin of culture and made simplistic
attempt to understand change. They believed that the primitive societies had already experienced dramatic change in the past.

Malinowski also talks about social change by stating that change is created primarily due to external pressure of colonial rule (Malinowski, 1960). His main argument was that primitive tribe must be studied as a unit actually functioning under present day but not as a reflection of their own past history. Malinowski’s main theoretical contribution was functional analysis of culture into a series of interacted aspects, and later he adopted to form the basis more dynamic type of study of culture contact by which it would follow the introduction into a primitive society of programmes of change.

The British social anthropologists seem to have more concern with the social consequences of change, in terms of structural adjustment. American anthropologists, on the other hand, were more concern with process and agent of changes. While Britishers were primarily concerned with the problem of culture change due to colonial rule and trade, the Americans were more concerned with the study of change as an outcome of better communication and economic development.

We can also approach the study of change in a society in two ways, first, change as a juxtaposition of circumstances unique for each culture, second, change as a regular phenomenon in each society having some regularity in the pattern of change.

One of the crucial problem areas in contemporary anthropology is that of culture change. Therefore, to understand the sphere of problem of
change in the social activities and human relations, it is necessary to investigate the social lives and actual background of the people in the past through the existing practices and available information. If we know the condition under which a culture operates then we can understand what form of and direction culture change takes place as it has been quoted by Ruivah the words of Gillin:

If we know the conditions under which a culture operates and lives of its internal integration and coordination, we are able to predict within certain limits what form and direction culture changes will take. As we perfect our knowledge and our techniques for specifying the condition of compatibility and consistency, our predictions become possible, so control and manipulation of changes are possible. ²

Therefore, in considering social change it is also important to keep in view whether the change is even in all aspects of life or change is rapid in some aspects and slow in other aspects or aspects.

Now, study of culture change has becoming more important or significant in the post Second World War as evidenced by Lester’s (1944) study of the effect of war on Fijian society, Brown’s (1949) study of missionaries and cultural diffusion and Benedict’s (1947) study of Japanese culture and personality, with special reference to the problem of stability and change. Thus, the above theoretical background study of culture change help us to understand the importance of the study of culture change.

In the 19th century a significant landmark has been continued in the history and of the tribal people of the North-east India, particularly to the Naga society. It witnessed the transition from tradition to modernity. Prior to British arrival to this region the people remained almost segregated. The Nagas lived in their isolated lives in their respective villages, which were more or less like village republics. There was little scope for mixing together with other people of the country. However, it was during the year 1832 the British made their first entry into Naga Hills. But the first mass contact of the Nagas with the people living outside was made only during the Second World War (Sema, Hokishe., 1986).

The entry of the British administration brought along the Christian missionaries, of course, it was mainly coincidence of time rather than coincidence of intentions between the British rulers and the Christian missionaries. The British intervened with the traditional political institutions and later they also introduced change in the subsistence activities of the people. The missionaries who came at the same time as the British colonizers, brought change in the indigenous religious beliefs and practices and many other aspects of life of the people like education, style of personal life etc. Thus the impact of westernization and modernization on the Naga society and culture during this period has a tremendous impact on the socio-economic, religion, education and cultural field and eradication of some evil practices like head-hunting and superstitious beliefs. Further, it leads to the gradual decline in indigenous arts, crafts, traditional system of administration, customary law and justice and indigenous industries. The British policy of introducing to the
Nagas about the apparatus of western civilization led to the crises in their faith, traditions and cultural values.

The second phase of socio-cultural and economic change was noticed during the post-independence period. From 1947 onwards the government of India introduced a series of developmental programmes in the country and as a result of which hardly any aspect of life of the people remained untouched. Thus, there was total transformation in the way of life of the people of Nagas due to the introduction of western cultural elements into the Naga traditional way of life.

The Lothas, like any other tribes of Nagaland, has been traditionally living within their own territory in almost relatively isolated from the rest of the civilized world. They led a simple life according to their own way of life, following their own customs and traditions in all matters of socio-political activities. But now things have drastically changed. Culture and traditions of the Lothas had undergone a tremendous change owing to the coming of the Britishers and the Christian missionaries to this region in the year 1841, and more so after independence.

The whole attitude and the life style of the Lothas have considerably changed in recent times as observed by A. P. Sinha:

A modern Lotha boys and girls can easily impress anyone that the people of this region (Naga Hills of yesteryear, Nagaland of today) are in no way different in their food habits, hair-style, in total appearance, from the people
of other parts of the country, and who are known to be modern.³

Thus cultural change has come about as a result of experiences initially due to contact with the western civilized world and adaptation of a new religion and various relating aspects to style of life and more so after 1947 with improved economic development, communication, transportation, contact with people from other cultural group. Anthropological enquiry into the pattern and extent of such transformation, therefore, become quite relevant and appropriate. This brings us the need of proper understanding of socio-cultural structure as well as their problems of changes that have taken place within the Lotha community. The main purpose of the present study is, therefore, to examine the changes that have taken place in the socio-cultural and religious aspects of the Lotha people.

Review of Literature

Some of the works of the social anthropologists, sociologists and other thinkers of the social and cultural change among the Indian tribal societies provides some theoretical approaches to the study of culture change.

Furer-Haimendorf (1942) analyzed the gradual changes of the culture of the Chenchu. He enumerates the type of culture borrowing and discussed the nature of change caused in original culture owing to their

contact with the forest contractors, road labourers and local peasant population.

Kessinger (1974) selected a single village in Punjab and conducted a case study and deal with migration, commercialization and agriculture, differentiation of occupation and population growth in rural Punjab from the time of British annexation in 1948 till 1968. He combined the perspectives and method used by the historian to trace the situation of rural Indian economic and social position to study the aspect of change that have been left out previously. His main intention was not to show the changing state of village life in Punjab but to find out the development over extended period of time and to discover the factors responsible for it.

Roy (1989) conducted a study on the Khond tribe of Orissa and said that in the initial stage of existence, the Khonds were basically a hill nomadic race with self-sustained economy. But the British administration policy had affected the socio-cultural and economic life of this important section of the tribal of Orissa that in due course of time, these aborigines resorted to their shifting cultivation which supplemented their means of subsistence and economy.

Chaudhuri (1992) in a series of survey on the tribal transition in India found that the traditional economy of the Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh were such as agriculture, trade, sheep and goat rearing. But now their economy has shifted from its past tradition. The factors like enclosure of the border with Tibet, opening of modern commercial and transport system, introduction of modern education and new
administrative system have made people of this district inclined towards diversification of occupation like agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry.

Jain (1995) conducted a case study on social change among the Bhil tribe of Rajasthan and found that a number of them have already embraced Christianity. They ceased to practice polygamy and also condemned bride-price among Bhil Christians. There are also other factors like diversification of economy, implementation of massive development plans, opening of tribal territory and provision of infrastructure facilities which were responsible for bringing about changes among the Bhil community.

Burling (1963) did an intensive village study on the Garo village. In his work, Burling found that the major factors causing change among the Garos of Meghalaya are not the adaptation of wet paddy cultivation and better contact with the outside world. Adaptation of the permanent cultivation by itself caused no other change except changing some principles of ownership of land as historical evidence shows that the Garos had started wet-paddy cultivation there as early as the early part of the 15th century AD (Borah, 1936). But overwhelming changes started to show their impact on all aspects of Garo’s life, in their material culture, social organization and their world view.

In K. S. Singh's (ed.) 1993, *Tribal Ethnography Customary Law and Change*, S. K. Pal made analytical studies on the Rabha community and said that the Rabhas of Assam followed the matrilineal principles in respect of descent, residence and inheritance. In the pre-independence
period Rabhas were relatively isolated from the main stream of Hindu’s ways of life and maintained their cultural homogeneity as an integrated harmonious whole, but in the post-independence period the improvement of education and integration of tribal areas resulted into a closer interaction between the Rabhas and other communities like the Hindu caste groups. As a result of a closer contact with the neighbouring Hindus, the Hindu culture elements have penetrated the traditional structure of Rabha’s society. Thus, the Rabha society now is in transition from matrilineal to patrilineal social structure.

Snaitang (1993) studied the Khasi-Jaintia societies of Meghalaya and found that three important changes have taken place among the Khasi-Jaintia tribes. One of the most significant changes noticed was the lifestyle of the women. Under the impact of missionaries influence and the modern culture, the women were more free in their movement and even participated actively in political and social affairs. The impact is also found in the material culture where the old traditional houses were redesigned. Age-old taboo on drinking of milk and rejection of previous food such as chicken and eggs were removed. Drinking of country liquor or rice beer were replaced by introducing tea drinking among the Khasi-Jaintia Christians.

Furer-Haimendorf (1976) restudied the Konyak Naga tribe of Nagaland after a gap of thirty four years (1936-1970). In his analytical studies he found that a drastic change has taken place in the sociocultural and economic life of the Konyak people within the period of thirty four years. Under the changed political conditions, the tradition of
autocratic chieftainship is undergoing transformation, even though some of the chiefs may retain part of their wealth and privileges. Traditional political structure of the village based on the closed association of the “Murong” had already been replaced by modern form of political system. The introduction of Christianity has led to the abandonment of many customs and traditions. Many have totally abandoned their old tribal religion and have embraced Christianity. Even the house-type and household materials have been replaced by new items of furniture and equipments like table, chair, metal-utensils and cups.

Horam (1988) made an analytical studies on the Naga tribes in general and said that one of the most remarkable changes that have taken place among the Naga society was the transitional from old beliefs to new beliefs, animism to Christianity. Beliefs in the old gods and family-cult are slowly passing away but these have been firmly replaced by Christianity. Another aspect of change is due to the yielding of old things to new ones as being introduced by Christianity.

Saleh (1989) made an analytical study on the transition of Nagaland’s economy from a primitive to a modern economy. During the pre-independence period there had been no developmental programmes in Nagaland. Education was confined mainly to a few missionaries schools. But it was only after the formation of state, the administrative machinery had to be built up to bring about peace in the area. Thereafter various infrastructures development was made. The main factors of economic transition in Nagaland was mainly due to the introduction of 6th and 7th plans in the country where main emphasis was made for
development of infrastructure by providing medical hospitals, schools, drinking water supply, construction of approach road, improved seeds and agricultural tools and implements etc. Such development brought about changes in the ways of life and attitudes of the people from a traditional tribal society to a modern way of life.

Ruivah (1993) in his ethnographic account on the Tangkhul Nagas, one of the major tribes of Manipur, made a microscopic investigation on the Tangkhul society and found that the social life of the Tangkhul has been undergoing a rapid transformation as a result of the introduction of a new way of life mainly due to the impact of Christianity, contact with outside world, formal education and the imposition of a new political system etc. The most important factors of social change among the Tangkhul was proselytization which began after the occupation of Manipur by the British in the last part of 19th century. With the advent of Christianity social transformation of the Tangkhul society has taken place in numerous ways, viz., by the introduction of many new things, many indigenous social practices and aspects of culture were abolished and many modifications were made in the traditional social customs and practices. He analyzed the traditional culture and social system which were rapidly vanishing under the impact of modernization and Christianity.

In Ganguly's (ed.), 1995, Urbanization and Development in North-East India (Trends and Policy Implication), Saikia conducted a case study of two urban towns such as Kohima and Dimapur in Nagaland. His main intention was to study the process of urbanization in Nagaland. He
found that the growth of urbanization in Nagaland has been very fast and it is even faster than in some other states of North-East India. Kohima being the capital of the state has been growing fast on account of expanding administrative and political activities. Dimapur, on the other hand, has been spreading fast due to the development of business, industrial and civic and educational facilities. In both of these towns, commercial, educational and administrative functions have been expanding very fast. As a result, the old town areas are expanding in all directions, mainly along the National Highway No. 39. Another factor leading to the fast growing of Kohima and Dimapur was due to the migration of the educated people to these towns for employment in government service and business enterprises.

Mills (1922), in his monograph on *The Lotha Nagas*, made an effort in investigating on socio-cultural life of the Lotha Naga people and put them on record, which was the first book on account of the Lotha people. He made an elaborate studies on the original form of the Lotha’s customs and traditions. He also traced the origin and migration of the tribe. Mills’ account on the Lotha tribe was written in the form of monography and yet it provides us the situations prevailing before the changes have taken place in the socio-cultural life of the Lotha people.

In the Wokha District Gazetteers, Ghosh (1979) reports that the transition of dress from the old dress like “lengta” and mantles to other attires like pants and shirts is significant transformation in the dress culture among the Lotha Nagas. Owing to the advent of modern
education and Christianity such a radical and tremendous change on dress culture has taken place among the tribe.

So far any exhaustive review of the work done on social and culture change have not been tried here. But the main purpose of review of literature done here is to show the trend and development of researches done in culture change.

A number of study on social and culture change among the Nagas have been done by some researchers. However, it may be pointed out here that no study has been done so far among the Lotha society as culture change is concerned.

Scope and Objectives of the Study

The present study is entitled as a Study of Culture Change Among the Lotha Nagas: A Case Study of Wokha and Akuk Village in Nagaland. The main intention of this study is to find out the changes that are operating among the Lotha society.

Prior to the arrival of the British colonizers and the Christian missionaries the Lotha lives a simple life. Their customs and traditions are strictly observed and maintained. But now these things have been changed and a new way of life has been experienced by the people of Wokha district. Of course, culture change is an ongoing process and any society may experience it at any stage. As for the Lothas, rapid change of culture begins from the time when they had come into contact with the British and missionaries in the earlier time and with the various developments in economic opportunities in the post-Independence period
at the later stage. With the coming of Christianity and formal education, the Lotha society went for a greater change. Therefore, the present study purposes to find out why such change operating among the Lotha Nagas.

Keeping in view of the above purpose of the study, the present study proposes the following objectives so as to make the study more meaningful and manageable:

1. To review the traditional Lotha culture,
2. To investigate the culture change of the Lotha Nagas,
3. To find out the main factors responsible for the culture change,
4. To observe the process of change, and finally to analyse and summarize the findings of the thesis.

Methodology
Selection of the Village

After much consultation and a careful spot verification of the two types of Lotha typical villages such as Akuk and Wokha have been selected for intensive field study.

The Akuk village, which is one of the most traditional and historical villages in Lotha area, represents the traditional Lotha village at the time when the British and missionaries made their first contact with the Lotha people during the later part of the nineteenth century. The selection of the other two villages such as Wokha and Phiro represents a village that have been already affected by the present trend of culture change due to their contact with the British and the Christian missionaries, and the development of various economic opportunities
during the post-independence period. The purpose of selecting Wokha and Phiro villages is to have a better comparison of the data collected from these two villages for the present study.

Wokha village is about one and a half km. away from the district headquarters. This is one of the advanced and leading Christian villages in Wokha district comprising 679 households with total number of 3776 population. The attitude and life style of this village have considerably changed as a result of the introduction of modernization brought by the British administration and missionaries and also economic development in the village. Now, most of the people of this village could hardly follow their traditional ways of life.

Phiro is about 35 km away from Wokha town, the district headquarters. This village has 306 households with a total number of 2375 population. Christianity came to this village earlier than as it was introduced at Wokha village. But the growth rate of Christianity in this village was rather slow and at the same time their acceptance of alien culture was comparatively slower. This village still retains some of its traditional cultural traits. Yet majority of the people in this village have also changed their way of life.

For a better comparison of the information these two villages have been selected. Today, though almost all the population of these two villages have become Christian some of their ways of life are still influenced by their previous background in all the two villages. In this study, special emphasis was made to the kind of indigenous institutions of socio-cultural and their response to the changing situations are
carefully examined. The data so collected from these two villages generally reflected the characteristics of the entire Lotha society. The main intention of the present study is, therefore, to present a total picture of the traditional culture of the Lotha society and also to examine the changes that are taking place in various aspects of life of the Lotha people through a minute studies of these two typical Lotha villages.

**Tools and Techniques of Data Collection**

The data for the present study was collected during the trips made to the field search work between the month of December, 1999 and April, 2001. Prior to the actual investigation begins a thorough survey of the two selected villages was made. Some of the important persons like Village Council Members, Chairmen, elders, pastors, women leaders, students leaders etc., were also contacted in order to get the preliminary necessary information. Before the schedules and interviews were served to the respondents, preliminary contact was made in order to get acquaintance with the people and informed them about the purpose of the study. Then in-depth study was made by collecting data for the entire household census. Thus completed the first enquiry about the general information of the two villages.

The present study being an empirical study, the primary data were collected through schedules and interviews supplemented by participant observations. Besides, secondary data were also collected from the various available sources like books, journals and reports or records.
Comparative methods were used to understand the trends of culture change that are being taking place among the Lotha Nagas. Such techniques help to understand the trends of culture change that had started from the time when the Lothas had come into contact with the Britishers and the missionaries in the earlier time and with the development of various economic opportunities at the later stage to the present time. It also further helps for a better comparison of the information collected from the two different villages such as Wokha and Phiro.

Random sampling method was also employed. The sampled respondents were drawn through random sampling method from the two selected villages. Out of 679 households with total number of population of 3776 from Wokha village, a sample of 206 households were selected while 123 sample households were selected from Phiro village which has 306 households with total number of 2375 populations. The sample respondents so drawn from these two villages includes all the different categories of the people in the village and thus represents the whole universe of the present study.