

CHAPTER VII

BRITISH OCCUPATION, CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES

The British occupation of Maraland brought about tremendous and far-reaching changes in the socio-cultural and political life of the Maras. In this regard, the Christian Mission acted as catalytic agent for pacifying and taming the wild head-hunters and turning them into one brotherhood based on theosophy, love and humanity. At the same time the British administration and the Christian Mission worked hand in hand for the welfare of the subjects as well as the fulfillment of the British imperial interest. The primary objectives of the British were the maintenance of law and order, prohibition of notorious head-hunting, inter-tribe and inter village feuds and warfare, and other obnoxious primitive customs and practices. However, the British Government followed a policy of non-interference in regard to socio-cultural changes initiated by the Missionaries.

Anglo-Mara Relation and the British Occupation of the Maraland:

On the eve of British occupation, the areas inhabited by Maras were under the sway of the Mara chiefs. Almost

every winter the Maras committed daring raids upon the Khumis also called Pachypi¹ of the northern Arakan Hill Tracts killing many and carrying off many others as captives. On the basis of British records, Carey and Tuck observed that almost every year from 1800 to 1872 Kukis, Shendus (Maras) and other hill tribes swooped down from their mountain fastness upon the plains on the east and murdered, pillaged and burnt villages.²

Since the Arakan Hills tracts came under the British administration in 1826,³ any Mara raid in these territories naturally involved the British Government. The earliest raid of the Maras (then known as Shendus) on the British North Arakan is recorded in 1838.⁴ The warlike and powerful Maras were thus a constant source of trouble to the British in the Chittagong and Arakan frontiers.

Initially, the primary object of the British frontier policy was to give protection to the British subjects against the marauding raids committed by the daring tribes

1 Newsletter, 1935, p. 5.

2 B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck : *op.cit.*, p. 16.

3 A.P. Phayre : *op.cit.*, p. 708.

4 B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck : *op.cit.*, p. 12.

who were outside the administrative control of the Arakan authorities.⁵ However, since 1846 full details about the tribal raids were known from Capt. Phayre, the Principal Assistant Commissioner of Arakan. It was learnt from Capt Phayre that most of the raiders were the Maras from the Kolodyne. Efforts were, therefore, made to punish the raiders and recover the captives. The first expedition against the Maras was undertaken by Capt. Phayre himself during the cold weather in 1846-1847.⁶ This expedition did not achieve any lasting result. The Maras continued their raids on the Arakan Hill Tracts. Rather they often made several raids attacking village which they suspected to have assisted the British.⁷ However, an attempt at survey and exploration of Mara areas lying to the extreme south of the Lushai Hills was made by Capt. Hodgkinson and Lieut Sades in the winter of 1848-1849. With an escort of native troops and police, the party went upto the Kolodyne river from Akyab, ascended the Relietla and reached the vicinity of Saikao known as Sherkor.⁸ This exploration though did not establish any political contact with the Maras, it opened the first route to the Maraland.

In 1865 Capt. T.H. Lewin was deputed to conduct a

5 A. Mackenzie : *op.cit.*, p. 331.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 333.

7 A.G. Mccall : *op.cit.*, p. 43.

8 W. Shakespeare : *op.cit.*, p. 63.

boundary settlement between the Chittagong and Arakan Districts. With fifty of his police he made a most difficult march to the south east through unknown tracts. Proceeding up the Kolodyne river, he encountered a large body of Maras near the mouth of the Salyu river known as "Sulla". Lewin was wounded as also were several of his men,⁹ and it was he who first, discovered that most dangerous enemies the Maras.¹⁰ At the same time, Lewin was the first Britisher who laid the foundations of the British rule in the Lushai Hills and established intimate relations with the Maras.

The main difficulty before the British authorities was the impossibility of establishing close contact with the Maras. There was no proper exploration of the hill tracts which geographically belonged to Arakan. In 1869, the first Lushai expedition took place under the command of Brigadier General Nuthall,¹¹ and in 1871 another Lushai expedition consisting two columns, one from Cachar led by Brig. General Bouchier and the other from Chittagong under Brig. General C.H. Brownlow entered the Lushai Hills.¹² These expeditions dealt with the Lusheis but the Maras were left untouched. For ten years after this Maras and also the

9 W. Shakespear : *op.cit.*, p. 64.

10 A.G. McCall : *op.cit.*, p. 44.

11 B.C. Allen : *The Gazetteer of the Khasi & Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Lushai Hills*, Reprint, 1980, p. 8.

12 Col. E.B. Elly : *Military Report on the Chin Lushai Country*, Reprint, 1978, p. 9.

Lusheis remained comparatively quiet. In 1889, the Chin Lushai expedition (1889-1890) took place to punish Hausata, a Thlatla Chin. One of the objectives of the expedition was to construct a well-weather road in the direction of the Mara areas.¹³

The Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-90 resulted in the occupation of the Chin and the Lushai Hills including some parts of the Maraland bordering the South Lushai Hills. This had brought the Maras into political contact with the British. The British territory now touched the Mara areas of the south Lushai Hills. In 1891 Capt. Shakespeare further extended the British rule and included Saikao, Siaha and other Tlōsai villages.¹⁴ From 1891 these villages formed part of the south Lushai Hill. Later, the British rule was gradually extended, and the Hawthai villages were also brought under the administrative control of the British. However, a large tract of hill areas between the Lushai and the Chin Hills remained unadministered.

When the North and South Lushai Hills were amalgamated in 1898 to form the Lushai Hills District under the Chief Commissioner of Assam,¹⁵ the new district inherited an ill-defined boundary between the Chin and the Lushai Hills.

13 A.S. Reid : *Chin-Lushai Land*, Reprint, 1976, p. 6.

14 S. Das : *op.cit.*, p. 101.

15 ARNA, 1898-99, p. 28.

The problem of undefined boundary and of controlling the "unadministered" area attracted inevitable concern of the Chin, Arakan and Lushai Hills authorities after the Chin-Lushai expedition. The Mara groups of the "unadministered" tract were the Sizös, the Löcheis and the Hlaipaos¹⁶ who were left untouched by the Chin-Lushai Expedition. From 1890 onwards, their raids on the British villages were constant occurrences. They were armed, paid no tribute, and could go wherever they liked and did what they liked.¹⁷ The neighbouring tribe like the Chins, had to pass through this Mara "unadministered" tracts to Arakan for trade.¹⁸ The lack of the British control over this area created the situation inimical to peace. The overwhelming administrative problems arising from raid, abduction, murder, and encroachment of the British territories by the "unadministered" villages, called for a defined boundary.

In 1906, the Zyhnos, a sub-group of the Hlaipaos chased a family of slaves (*sei*) who had escaped and entered the British territory. They captured them in the British village, Paitha, and forcibly carried them back to their village over the border. They hang the head of the family in a tree.¹⁹ An expedition was prepared but before

16 ASPA, March, 1908, Nos. 18, 19.

17 ASPA, June, 1906.

18 ARAL, 1910-1911, pp. 5-6.

19 *Grammar*, p. 8.

it was undertaken, the captives were released and the operation was postponed till 1907. It took place in December 1907 under Major Cole. A fine of Rs. 500 had been realised from the Zyhno without difficulty in the shape of twenty guns at Rs. 25 each.²⁰ As a result of this expedition the villages of the Zyhno group were brought under a sort of loose control.²¹ The Lushai Hills officers then met Mr. W.L. Thom, Deputy commissioner of the Arakan Hills Tracts District and Mr. W. Street, Superintendent of the Chin Hills at Laki and discussed about the fixing of the southern boundary of the Lushai Hills and for bringing the "unadministered" tracts between the northern Arakan and Lushai Hills under the British administration.²² The "unadministered" villages, however, remained quiet till 1916.

In 1917, the Zyhno raided Tybu a Mara village in the Northern Arakan Hills, 18 people were killed and 3 men and 10 women were captured.²³ The heads were placed on the memorial posts over the grave of the late chief Hmolai. In retaliation, the Lialais raided a small village near Laki and captured nine people for slaves. The Laki village of the Zyhno also seized a girl from the British village of Kiasi

20 Sir Robert Reid : *The Lushai Hills*, Reprint, 1978, p. 62.

21 N.E. Parry : *op.cit.*, p. 174.

22 Sir Robert Reid : *op.cit.*, p. 62.

23 N.E. Parry : *op.cit.*, p. 211.

while Chapi had raided Lôchei village and carried off some women as slaves.²⁴ These forays resulted in an expedition led by Mr. H.A.C. Colquhoun who marched to the villages of Zyhno, Chapi and Laki in January 1918. Without opposition he exacted fines from them.²⁵

The Lôcheis were, however, deeply involved in the encroachment of Lushai Hills territories. They cut *jhums* within the "administered" areas and declined to pay dues to the chief concerned.²⁶ Early in 1919, a group of Lôchei raided the "administered" village of Siata,²⁷ in the British territory. The raids and forays led the Governments of Bengal and Assam to propose to the Government of India for the establishment of "loose political control" over unadministered tract.²⁸ This principle was extended over to other "unadministered" area in 1921.²⁹ In this context in a meeting was held between L.E. Burne, Deputy commissioner of the Chin Hills, W.L. Thom, Deputy commissioner of Arakan Hills Tracts and S.N. Mackenzie, Superintendent of Lushai Hills on 31 January 1922 at Baw where the fixation of the Chin Lushai boundary was discussed. In the Baw meeting, the

24 N.E. Farry : *op.cit.*, p. 12.

25 Sir Robert Reid : *op.cit.*, p. 64.

26 ARNA, 1918-19, p. 5.

27 ASPA, June, 1921, No. 24.

28 ASPA, June, 1912, No. 63.

29 ASPA, March, 1924, No. 2.

Maras villages of the independent area were divided among the three districts of Lushai hills, Chin hills and Aracan Hills Tracts.³⁰ It was only in 1924 that boundaries between the Chin Hills and Lushai Hills were clearly demarcated and all the Maras came under the British rule. The Mara villages which fell to the Lushai Hills came under some type of "loose administration" in 1924.³¹ The formal inclusion of this area as British territory took place in 1931 when by a notification, the "Zyhno area" described as an area of political control to the south Lushai Hills District, was included in the Province of Assam.³² Subsequently all the laws and rules enforced in the Lushai Hills District were extended to this area.³³

The British Administration:

As the Mara chiefs did not initially oppose the British it was easy to annex the Mara area and cultivate friendly terms with the chiefs. The coming of the British, therefore, did not disturb the general peace and normal life of the inhabitants who continued to live as before. Rather

30 N.E. Parry : *op.cit.*, p. 12.

31 B.C. Chakravorty : *British Relations with the Hill Tribes*, 1988, p. 188.

32 Notification No. 475- x of the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, date the 30th July, 1931.

33 Animesh Ray : *op.cit.*, p. 42.

the British brought certain advantages in its train; the Maras could now sleep peacefully at night without fear of an ambush and could have beer-parties with out posting sentries. The British rule had removed fear, implanted a sense of security and enabled the people to live peacefully.³⁴

The most remarkable result that followed the British occupation of the Maraland was the gradual weakening of the position and powers of the chiefs.³⁵ The Mara chiefs were allowed to continue their rule in accordance with the laws and orders of the British administration. However, circle system introduced in 1901-92 in the Lushai Hills was extended to the Mara area under Lunglei Circle, and the "Saikao area"³⁶ formed part of administrative circle. A number of rights and privileges which had been enjoyed and exercised by the chiefs were allowed to retain unaltered. But certain powers had been exercised by the British Government over the chiefs who were not treated as "Government functionary".³⁷ The chiefs could, however, decide all cases except those of very serious nature such as murder, rape, etc. The chief merely

34 S. Das : *op.cit.*, p. 101.

35 Among the Maras chieftainship was abolished in 15 April 1956 by the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of chiefs rights) Act of 1954.

36 Sir Robert Reid : *op.cit.*, p. 61.

37 N.E. Parry : *op.cit.*, p. 249.

represented the village in all dealings with the Government, and all dealings with the villagers were carried through the chief who acted as spokesman for his people as well as village representative of Government. The chief had a dual function. Each chief now held a boundary paper from Government vesting his land in him, and on the death of a chief, his name was removed from the paper and his successor's name entered instead.³⁸ The British did not appoint commoner as chief among the Maras.³⁹

Lakher Pioneer Mission:

The British expeditions had paved the way for the coming of the Christian missionaries to the Maraland. The Christian missionary who first set his foot on the Maraland was Rev. R. A. Lorrain. Born 10 January 1880, he entered Anerly Congregational Church, London at the age of twelve, and later he became active Church member.⁴⁰ A man of principle by faith and staunch supporter of humanism; he had the thought of Missionary's career. On 11 February 1905, he decided to undertake the pioneering work among the Maras on receiving a private letter from his brother J. H. Lorrain that mentioned

38 N.E. Parry : *op.cit.*, p. 250.

39 Informant : T. David says that Daotha of Azyu clan, a *chaprassi*, was the only such chief who held the Vahia area originally belonged to the Zyhnos.

40 *Newsletter*, 1934 & 1935, p. 6.

about the Maras who were left untouched.⁴¹

R.A. Lorrain approached two of the leading Missionary societies in England, i.e. British Baptist Missionary Society and Arthington Trust, urging them to undertake the responsibility of sending him on this pioneering venture. Neither of these Missionary Societies, however, accepted to undertake the responsibility of extending their work to the Mara area, and after failing to gain their co-operation, R.A. Lorrain founded a Mission in London in 1905 specially to reach the Maras, known as "Lakher Pioneer Mission".⁴² The Mission was pre-eminently a Gospel Mission, Mission of Divine love, founded on prayer and launched in faith. It was a spiritually controlled Mission, and the workers did not seek a guaranteed stipend, prestige and authority. It was also a Mission of supreme devotion.⁴³ Its function was solely independent having no connection with other Mission Society.

Immediately after the Mission was founded R.A. Lorrain soon gave up his business career in London and entered Livingstone Medical College for one year's course of medical training.⁴⁴ He married Maud Louise Ulander on 20 October

41 Donna Storm : *op.cit.*, p. 35.

42 R.A. Lorrain : *op.cit.*, p. 4.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

1906 in the Anerly Congregational Church London, and together they sailed for India on 18 January 1907.⁴⁵ They entered into the Lushai Hills through Demagiri, and eventually reached the Maraland on 26 September 1907. They built their first Mission bungalow at Saikao village which was made the site for the head-quarters of the Mission.⁴⁶ On 18 September, 1909 a female child was born to them and was named Louise Marguerite Tlosai Lorrain, commonly called Tlosai by the Maras. From 1909 onwards Mr. Lorrain was known to the Maras as "Tlosaipaw" meaning "the father of Tlosai" and Mrs. Lorrain as "Tlosaino" meaning "the mother of Tlosai".

In 1928, the two missionaries were joined by new workers, Albert Bruce Foxall and Miss Irene E. Hadley but the latter had retired in 1934.⁴⁷ Albert Bruce Foxall married Tlosai on 20 September 1934 in the Fenge Congregational Church, London.⁴⁸ By legal notice A. B. Foxall had adopted the name A.B.Lorrain-Foxall on 10 August 1934. From 1938 onwards Mr. and Mrs. Lorrain-Foxall were known by the name of their daughter Violet Louisa

45 *Newsletter*, 1934 & 1935, p. 6. Also A.B. Foxall : *op.cit.*, p. 47.

46 *Newsletter*, Circular Letter, January, 1907.

47 *Newsletter*, 1930, p. 7.

48 *Newsletter*, 1934, p. 3.

Annie-49 (Vaili for Violet), "Vailipaw" (Mr. Lorrain-Foxall) and "Vilino" (Mrs. Lorrain-Foxall). Mr. and Mrs. Lorrain were also given new names "Vilimapaw" (Mr. Lorrain) meaning "Vaili's grandfather" and "Vailimano" (Mrs. Lorrain) means "Vaili's grandmother". In this way, the Mara King ship was affectionately extended to the missionaries who also lived and worked in the Maraland with great missionary zeal till their end.

The Mara Literature:

The foremost task before the Mara Pioneering Missionary was to master and transform the Mara language into written form. The language was soon picked up word by word with the help of Thadu Khithie⁵⁰ who was selected by J.H. Lorrain to teach the Missionaries the Mara language. On 16 March 1908, R. A. Lorrain drew up an alphabet of his own which was applied to the Tlosai dialect.⁵¹ The alphabet was purely a reproduction of Roman script and was given new names to suit the phonetic character of Mara language. The letters, C, F, J-Q., W and X were dropped because they were not suited the phonetics of the Mara language and five letters, AW CH, NG, AD and YU were added. Thus the total number of letters came to 25.⁵²

49 Vaili (Mrs. Mark), 56 years old is now in good health.

50 Thadu Khithie : 'The story of when Mr. and Mrs. Lorrain first arrived in Lakherland', *Newsletter*, 1957.

51 Rev.K. Nocho : 'Missionary Hriapasana Their' (The contribution of the Missionary), Ms., p. 1.

52 *Grammar*, pp. 3-4.

AlphabetPronunciation

A	a	like <u>u</u> in the English word Sun
Aw	aw	like <u>aw</u> in the English word <i>awl</i>
Y	y	like <u>i</u> in the English word <i>sir</i>
B	b	as in English
Ch	ch	like <u>ch</u> in the English word <i>chart</i>
D	d	as in English
E	e	like <u>e</u> in the English word <i>tell</i>
H	h	like <u>h</u> in the English word <i>home</i>
I	i	like <u>i</u> in the English word <i>sit</i>
K	k	as in English

L	l	as in English
M	m	as in English
N	n	as in English
NG	ng	like <u>ng</u> in the English word <i>wood rang</i>
O	o	like <u>o</u> in the English word <i>sang</i>
o ⁵³	o	like <u>ou</u> in the English word <i>round</i>
P	p	as in English
R	r	like <u>r</u> in the English word <i>rock</i>
S	s	as in English
T	t	pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the teeth

53 o is pronounced a diphthong 'ou' or 'Au', and vowel 'O' sound is rather diminished.

U	u	like <u>u</u> in the English word <i>full</i>
V	v	as in English
Z	z	like <u>z</u> and <u>s</u> in the English words <i>zone, pleasure</i>
AO	ao	like <u>a</u> in the English word <i>ark</i> combined with a short Yaw sound.
YU	yu	like <u>e</u> in the English word <i>under</i> combined with a short <i>oo</i> sound.

The alphabet drawn up by R.A. Lorrain was the foundation of the Mara literature and also became vital tool of the Mara education in the Maraland. Savidge also drew the Mara alphabet consisting thirty letters⁵⁴ which are similar to the above alphabet.

R.A. Lorrain thus reduced the Mara language into writing by using the Mara alphabet after many days of patient toil and labour, and the first service in the Mara

54 F.W. Savidge : *Grammar and Dictionary of the Lakher Language*, 1908, pp. 1-2.

language was also conducted in 1908.⁵⁵ In literary work he was solely helped by Saro Nöhro of Tisöpi village who acquired the knowledge of writing and reading.⁵⁶ Two large dictionaries *Lakher-English Dictionary* containing 7,000 to 8,000 references, and *English-Lakher Dictionary* containing 7,000 to 8,000 references had been compiled. A complete *Grammar of the Lakher Language* was also made, thus giving to the world for the first time another of its languages.⁵⁷ He also translated many books of the New Testament into the local language. He first translated the Gospel according to St. John.⁵⁸ Till 1919, twenty two Books of the New Testament had been translated. The Book of Jonah and part of Psalms of the Old Testament were also translated. He also translated and compiled several books Hymn Book, Catechism on the substance of the Bible, Learner's Catechism, etc.⁵⁹ The translation of the New Testaments was also completed in 1927, and was printed in 1928 by the British and Foreign Bible Society.⁶⁰ He started translating the Books of Old Testament on 4 December 1929. This translation work

55 *Newsletter*, 1907.

56 MAT, p. 14.

57 R.A. Lorrain : *op.cit.*, p. 21.

58 Zase : *op.cit.*, p. 13.

59 R.A. Lorrain : *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22.

60 *Newsletter*, 1934 & 1935, p. 7.

was, however, completed in 1953 and the Books were printed in three volumes in 1956⁶¹. Several school text books and Christian literature were prepared and printed at the Louisa Lorrain Memorial press which was established in 1921 at Saikao.⁶² The press facilitated the Mission in its work and also served the far-reaching effect on the Mara literature.

Introduction of Education:

There was no formal education among the Maras before the advent of the British. The only system was "oral education" or "information" passing orally from father to son. The *Laiphos*⁶³ in which the unmarried young men of the village slept, were the main centers of such education. There, all the boys of certain age were imparted education by their elders of the village.⁶⁴ In the same way girls were also imparted education by their mothers and elder sisters.

The formal education found place among the Maras only after the coming of Christian Missionaries. The British Government did pay attention to the formal education for the

61 A.B. Lorrain-Foxall : *op.cit.*, pp. 45-46. Also *Newsletter*, Feb. 1949.

62 *Newsletter*, Jan. 1957.

63 This social institution was gradually abandoned with the coming of Christianity, and is now completely vanished in the Mara society.

64 Zase : *op.cit.*, p. 12.

Maras, and there was no school education till 1907 in the Maraland. In March 1908 after having resided in the Maraland for six month, R.A. Lorrain started formal education at his own residence. At the beginning four Lushai boys joined his school, and soon the number increased to eleven, seven of them were the Lushais and four were the Pawis. With in this period, two young men of about twenty years old Mawkha and Laihno of Siaha village also joined the school, and after a month the number increased to three.⁶⁵

The first school-house was constructed in July August 1908. It was also used as a church for sometime. Four boys joined the first school and on 13 September 1909, sixteen boys had been enrolled.⁶⁶ In 1910, students increased to twenty two, and one in 1911.⁶⁷ The percentage of enrollment increased gradually and after the British occupation of the "unadministered" area, many boys from different villages joined the Mission school. In 1929, Mrs. Lorrain-Foxall and Miss Hadley also started a Kindergarten and girl school which ran until the end of 1947 when Government took over schools and made them co-educational.⁶⁸

65 *Jungles*, pp. 222-223.

66 *Ibid*, pp. 224-226.

67 *Jungles*, p. 226.

68 *Newsletter*, Jan., 1957.

In 1924, R.A. Lorrain constructed a large hostel which could accommodate about fifty boys. The admission into the hostel was open to all but boys coming from different villages were given priority. The boarders were provided free cost of lodging and fooding for four years. Besides, each boarder received a copy of Hymn Book and the Bible, and also got 8 annas (50 paise) monthly as a stipend, and soap, pencil and exercise book every Friday. It was instructed that any boarder who left the hostel on unreasonable ground before completing four years must refund two-thirds of the monthly stipend drawn.⁶⁹

These facilities encouraged and enabled the Mara boys to join the school. In 1927, four Mara young men, Chhyhnao, Khochhy, Chhahia and Seilie were appointed by R.A. Lorrain as his helpers in class-room. In 1932, Khidia of Saikao village and Thlachyu Nöhro of Amobyu were employed as Headmaster and Assistant Headmaster of the Mission School respectively. From 1936 onwards, school education was extended to different villages. The distribution of school education from 1936-1939 is shown as follows:⁷⁰

69 Rev. K.T. Nocho : *op.cit.*, p. 1. Also Zase : *op.cit.*, p. 14.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Village	Date of establishment	Teacher
1. Chapi	1936	Vaki
2. Löbö	1938	Totha
3. Para	1936 May	Rev. Chakho
4. Satly	1939 June	Toka
5. Siaha	1936	S.Mokia
6. Siata	1937 March	Huny
7. Tipa	1937 March	Hrangzinga
8. Tisöpi	1938 June	Kiapo

Although the Mission schools were the only educational institutions among the Maras for many years yet remarkable advance was made. When India become independent in 1947, all twenty one Primary schools and one Middle school were taken by the Government, and the Mara language was substituted by the Lushei language in the Mara schools.⁷¹

The initial objective of the Mission school was to convert the Maras into Christianity through the Christian education, and also to educate illiterate converts the knowledge of reading the Bible. The educational activities were thus religious and philanthropic, confined mainly to the prorogation of Christianity.⁷² Christian principles

71 Newsletter, Jan., 1957.

72 Zase : *op.cit.*, p. 10.

formed an essential part of the Mission school. Education thus became an instrument to influence the mind of the Maras. Moreover, the school-house served as center for social inter-action and religious worship. For the same reason, the Missionaries were compelled to introduce printing press to print scriptures and other Christian literature. The Missionaries believed that by promoting Christian education, the agnostic and traditional religious practices could be eradicated.

The Mission school was basically a Christian institution imparting Christian teachings. Although the institution was called "primary school", it did not provide classes, and there was no examination system till 1944. Students who completed the courses of study were sent to different villages to establish school in which they became teachers. The course of study generally included the 3 R's - reading, writing and arithmetic; social work, elementary hygiene, music and religious instruction. The curriculum consisted of (1) World Geography, (2) Music, (3) Arithmetic, (4) Premier and (5) Scripture.⁷³ These were prepared and printed in the Mara language which was also the medium of instruction. The Mission looked after school education smoothly till 1947.

73 Zase : *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

The Christianity :

As mentioned earlier, the primary task before the Mara missionaries was to propagate Christianity in the Maraland by converting the people who followed animism, practicing rituals and sacrifices and were dominated by taboos and supernaturalism.

R.A. Lorrain started preaching the Gospel among the Maras in 1908 at the verandah of the Chief's (Thylia) residence.⁷⁴ He used to tell them that God was stronger than the Devil that He had thrown him over and cast him out.⁷⁵ By means of his medical knowledge he able to gain the confidence of the people. They dared to trust on medicine in order to avoid serious illness or death which was, in their belief, caused by evil spirits.⁷⁶ Medicine was given to any patient on the hope that he or she would give up sacrifices. It became important tool to remove the influence of animism. Gradually, Christian literature also started changing the thought or attitude of school boys who could then trust in new faith in order to avoid fear. In this way the Maras started to accept Christianity.

The first convert was Thytu, a twelve year old and it

74 MAT, p. 13.

75 *Jungles*, p. 105.

76 R.A. Lorrain : *op.cit.*, p. 5.

was on 16 September 1910.⁷⁷ He was followed by Chiahu of Tisi village in 1911. In 1914 Laila also accepted new faith.⁷⁸ In 1916 the church was established and was designated "Mission Church".⁷⁹ The number was twenty-four in 1915, and fifty-three in 1916. From 1920 onwards Christianity became more popular and the respondents had been increased radically. In 1933, Christianity fully covered the Maraland.⁸⁰

The Abolition of Head-hunting :

This age-old custom of Head-hunting gradually turned into abominable. The Tlôsai and Hawthai groups gave up this practice after the British occupation of their areas in 1891. The "unadministered" groups - Sizô, Hlaipao, and Lôchei, however, practiced the same custom till 1917's. The British Government took direct action against the Zyhnos in 1918 when they last carried out this custom.⁸¹ In this way, physical force was effectively used to suppress the cruel and abominable practice among the Maras. They now learned that killing of a person was a serious crime punishable even by execution.

77 *Newsletter*, 1910, Circular Letter.

78 MAT, p. 15.

79 A.B. Lorrain-Foxall : *op.cit.*, p. 19. Also *Newsletter*, Jan., 1957.

80 MAT, p. 22.

81 A.B. Lorrain-Foxall : *op.cit.*, p. 29.

It was the Christianity that played the most effective role in the gradual and final extinction of the traditional customs in the Mara society. The Missionaries taught the people that killing of human beings was an act against God who created all living and non-living things in the world. The Christian teaching was concerned with moral code - humanism. The missionaries made the people morally conscious to abide by Christian principle. In this way, they indirectly attacked the custom by convincing them that head-hunting was a sin against God. The rapid spread of Christianity and the efforts of British governance ultimately brought about complete termination of head-hunting in the Maraland in the second decade of the 20th century A.D.

The Abolition of Sei (Slavery):

The seis (slaves) among the Maras were the real slaves permanently dependent on their masters. They were the property of their masters and were valued as a *mithun*⁸² for trade, dowry, etc. When the British occupied the Mara area they found this institution abhorrent and they freed any slave who appealed for freedom on the strength of the provisions of the *Slavery abolition Act*, 1833, by which the

⁸² Informant : T. David.

British Government abolished slavery throughout the British empire.⁸³

There was, however, no confrontation between the Government and the slave-owners. Even before the coming of the British, the Mara slaves were customarily liberated from time to time by paying a *mithun* or other equivalent articles or commodities.⁸⁴ As soon as the Mara area was taken over by the British numbers of dependents came forward to pay the forty-rupees as ransom which freed them from their obligation to their master, chief or rich person.⁸⁵ The abolition of this institution diminished the chief's wealth, and many free men migrated elsewhere even outside the Maraland fearing that the chief would take revenge on them for having ransomed themselves from him.⁸⁶

It was the Christianity that played key role in the gradual and final eradication of this institution. The Christian teaching made the people morally conscious to abide by humanism, i.e. respect for others. They were

83 G.M. Trevelyan : *A Shortened History of England*, Reprint, , 1960, p. 477.

84 Informant : T. David.

85 N.E. Parry : *op.cit.*, p. 13.

86 *Ibid.*.

morally taught that slavery was sinful exploitation against God. The introduction of money also reduced the value of *sei* in internal trade. From 1924 onwards, the institution had been fallen into disuse in the Mara society.

The Abandonment of Sacrifices and Rites:

As discussed in chapter IV, the Mara religious beliefs of the pre-Christian period was animistic. They believed in supernaturalism, spirits, etc., and performed sacrifices and rites for fear of the power of darkness. Sacrifices, rites, etc. were the vital parts of their socio-religious life. The coming of the Christian missionaries started changing mental attitude and psychology of the Maras. With the introduction of education, but more particularly the propagation of the Gospel due to the efforts of the missionaries such practices gradually disappeared among the Maras. In this matter the Government or the Mission did not take direct action but only made them enlightened, and the converts, by their own choice, gradually abandoned sacrifices and rites. The age-old sacrifices, rites etc. are now totally vanished among the Maras.

The Removal of Superstitious Taboos:

Before the advent of Christianity the Maras were deeply influenced by superstitions in everyday of life. They were dominated over by respect and fear of supernaturalism which

was associated with animate and unanimate objects on earth. Their belief, thought and deed were solely pre-occupied by superstitions and taboos. The spread of Christianity and abandonment of sacrifices and rituals gradually reduced superstitions among the Maras.

In this respect the influence of the Christian missionaries and British administration had a limit. Today the Maras do not interpret superstition seriously as they did it in the past. However, several conceptions - fear of evil eye *ahmaw*, evil spirit, hunted lake, spring, soil etc. are still alive among the Maras. When new converts made question about the existence of evil eye basing on the Book of Proverbs, Chapter 23, verse 6, the Missionaries firmly replied them that the existence of evil eye *ahmaw* was an absolute truth, and was clearly mentioned in the Bible⁸⁷. Lorrain himself was attacked the evil spirit, *Iyurahrifa* at mid-night while the Bible translation had been carrying on. He admitted and declared such incident among Christians.⁸⁸ The teaching of Christianity has not, however, uprooted all the indigenous beliefs and practices in the Mara society. The trend is that the people rather acquire clearer concept about superstitions, omens, misfortunes etc.

87 MAT, p. 21.

88 *Ibid.*

Medical Facilities:

In early days the Maras had practically no knowledge of medicine. They believed that all ailments were caused by evil spirit, and when a person fell sick, they resorted to sacrifice killing a pig or a fowl. Side by side with the preaching of the Gospel, the Mission also practiced medicines, knowing that medical treatment was as much important as the spiritual healing.

The Maras had, however, no great objection to the western remedies and submitted readily to injections, antibiotics, anti-malarial and vaccinations. As a result of the efforts of the missionaries, within a sort period of time, only few people still believed that sacrifice was the only means to cure illness. The traditional notion now no longer holds their mind. The only remarkable feature which remains unchanged is that they still use their traditional surgery, a broken limb, leg or arm is placed in the bamboo sliced splints lined with cotton thread, and is correctly bound up. Certain plant leaves which have been commonly in use among the Maras are the *nawhrithohna* (*Argyreia Wallichii.*), the *Iyuraseikitō* (*Anodendron peniculata.*), the *kōdia* (*Adhatoda vasica.*) etc.

Death and Burial:

The treatment and disposal of the dead was another significant area where certain changes were effected. With

the advent of Christianity, the different treatment of the dead was diminished and the unnatural dead *sawvaw* and *thichhie* were treated as *pithi*. The grave *thiaphei* made for the unnatural dead was given up and the dead was generally buried in the grave *thiatø*. At present many villages again give up *thiatø* and rather make *thiaphei*. The family grave called *lô-o* is now not encourage but some people still follow this custom. The case is rare. The bamboo stretcher was given up, ordinary bed is now commonly used for lying out the dead. In burial a coffin made of planks is generally used. And also with the coming of Christianity, the *riha* ceremony and ritual dances - the *Rakhatla*, the *Athila*, etc. were completely abolished and replaced by Christian song, Bible reading and prayer.

Marriage:

The advent of Christianity too brought about changes in marriage customs resulting in the adoption of a hybrid form. This was because the Christian missionaries did not ban the age-old marriage customs rather imposed the Christian marriage system over the old ones. Initially a clear demarcation was made between a Christian and a non-Christian, and the former was not allowed to marry the latter. The first Christian marriage was solemnised in

1916-89 The annual report of the Lakher Pioneer Mission gives⁹⁰ the number of Christian marriage thus :

<u>Years</u>	<u>Christian marriage</u>
1930	4
1931	7
1932	5
1933	21
1934	45

Total	82

At present the marriage rites and solemnity except the bride prices are fully anglicised and performed within the framework of the Christian doctrines. The bride and bridegroom have freedom to choose any kind of dress they like. The couple of wealthy families dress themselves on the western lines wearing gowns, veils, suits and rings. Now only those who are too poor to afford such things normally use ordinary dress on wedding day.

Widow or widower remarriage remains unchanged but remarriage under *lapin@khu* is now not encouraged whereas *akeipa* remarriage is still in practice. Marriage through elopement, fornication, etc. are, however, rare.

89 Newsletter, 1916.

90 Newsletter, 1934 & 1935.

The bride prices have increased. The major prices except the *Puma*, the *Laokhyu*, the *Thuaso*, the *Nochyu*, the *Nochyu*, and the *Tini*,⁹¹ are condensed into one rate called *chatypa*. The chiefly clans claim Rs. 1,500 and other clans Rs.1,000.⁹² The amount is realised in term of *dekchi* pot, pot, gong, *mithun*, cow, etc.⁹³ The killing of animals on wedding day is now restricted by the church but this prohibition is not yet followed by all the Maras.

Festivals:

The advent of Christianity also brought about a new mode of psychology and attitude. Traditional feasts and festivals were substituted by Christian festivals. Of course the Christmas was the main and was celebrated the first time in 1907. Slowly the celebration of the indigenous feasts and festivals were abandoned, other Christian dates such as Easter Sunday, Good Friday, etc. are also observed in a mild way.

91 The *Syuhra* and the *Seimawchyu* (mentioned in Chapter III) are now abandoned but the former is not eradicated completely.

92 In actual payment, 20-30 percent out of the amount is a rule omitted.

93 Informant : H.T. Phili.

New Way of Living:

Another important development was the adoption of the western way of living by the Maras who willingly copied westernisation. By coming into close contact with the Christian Missionaries they soon became western oriented in moral and adaption, even in their cultural life. Their nomadic way of living had been abandoned and their tribal seclusion was completely shattered, and they now participate in the mainstream of India. They have abandoned their taboos and social obligation in the construction of house. Any pattern of design at any convenient place in the village is now followed. However, due to economic condition majority still use thatch grasses.

Food and Drinking:

Though there is no remarkable change in food habit and diet, yet there is a new change. The remarkable change is that the people who are employed in the office and those who live in the District town Siaha, started taking meals two times a day instead of three times as they did earlier. Utensils made of steel and aluminum completely replaced the indigenous utensils made of clay, wood and bamboo. The western oriented family now use spoons and forks in feeding.

The advent of the British slowly diminished rice-beer drinking among the Maras. It was replaced by tea drinking which now become important culture in the social life of the Maras. The Christian missionaries prohibited rice-beer drinking by convincing the people that drinking was bad habit against Christianity. The converts were not allowed to drink rice-beer or any alcohol, and no one was allowed to become a Christian who ever touched the same.⁹⁴ Gradually tea drinking was picked by all Christians and has become a part of life among the Maras. Wine or rice-beer drinking is not, however, totally eradicated among the Maras.

Smoking:

Men gave up *aomabei* smoking but continued to smoke fermented tobacco rolled with a piece of paper known as *chahnamei*. They also smoke cigarettes which they value much. Both sexes smoke local tobacco but women are now hardly addicted to smoking a hookah pipe or *chahnamei*. Nicotine sipping is also still prevalent among the Maras whereas many other prefer chewing *sada* or *Khaini*.

Dress Habit:

Formerly the Maras wore indigenous cloth. The Christian missionaries did not favour wearing loin-cloth and binding

94 N.E. Parry : *op.cit.*, p. 21.

top-knots. The Maras slowly discarded the belt-loom product clothes, and began to wear shirts, trousers, pants, etc. made of imported yarn. Dress is perhaps an area where fast and radical change is witnessed among the Maras. But complete change could not take place during the British period due to economic backwardness of the people. The people are however, eager to dress themselves on the model of western fashion.

The Economic Development:

The spur of economic development came along with the advent of the British. The money economy brought transformation to the Maras. Rice was the chief article sold by the people, and hence their main source of income. By selling this they paid taxes to the British Government. Later, they also sold pig, *mithun*, etc. Few people carried out trade outside their land. The circulation of money among the Maras during the British period apparently changed the mode of trade, more particularly in the internal trade. Selling and buying of goods, livestock, etc. are measured in term of cash value. With inflow of more and more money the barter system had fallen into disuse.

The development of road communication during the British period ushered the real beginning of the economic progress among the Maras. In 1936, there were three bridle paths fit for pony carts Siahā to Lunglei, Tipa to Satly and

Zyhno to Tókaló.⁹⁵ Few people could go for trade outside their land. The British policy was not aimed at the economic betterment of the people. Now this stage was gone, and many people live on cash economy. However, the majority of the people rely solely on shifting cultivation, which is their traditional occupation.

The Political Development:

The impact of the British rule was tremendous. It reduced the Maras into a geo-political minority by dividing them into two parts, one being corporated with the Lushai Hills District of Assam, the other with the Chin Hills and the Arakan Hills Tracts of Burma in 1924.⁹⁶ The Maras were bewildered on the double-pronged problem created by the British consolidation on the one hand and partition of the land on the other. At the same time, some Mara chiefs did not favour joining their sphere of influence with the Lushai Hills District. However, the British easily shattered the political structure by extending the laws and orders to the Mara land. The Zyhno chief composed a song reflecting the inner sentiment of the Maras.

A ngò tyka e cheih ta za,

A panò chhò cheila ena ti,

95 Animesh Ray : *op.cit.*, p. 197.

96 ASPA, March, 1924, Nos. 34, 45, 59.

*Tlekua*⁹⁷ *pela chy khai aw vi e.*⁹⁸

(We have paid two rupees house tax,
Not content with that we are told
to pay a hen too,
Would that we are not part of the
Lushai Hills.)

The Maras, aware of their language and indigenous culture, custom and tradition mooted the idea of having complete separation from the Lushai Hills since the creation of a District Chief Durbar in 1941.⁹⁹ They demanded, for the first time in 1945, that their territory should be given a political status designating it "Lakher Hills District", a governance purely for the Maras.¹⁰⁰ Twenty three chiefs thus submitted a joint memorandum to the Additional Superintendent of the Lushai Hills in November 1945 and again another memorandum was submitted to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills in December 1945. The memorandum runs as follows :

"We, the Lakher chiefs would like to express to you what we want most for your sympathetic consideration and immediate orders.

97 The Mizos are known to the Maras as "Tlekua" or "Tlaikao".

98 S. Das : *op.cit.*, p. 102.

99 R.T. Zachono : 'The Mara Towards Autonomy', Ms. P.6.

100 Memorandum submitted to the Additional Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, 4th Jan., 1945.

As we have been demanding so many times, the Government may be pleased to give us Lakher Hills District, and also one English officer may be appointed to conduct our administration. This is what we want most. We would like to be under either the Burma Government or the Crown Colony. We want that the Lakhers should have a separate District. We pray you that Lakhers should be placed under one separate District Administration, but not under the Lushai Hills District.¹⁰¹

The Maras chiefs again submitted a memorandum in July 1947. When India became independent, the Maras faced new stage of political development, and in 1948 regional and clan based political party "Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union" (PLTU) was formed.¹⁰² The PLTU struggled for separation from the Lushai Hills District and ultimately in 1953 the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Regional Council was granted to the Maras and the Lais¹⁰³ under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Maras were not, however, satisfied with the functioning of the Joint Regional Council. The Mara Freedom party founded in 1962 fought for separate autonomy, started a clan-base political movement in 1963.¹⁰⁴

101 Memorandum submitted to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, Dec., 1945.

102 R.N. Prasad : *op.cit.*, p. 261.

103 B. Poonte : *District Handbook*, 1965, p. 6.

104 Memorandum submitted to the Central Study Team by the United People's Party at Siaba, 9th Sept., 1987, p. 13.

When the Mizo Hills became a Union Territory in 1972, the Mara Autonomous District Council, along with the Lai and the Chakma Autonomous District Councils, was created out of the then Paw-Lakher Regional Council in Mizoram under the Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution.¹⁰⁵

The Maras had undergone a lot of political changes since their land was annexed to the British dominions. The changes had paved the way for the remarkable transition to the present status. The political development of post-Independence period and the creation of geo-political autonomy testify the exact identification of the Mara socio-culture and language which have striking difference. The Maras are now treated as one of the distinct Scheduled Tribes of the North-East India. They fully participate in the mainstream of India, and enjoy the real spirit of Indian Constitution. Hence, the question among them is how to develop political synthesis, how to gain the blessings and advantages of the Indian Constitution without destroying their ethnic affinity and socio-cultural values of their tribal life.

105 *Constitution of India*, Sixth Scheduled Paragraph 1(1).