Chapter 2

Theoretical Parameters of the Study of
Revivalist Movement, Ethnicity and Manipuris of Assam

A substantial amount of literatures for the study of social movements provides support in the study of this area which has also seen an ongoing process of many new social movements, and many new interpretations are put forward by many scholars in this regard. Earlier, the social scientists have shown much interest in the study of social movements particularly, on the issues of identity and community as because the identity and community constitute major issues of studies on the people and culture of the region. The north east India witnessed emergence of various forms of social movements and many scholars specialized in the study of the types and natures of such movements which have been greatly influenced by the tribal movements around the region. However, a number of non tribal social movements such as the Apokpa/Sanamahi movement of the Meiteis, deeply impacting the social and cultural streams of the Meitei community, has not found proper projection till today. This study is an attempt to make a critical analysis of the latter and the Apokpa/Sanamahi as a socio-religious and revivalist movement in particular, and its distinction from other social movements.

‘Culture’ describes the many ways in which human beings express themselves for the purpose of uniting the others, forming a group, defining an identity, and even for distinguishing themselves as unique. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is a conceptual parameter of looking at a group of population whose members identify each other, either on the basis of resumed common genealogy or ancestry or recognition by others as a distinct group, or by common cultural, linguistic, religious or territorial traits.
The term ‘cultural revival’ refers to the reconfiguration of a group identity around a perceived common culture, where a claim is laid to the effect that the aspects of culture with which the group identifies, have been recovered after losses due to colonization, forced or voluntary relocation, oppression, or modernization. Cultural revivalism is predominantly associated with minority populations and frequently underwrites demands for rights, restitution and political or legal recognition as an ethnic group (Campbell, 1994). Much scholarship on the subject has taken examples of cultural revival at face value, undertaking to document the strategies of such groups employ and analyze the cultural practices and materials they recover. According to Campbell, cultural revivalism is a tactic pursued consciously or unconsciously, by minority communities to consolidate political identity and gain recognition through an appeal to fundamentalist cultural logic, that is, the belief that authentic traditions are unchanging and ancient, unique too and defining of a given community, and properly transmitted only to members of that group through heredity and or ancestry.

Contemporary interpretation of cultural revivalism is that culture is a text, which like all texts, is an assemblage of signifiers from the sign systems of cultural discourse at large. While specific signifier becomes attached to specific groups by social convention, these relations are essentially arbitrary (MacCannel, 1994). MacCannel has gone further in suggesting that contemporary cultural revivals are not only semiotic constructions (like other cultural and ethnic identities) but they are uniquely a postmodern phenomenon that he calls ‘reconstructed ethnicity’, in which authenticity itself has taken on a commodity value as groups come to project and identify with a generalized and interchangeable image of ‘traditional’ values. Through the movement of Apokpa-ism/Sanamahism the Meiteis may have sought to reshape traces and components in the areas of social values, custom, belief, structure and control or a combination of them. In this way the present movement
among the Meiteis also demands a change that is the complete replacement of Hindu (Vaishnavite) religious values with the Meitei socio-religious values which they call *Apokpa-ism/Sanamahism*. Therefore, the present chapter attempts to highlight the conceptual and theoretical issues involved in a sociological study of revivalism and social movements.

Sociologists have developed a set of theories and concepts, which enable us to study the genesis and nature of movements, the formation and sources of ideologies, organizational structure, and types of leadership, strategies of mobilization, dynamics and the implication of the movement. However, a logical boundary of the movement requires to be drawn carefully and more appropriate concepts and methods need to be developed to analyze problems as every movement has its unique characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to make a conceptual clarification of Revivalism and ethnicity as used in the title of this thesis, and its four crucial dimensions like ‘socio-religious’, movement and *Apokpa-ism/Sanamahism*.

Revivalist movements have played a major role in history for thousands of years. While some members of a religious group find comfort in the status quo, others want change and a greater spiritual connection with their beliefs and deities. Often associated with a fundamentalist movement, revivalists seek to revitalize and reform or break away from their organization, attract new believers and gain influence in society. This often happens during times of cultural, economic and governmental upheaval as religious revivalists may see themselves as ‘saviors of society.’
The word 'revival' is as familiar in our mouths as a household word. We are constantly speaking about and praying for a 'revival'. Would it not be as well to know what we mean by it? Where does the word 'revival' come from and how is it to be properly understood. Many assume the term, as popularly used in religious circles, comes from the Bible.

Arthur Wallis wrote, "We cannot go to the Bible to see how the word 'revival' is used, for it is not found there... The nearest equivalents are 'revive' (or quicken) and 'reviving,' but these may be applied to individual awakening, and are not always synonymous with what has been called, by common consent down the centuries, 'religious revival'.(Wallis, 1956: 19-20)

Modern English usage of the word largely descends from the following:

1. The French word 'revivre'
2. The Latin word 'revivere'

Henry Blackaby and Claude King wrote, "The word 'revive' is made up of two parts: 're' meaning 'again' and 'vive' meaning 'to live.' Thus 'revive' means 'to live again, to come or be brought back to life, health, or vitality.'(Henry, et al, 1996: 21) Coming into general usage in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, 'returning to life,' became associated with God awaking and empowering a lethargic church.

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\(^{14}\) Kathryn Teresa Long wrote, "In the nineteenth century, 'revival' commonly was used in two different ways, to refer to a local phenomenon and to a broad popular movement. In both cases, as I have already indicated, it meant an unusual increase in religious concern and of professed conversions that occurred in a communal setting. Revivals sometimes were described as 'extraordinary seasons of religious interest'. Local revivals were periods of intense religious concern in a congregation, community, or other group such as a camp meeting. But "revival" also could refer to outbreaks of religious fervor throughout a particular denomination, region, nation, or group of countries over a prolonged period of time." Long, Kathryn Teresa. *The Revival of 1857-58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998: 9.
This particular English usage emerged strongly in early Puritan works. The word ‘revival’ was first used in English by Cotton Mather in 1702 in his massive work *Magnalia Christi Americana*. The word ‘revive’ wears its meaning upon its forehead; it is from the Latin, and may be interpreted thus—to live again, to receive again a life which has almost expired; to rekindle into a flame the vital spark which was nearly extinguished.

When a person has been dragged out of a pond nearly drowned, the bystanders are afraid that he is dead, and are anxious to ascertain if life still lingers. The proper means are used to restore animation; the body is rubbed, stimulants are administered, and if by God’s providence life still tarry in the poor clay, the rescued man opens his eyes, sits up, and speaks, and those around him rejoice that he has ‘revived’. A young girl is in a fainting fit, but after a while she returns to consciousness, and we say, ‘She revives’. The flickering lamp of life in dying men suddenly flames up with unusual brightness at intervals, and those who are watching around the sick bed say of the patient, ‘he revives’.

A People Group is “a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these.” (Winter & Koch, 1999: 514). Analysis of revival movements in sociology has to do with social configurations, and the social origins of religion, as exemplified by Durkheim at the beginning of last century as he identified religion as primarily performing the vital social functions of social integration and solidarity that derive from a system of shared beliefs (Durkheim, 1965). It can only describe the phenomenology of movement growth, and interpret human or institutional elements within that. ‘Revival’ is not utilized by sociologists in the theological, but more generally as revitalization of religious institutions and/or belief systems not dissimilar
in use to revival of a cultural system, political ideas, or philosophy. (Wallace, 2003: 9-29).

Why do people join various types of social movements? Is it because, some people are highly vulnerable to such appeals due to their psychic make-up? Or, to ask in a crude way, does it mean that something is ‘wrong’ with some people? If individuals are not causing it, then, is it the society that is at the root of the movement? Is it true, that when something goes ‘wrong’ with the society, people try to change it through social movements? Questions like these come to our mind when we ponder over the motivating factor behind a social movement. But one thing is certain — that the reason for the emergence of a social movement need not be the same as the reason why people join it. Social movements arise because; social conditions create dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements. People join specific social movements for an almost infinite variety of reasons — including idealism, altruism, compassion, political considerations, practical benefits, religious fervour, as well as out of frustration.

It is indeed true that one of the main issues in the study of any movement, concerns its emergence. This point leads to three basic questions? What are structural conditions under which movements emerge? What are the motivational forces? What are the theories which conceptualize the beginning of a movement? According to M.S.A. Rao, there are three main theories concerning the emergence of social movements. They are: The Relative Deprivation Theory; The Strain Theory; and The Revitalization Theory.

2.1 The Relative Deprivation Theory:

‘Relative Deprivation’ is a concept developed by Stouffer (1949). “It holds that one ‘feels’ deprived according to the gap between expectations and realizations. The person who wants little and has little, feels less
deprived than the one who has much but expects still more”. “A point that is coincident by relative deprivation theorists is that a position of relative deprivation alone will not generate a movement. The structural conditions of relative deprivation provide only the necessary conditions. Sufficient conditions are provided by the perception of a situation and by the estimate of capabilities by certain leaders that they can do something to remedy the situations.” (Rao, 1978)

Relative deprivation is increasing throughout most of the underdeveloped countries. A weakening of the traditional and tribal controls generally leads to an enormous increase in desires. People long for so many things, better living conditions, facilities, luxury goods (like phone, T.V., Vehicles, electrical appliances, etc.) without knowing the difficulties involved in producing them and supplying them to all the people. Hence the recently established independent governments of Third World Countries have no hopes of keeping up with their peoples’ expectations. The clouds of mass movements and revolutions seem to be widespread in these countries. “Revolutions seem most likely to occur not when people are most miserable, but after things have begun to improve, setting off a round of rising expectation” (Brinton. 1965).

Though this theory seems to be more acceptable, it is yet to be proved beyond doubts. Feelings of deprivation are easy to infer but difficult to measure. It is still more difficult to measure it over a period of time. This factor could be taken as only one among the many factors in social movements.

2.2 The Strain Theory:

The ‘Strain Theory’ of social movement has been propounded by Smelser in 1962. This theory considers structural strain as the underlying factor contributing to collective behaviour. Structural strain may occur at different levels such as norms, values, mobility, situational facilities, etc.
Because of these structural strains some generalized belief that seeks to provide an explanation for the strain, may emerge. Both strain and generalized belief require precipitating factors to trigger off a movement.

Smelser’s analysis of the genesis of social movements is very much within the structural functional framework. Smelser considers strain as something that endangers the relationship among the parts of a system leading to its malfunctioning. It places stress on the feeling of deprivation also (Smelser, 1962). On the contrary, the "relative deprivation theory", though emphasizes the conflict element, which contributes to change, fails to consider it (conflict) as something that may contribute to the malfunctioning of the system.

2.3 The Theory of Revitalization:

The ‘Relative Deprivation Theory’ and the ‘Strain Theory’ give us an impression that social movements necessarily arise out of negative conditions such as ‘deprivations’ and ‘strains’. In this context, Wallace has asserted “That social movement develops out of a deliberate, organized and conscious effort on the part of members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture for themselves” (Wallace, 2003: 9-29). Wallace who analyzed the dynamics of revitalization theory has mentioned about its four phases:

1. period of cultural stability,  
2. period of increased individual stress,  
3. period of cultural distortion and consequent disillusionment, and  
4. period of revitalization.  

The revitalization theory suggests that adaptive processes are employed to establish equilibrium situation. Social movements no doubt develop a programme of action. But these movements tend to be like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they express dissatisfaction, dissent, and
protest against existing conditions, and, on the other, they offer a positive programme of action to remedy the situation.

2.4 The Theory of Relative Deprivation is more acceptable; M.S. A. Rao:

According to M.S.A. Rao, the relative deprivation theory offers a more satisfactory explanation of the emergence of social movement. Its merit is that it is pivoted around conflict and cognitive change. It is motivating and mobilizing people around some issues and interests. It's another merit is that “it offers the best explanation for the change orientation of movements rather than looking at movements as adaptive mechanisms restoring functional unity and equilibrium” (Rao, 1978).

The theory of relative deprivation, as M.S.A. Rao opines, requires refinement in two directions:

Firstly, “it is necessary to make the concept sociologically more relevant by eschewing individual and psychic deprivations” such deprivation remains “personal, arbitrary and even frivolous”;

Secondly, in considering areas of deprivation, it is necessary to include the areas such as religion, caste, etc. The area of religion, though some sociologists (like Aberle, Glock and others) have not included in the purview of this theory, M.S.A. Rao feels, is as important as those of economics, education and politics. (Rao, 1978).

The patterns of religious behaviour, like other patterns of social behaviour, are of great interest to sociologists, since they underscore the relationship between religion and society. Religious ritual is one of the dimensions of religious behaviour. The beliefs and ideals of different civilizations are often inscribed in their rituals more explicitly than in any other cultural trait, which gives the study of ritualism a greater
sociological significance. What is more significant here is the dynamics surrounding the ritual not only in terms of its ritualistic or mythological connotation but also in terms of other variables such as revivalism, identity formation and so on, which constitute important variables influencing its dynamics. The main argument that I would like to put forward in this study is that the rise in the number of religious rituals of Lai Haraoba is associated with the changing socio-cultural dynamics of the Meiteis of Assam. This can be observed from two changing trends of religion and ritual. Firstly, the increase trend of lai haraoba in the Meitei society in general indicates the growing awareness of the pre-Hindu identity of the Meiteis. Secondly, the ritualization of the lai haraoba shows the basic urge of the Meitei to assert a distinct ethnic identity. Apart from this, there also exists certain social and political dynamics associated with the lai haraoba at micro level.

The ritual of lai haraoba is the most important tradition of the Meiteis. Its meaning can be analysed within a Durkheimian, functionalist framework, stressing the integrative force of such ritual, and the way in which it embodies and reflects, upholds and reinforces deeply rooted popular values. In another tradition, the same ritual can be seen, not as expressing a publicly articulated expression of consensus, but as embodying the ruling elite consolidating its ideological or political dominance (Otojit, 2011.). David Kertzer demonstrates that ritual has always been and will continue to be an essential part of political life, used to symbolize, simplify and enhance political messages. He shows how ritual helps to build political organizations, how it is employed to create political legitimacy, how it fosters solidarity in the absence of political consensus, and how effective it can be in both defusing and inciting political conflict (Kertzer, 1988). Thus, it can be arrived that in order to rediscover the meaning of lai haraoba in the contemporary period, it is necessary to relate it to the specific social, political, economic and cultural milieu within which it was actually performed.
Though revivalism in Manipur is very apparent today, this process had already been started even during the reign of King Garibniwaz (1709-48) when most of the Meitei culture and tradition had been destroyed and substituted by Hindu culture. Many people opposed the policy of the King. But the movement took a significant development in the 1930s. It was around 1930 that the Meiteis started discarding Vaishnavism and started reworshipping their ancient gods and practicing their traditional religion, which is called Meiteism or Sanamahi religion (Kabui 1990, 102). A Meitei from the present Hailakandi district of Assam named Naoria Phullo started this movement. In order to investigate the ancient religion and culture of the Meitei, he founded a socio-religious group called Apokpa Marup (Association in the name of a Meitei ancestor deity) in Cachar in 1930. After Phullo’s death, his followers in the Manipur valley initiated Sanamahi movement in 1945 (Kangjia 1981: 18). Some of the important resolutions of this organization were as follows:

1) to revive the cultural heritage of the Meiteis
2) to do research the ancient Meitei history and other literatures of the Meiteis.
3) to revive the Meitei scripts
4) to worship and chant religious hymns in the mother tongue Manipuri/Meiteilon.

The objective of the movement is to revive the Apokpa-ism/Sanamahism, the indigenous religion of Meiteis. They believe in Atya Mapu Sidaba, Pakhangba, Leimarel, Sanamahi and host of other 363 umanglai. However, the sentiment of the movement is indicative more of a political trend than a regeneration of the religious belief in the state of Manipur. Several educated Meiteis have also denied calling the Sanamahi movement as revivalist movement (Kabui, 1974: 53–75). They believed that Manipur has been a center of religious syncretism where the
Brahmins and the Meiteis worship Meitei gods and Hindu gods. The two religious systems always co-exist. On the other hand, the Sanamahi followers assert that they have stopped all Hindu customs and follow purely Meitei system (Kabui, 1990).

This movement was geared to an extremist attempt in Manipur towards the de-Sanskritization of Meitei culture and the revival of Meitei heritage, which strongly opposed the identification of the Meiteis with the Kshatriya caste and denied any link with the Indo-Aryan heritage claimed by the early promoters of Hinduism (Sirkar, 1984: 121). It is primarily trying to revive and practice what is considered purely indigenous Meitei religion, culture, custom and the way of life. They want maiba and maibi to perform all their rituals and the other socio-religious functions in Meitei language. Brahmins reciting prayers in Bengali and Sanskrit languages have no role and no place in their socio-religious life. The leaders of the movement assert that they are neither anti-Hindu nor against any other religious community (Kabui 1990: 103). The movement aims at bringing in unity among the Meiteis and a closer relationship with the Nagas and the Kukis (the hill tribes of Manipur). The branches of this organization are scattered all over the valley while actively involving in reviving and popularizing Meitei script, religion, language and other cultural activities. (Kabui 1990: 104).

The most profound impact of the revivalism is on the cultural sphere of the Meiteis and the general awakening of their identity. The first trend of revivalism in Manipur can be seen in the restoration of Lainingthou Sanamahi at Haying Khongbal. Even the Government of Manipur recognized the necessity of reviving Meitei culture, religion and tradition. The Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple Board published a brochure on the occasion of Mera Chaorel Houba, which fell on September 29, 1981. Irengbam Tompok, the then Deputy Chief Minister of Manipur sent a message referring to the need for revivalism. To quote his words:
"I am glad to know that Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple Board is organizing to bring out a brochure on the day of Mera Chaorel Houba. I hope, this will bring the original and due faith and worship of the Meitei people. I wish every success of the Board" (LSTB, 1981).

The Meiteis had neglected the worshipping of Panthoibi after Hinduism came to Manipur. In the last few years, the Meiteis have started establishing Panthoibi Temples and worshipping her in some of the Meitei concentrated areas in Lakhipur and Sonai in the Cachar district of Assam. From 1990s, the number of Panthoibi worshippers and the temporary Panthoibi worshipping places (during the Durga puja festival) has soared up. Revivalism of Meitei culture and religion can also be seen from 1990s that the devotional songs and prayers are performed in the archaic Meitei language which was otherwise performed in Bengali and Sanskrit languages.

In Manipur the trend of Meitei revivalism was seen around the year 1980, when Meitei gods and goddesses substituted the Hindu gods and goddesses shrines at Nongmaiching hill. Before Vaishnavism came to Manipur, Meiteis had an early practice of climbing the Nongmaiching hill on the 28th Lamda (name of a Manipuri month, around February) to worship Nongpok Ningthou. This practice was originally known as chinggoi iruppa. It was during the time of King Garibniwaz that this festival was renamed Baruni Snan and all the worshipping places on this hill, which were known by Meitei names were converted into Hindu names. But in 1980, the Meitei National Front made a hard effort and succeeded in reviving the past tradition. That year names like 'Mahadeva Shrine' came to be known as 'Nongpok Ningthou Chingu Panganba Shrine'. The pond known as Saraswati Kunda came to be known by its original name 'Shileima Ikon'. Revivalism of Meitei culture and religion can also be seen in the effort of the Meitei to worship the shrine of
Mongba-Hanba in lieu of Hanuman image in the Mongba-Hanba Forest, which is also known as Mahabali Forest. The Meiteis claim that the term 'Mahabali' and the 'Temple of Hanuman' was brought into practice only during the time of King Garibniwaz. Before this the Meiteis called this place as 'Mongba-Hanba Umang'. Mongba-Hanba is one of the nine Laipunghthous (mound God) (Otojit, 2011). The local newspaper Janata in its editorial column reviewed the situation.

"It is seen that in most of the temples, shrines and worshipping places of Manipur, Meiteism and Meitei form of worshipping have revived. The Meitei religion, which was about to disappear is showing its identity clearly" (Janata, Imphal. 18th March, 1980). (Cited in Bijoykumar, 2005)

Previously, there were a countable number of umanglai shrines in Meitei populated areas of Assam. The number of local deities, which the Meiteis believe to protect them from supernatural evil forces, was also limited. Today, almost every locality seems to have either an umanglai or a local deity in almost every village. One can hear the sound of lai haraoba from one corner or the other during the festival season especially from January to June. Such interest shown by the Meiteis in their ancient Gods and Goddesses indicate their sense of cultural and religious revivalism (Devi, 1991: 91–3). The socio-political nexus that it enjoyed during the monarchical times seem to be a characteristic feature even today, although in a different context. Revivalist movement has brought to the fore an awareness of the pre-Vaishnava culture. The space afforded by the festival continues to assume political significance in the reinstating of a pre-Vaishnava identity. However, its recent resurgence in Manipur on a much grander and stylized scale assumes more than a cultural or religious revival. The resurgence may not have much to do with a growing religiousness towards the indigenous faith or belief systems (Otojit, 2011). It, rather, reflects a consciousness of going back to and re-
establishing cultural rootedness against the cultural homogenization associated with national mainstream, which is seen as threatening to the interests of the smaller cultures.

2.5 Ethnicity and the Meiteis of Assam:

'Ethnicity' has been best defined within cultural anthropology, but it has been a debated topic and there is no single definition or theory of how ethnic groups are formed. According to John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (John, and Smith, 1996: 1–14.), the term 'ethnicity' is relatively new, first appearing in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1953, but its English origins are connected to the term 'ethnic'. The true origins of 'ethnic' have been traced back to Greece and the term *ethnos*, which was used in reference to band, tribe, race, or a people. In short, one may born poor and dies rich but one's ethnic group is fixed which is the 'primordialist' way of thinking about ethnic identity. According to it, each of us belongs to one and only one ethnic group that group membership remains fixed over a lifetime and it is passed down intact across generations.

In more recent colonial and immigrant history, the term 'ethnic' falls under the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them'. The 'us', the majority, are viewed as non-ethnics and the 'them', new immigrants or minorities, as ethnic. Variations of the term have developed, including ethnic identity, ethnic origin, ethnocentrism, and ethnicism (John and Smith 1996: 4–5). Ethnic identity or origin refers to an individual's ancestral heritage. Ethnocentrism is a belief that your cultural community or ancestry is superior to all others, resulting in dislike or hatred of any material, behavioral, or physical characteristics different than your own. Ethnicism is defined as a “movement of protest and resistance on behalf of ethnics against oppressive and exploitative outsiders” (John and Smith 1996: 5).
Overall, an ethnic group or ethnicity has been defined in numerous ways. John and Smith’s (1996: 6–7) definition of an ethnic group, or *ethnie*, consists of six main features that include:

1. a common proper name, to identify and express the ‘essence’ of the community;

2. a myth of common ancestry that includes the idea of common origin in time and place and that gives an ethnie a sense of fictive kinship;

3. shared historical memories, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration;

4. one or more elements of common culture, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, and language;

5. a link with a homeland, not necessarily its physical occupation by the ethnie, only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples; and

6. a sense of solidarity on the part of at least some sections of the ethnic’s population.

The work of Sian Jones contains one of the better summaries of anthropological theories concerning ethnicity and its application to archaeology. Overall, Jones outlines three major terms related to ‘ethnic’: ethnicity, ethnic identity, and ethnic group. Ethnicity is defined as “all those social and psychological phenomena associated with a culturally constructed group identity.” Ethnic identity is defined as “that aspect of a person’s self-conceptualization which results from identification with a broader group in opposition to others on the basis of perceived cultural differentiation and/or common descent.” An ethnic group is classified as
“any group of people who set themselves apart and/or are set apart by others with whom they interact or co-exist on the basis of their perceptions of cultural differentiation and/or common ancestry.” (Jones, 1997).

Fredrik Barth’s work on ethnic group boundaries had a strong influence on both, anthropologists and sociologists. No discussion or theoretical formulation of ethnicity vis-a-vis ethnic boundaries is possible without first acknowledging the seminal contribution of Fredrik Barth. He examined the notion that culture develops distinctive characteristics of structure and content as the result of isolation from other groups. He claimed to have made two discoveries which show the inadequacy of that view.

Firstly, the observation that ethnic boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them showed that categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on absence of mobility, contact and information but do include social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing membership.

Secondly, stable, persisting, often vitally important social relations are maintained across such boundaries and frequently based precisely on the dichotomized ethnic statuses (Barth, 1969).

There is no space for doubt that ethnicity is a complex phenomenon. Overall, the underlying truth of ethnicity is that it is a product of self and group identity that is formed in extrinsic/intrinsic contexts and social interaction. Ethnicity is in part the symbolic representations of an individual or a group that are produced, reproduced, and transformed over time. Ethnic revivals are examples of culture change in a given society. The Meiteis society is presently undergoing changes in several aspects of their social structure with the revivalist wave across the society. They regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as having a
unique ethnic identity. This ethnic identity, or the ethnic 'boundary' that separates them from others, circumscribes a known assemblage of individuals. It is within this boundary that their ethnicity develops, to revive, to revitalize, mobilize and bolster them in their pursuit of shared goals. They are distinguished among small groups by their high degree of social organization and belief system. Their self-ascribed separateness of identity from other communities, and other Indian neighbors is regarded in anthropological terms as their ethnicity. Most Indian groups are able to maintain a high level of ethnic self consciousness by drawing from traditions of earlier forms.

'Culture' is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. The word culture has many different meanings. For some it refers to an appreciation of good literature, music, art, and food. For a biologist, it is likely to be a colony of bacteria or other microorganisms growing in a nutrient medium in a laboratory Petri dish. However, for anthropologists and other behavioral scientists, 'culture is the full range of learned human behavior patterns' (O'Neil, 2006). The term was first used in this way by the pioneer English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, Primitive Culture, published in 1871. Tylor said that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Of course, it is not limited to men. Women possess and create it as well. Since Tylor's time, the concept of culture has become the central focus of anthropology.

'Culture' has been defined in a number of ways, but most simply, as the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings. (Useem & Useem, 1963). Culture is a powerful human tool for survival, but it is a fragile phenomenon. It is constantly changing and easily lost because it exists only in our minds. Our written languages, governments,
buildings, and other man-made things are merely the products of culture. They are not culture in themselves. For this reason, archeologists cannot dig up culture directly in their excavations. The broken pots and other artifacts of ancient people that they uncover are only material remains that reflect cultural patterns; they are things that were made and used through cultural knowledge and skills. Most obviously it is the body of cultural traditions that distinguish one's specific society.

The term 'socio' implies an attempt to rearrange society, its social values, custom belief and structure, which the Meiteis consider to be very unique and different from those of the other Hindu Societies. The Apokpa/Sanamahi movement among the Meiteis may have sought to reshape any one of these components or a combination of them. Every socio-religious movements also attempt to change the existing system ranging from the relatively limited change or reformation to a complete rejection of the existing system. In this regard the Apokpa/Sanamahi movement is an attempt to complete replacement of the Vaishnavite socio-religious values with the traditional Meitei socio-religious values which they call Apokpa-ism/Sanamahism.

The term 'religious' refers to a type of authority that is used to legitimize a given ideology which is accompanied by its own programmes and actions. Such kind of authority is also based on scriptures that are no longer considered to be properly observed, on a reinterpretation of existing socio-religious doctrines, or an a re-invention of the old scripture by new religious reader. Sometimes different types of authority are combined to legitimize a particular programme and action or the teaching of an individual, once adopted by his disciples, are standardized, codified and transformed into an ideology. Such ideology also promises to create a better future, either for a section of society or for the whole society. The leader initially, and later on the ideology, furnish the vehicle for an individual's participation in the particular movement. Moreover, it is also
the ideology of the leader that attracts a large number of participants in
the movement. (Bijoykumar, 2005) Therefore, the term movement here
may refer to an aggregate of individuals united by the message of a
charismatic leader or the ideology derived from the message of the
leader, who are involved in the translation of the leader’s message or
ideology into a collective action.

The type of movement carried forward by such charismatic leaders may
be loosely organized in the early stage, especially during the lifetime of
the leader, but if it needs to continue after his death, his followers need to
establish it in a systematic formal organizational structure as max Weber
called ‘rutinization of Charisma’ (Weber, 1993). The Apokpal/Sanamahi
movement which was started by Naoria Phulo in 1930s was initially
small and loosely organized during the lifetime of the founding leader.
This movement became highly rutinized after his death in 1941 by his
followers. In the proceeding years his disciples established Meitei
traditional system in an organized way with elaborate functioning system
by replacing Brahmins with the pibas to perform rites and rituals and
brought a change within the Meitei society. In this process emergence of
numerous organizations also witnessed along with the individual leaders
to propagate the teachings and ideologies of Naoria Phulo. (Bijoykumar,
2005) In this way socio-religious movement needs modification in mode
of action and organization and builds an organizational structure in order
to sustain over time.

To understand Apokpal/Sanamahi movement and its nature and impact it
is also necessary to define the particular process as a movement. Socio-
religious movement essentially involves a collective and sustains
movement which is different from an intermittent occurrence like move,
episode situational like protests and strikes.
2.6 Ideology of the Movement

When one studies social movements there is yet another set of conceptual problems to understand the ideology of the leader and the type of identity the concerned group established. Clifford Geertz in his *Ideology as a Cultural System* writes, "Ideology is not only a structure of consciousness but also a source of legitimizing action" (Geertz, 1964). In order to direct the action of the movement, it is necessary to formulate a clear cut ideology that can stimulate the movement. The leaders work out different layouts by which the concerned people who take part in the movement make attempts to pronounce them into a systematic manner into proper programmes of the movement and direct actions towards the specific goal. Moreover, the said ideology also legitimizes new values as visualized by the leaders. The present movement of the *Apokpa* or *Sanamahi* is manifested with the ideology of glorifying the ancient tradition of the Meiteis with the rejection of Vaishnavism and its values.

Another important aspect of the ideology based on relative deprivation is that the concerned deprived group draws boundaries based on the ideology of the movement to establish identity. They attempt to take away privileges in economy, political and religious goods and services from the privileged group. In this regard the *Apokpa/Sanamahi* movement rejects the monopoly of the Brahmins in the rites and rituals of the Meiteis and instead *pibas, maibas* and *maibis* undertake the functions carried out by the Brahmins and introduce religious institutions with the non Brahmin functionaries. (Bijoykumar, 2005) They do not seek legitimacy from the Brahmins, rather they establish legitimacy drawn from the pre-Vaishnava scriptures.

Any social movement also tends to develop an event structure over a period of time. A part event influences the choice of strategy in the mobilization of people towards the movement. The selection of such part events draws the attention of the people to counter and challenge an
opposite reference group. As for the case, the leaders of Apokpa/Sanamahi movement observes the event of puya meithaba as a protest against the atrocities of king Garibniwaz and Hindu missionaries for their unbecoming act of burning ancient Meitei scriptures.