

**A STUDY OF SOCIO-POLITICO-RELIGIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON  
ZELIANGRONG COMMUNITY OF NAGALAND**

**THESIS**

**Submitted to**

**Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences  
In Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**In**

**History of Christianity**

**Albert M. Chawang  
ID. No. 09PHTH106**



**Supervisor: Bishop Dr. D.K Sahu  
Dean, Faculty of Theology, SHUATS  
2018**

**Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences  
Allahabad, UP, India**



**Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology And Sciences**  
**सैम हिगिन्बॉटम कृषि, प्रौद्योगिकी एवं विज्ञान विश्वविद्यालय**  
(U.P. State Act No. 35 of 2016, as passed by the Uttar Pradesh Legislature)  
Allahabad - 211 007, U.P., India

**ISO 9001:2008 Certified**

Office : 91-532-2684281, 2684781  
Fax : 91-532-2684394  
Website : www.shuats.edu.in  
E-mail : info@shuats.edu.in

**DECLARATION**

It is certified that I have personally worked on the research topic "A Study of Socio-politico-religio-cultural Impact of Christianity on Zeliangrong Community of Nagaland." The data mentioned in the manuscript have been generated during the work and are genuine. Data information obtained from other sources/agencies has been duly acknowledged. None of the findings information pertaining to the work has been concealed. The results embodied in this manuscript have not been submitted to any university or institution for the award of any Degree or Diploma.

**Place: Allahabad**

**Albert M. Chawang**  
**ID. No. 09PHTH106**



**Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology And Sciences**  
**सैम हिगिगनबॉटम कृषि, प्रौद्योगिकी एवं विज्ञान विश्वविद्यालय**  
(U.P. State Act No. 35 of 2016, as passed by the Uttar Pradesh Legislature)  
Allahabad - 211 007, U.P., India

**ISO 9001:2008 Certified**

Office : 91-532-2684281, 2684781  
Fax : 91-532-2684394  
Website : www.shuats.edu.in  
E-mail : info@shuats.edu.in

---

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the Thesis entitled, "A Study of Socio-politico-religio-cultural Impact of Christianity on Zeliangrong Community of Nagaland", submitted for the Degree of Ph. D. Theology in History of Christianity is a bonafide research carried out by Albert M. Chawang ID No. 09PHTH106 during 2009-2018 under my guidance and supervision. No part of this Thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

**Bishop Dr. D. K. Sahu**  
Advisor  
Dean, Faculty of Theology  
SHUATS



**Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology And Sciences**  
**सैम हिगिगनबॉटम कृषि, प्रौद्योगिकी एवं विज्ञान विश्वविद्यालय**  
(U.P. State Act No. 35 of 2016, as passed by the Uttar Pradesh Legislature)  
Allahabad - 211 007, U.P., India

ISO 9001:2008 Certified

Office : 91-532-2684281, 2684781  
Fax : 91-532-2684394  
Website : www.shuats.edu.in  
E-mail : info@shuats.edu.in

**CERTIFICATE OF RECOMMENDATION BY STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

This thesis entitled 'A Study of Socio-politico-religio-cultural Impact of Christianity on Zeliangrong Community of Nagaland' has been prepared and submitted by Mr. Albert M. Chawang ID No.09PHTH106 for the award of degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY Theology in History of Christianity of the Faculty of Theology, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences,

Name	Evaluation	Signature
Bishop D. K. Sahu Advisor	Satisfactory/ <del>Not Satisfactory</del>	
Prof. Dr. P. W. Ramteke Member	Satisfactory/ <del>Not Satisfactory</del>	
Dr. Sam P. Mathew Member	Satisfactory/ <del>Not Satisfactory</del>	

This Thesis is recommended by the Student Advisory Committee for partial fulfilment of award of Ph.D. degree.

Dr. Atula Ao  
External Examiner  
Allahabad Bible Seminary

Prof. Dr. Nahar Singh  
Pro. Vice-Chancellor (Academics)  
Chairman, Final Defense Examination Board

Date: 25-04-2018

## **Acknowledgement**

At the outset, I express my sincere thanks to Bishop Prof. Dr. RB Lal, Honourable Vice Chancellor of SHUATS for the opportunity to do my research work in the esteemed University.

I express my profound gratitude to Bishop Prof. Dr. D. K Sahu, Dean Faculty of Theology, for his critical comments and guidance that enabled me to complete my research work.

I am indebted to two well known Church historians Prof. Dr. O.L Snaitang, external examiner and Rev. Prof. Dr. Narola Imchen, co-supervisor for taking the pain of reading my draft thoroughly and contributing creative and constructive comments. They shaped and sharpened my focus based on their areas of expertise on history of Christianity, particularly in North East India context.

Special thanks to Dr. Sam Peedikayil Mathew, SAAC member, Prof. Dr. Pramod W. Ramteke, SAAC Member, Dr. Atula Ao, external examiner, Dr. Imsutoshi Jamir, Rev. Dr Elungkiebe Zeliang and Dr. Graham Houghton for their many insightful criticism and helpful suggestions.

I am grateful to the staff of the Eastern Theological College, Jorhat and Nagaland State Library (Kohima) for giving me access to the library and co-operation during my material collection. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to three elder brothers Rago Chawang, Raitu Chawang and John B. Chawang for sending materials required for my research work.

I am also grateful to the elders and knowledgeable persons from whom I have gathered information on Zeliangrong traditional society and early mission history. The stories are embedded in the memories of the elderly people.

I express my heartfelt thanks to my wife Keyipungwangle (Kawi) and my daughter Ntinglungliu (Ting-Ting) for their support and understanding during my long period of study. Thanks also to my dad Kamgi Chawang, elder brothers and sisters and extended family members for their constant prayer support which has been the source of strength. Above all, I thank God for granting good health and intellectual blessings.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>i-v</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Statement of the Problem</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Elaboration of the Problem</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Objectives of Study</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Limitation</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Method of Study</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6. Previous Research</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7. Structure of Research</b>	<b>13</b>

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN WRITING OF THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA**

Introduction	
<b>1.1. History</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1.2. Paradigm Shift in the Historiography of Christianity in India</b>	<b>17</b>
1.2.1. Imperial/Colonial Historiography	17
1.2.2. Colonial Mission Historiography	22
<b>1.3. Post Colonial Reading of History</b>	<b>25</b>
1.3.1. CHAI Historiography	24
1.3.2. Subaltern Historiography	27
1.3.2.1. Dalit Historiography	28
1.3.2.2. Feminist Historiography	30
1.3.2.3. Tribal Historiography: North East Perspective	35
1.3.2.3.1. Reconstructing Historiography: A Zeliangrong Perspective	41
1.3.2.3.1.1. Outsider's Perspective	41
1.3.2.3.1.2. Insiders' Perspective	45
Conclusion	56

**CHAPTER II**  
**TRADITIONAL ZELIANGRONG SOCIETY**

Introduction	58
<b>2. 1. The Zeliangrongs</b>	<b>59</b>
2.1.1. Oral Traditions	59
<b>2.2. Social, Political and Cultural Life of the Zeliangrongs</b>	<b>64</b>
2.2.1. Kikhun Jai (The Family System)	65
2.2.2. The Village Set-Up	66
2.2.3. NnamgaApimai (Village Council)	67
2.2.4. Puina Jai (The Clan System)	69
2.2.5. Khangchiu Ki (Morung/Bachelor’s Dormitory)	70
2.2.6. Magiangbu Jai (The Marriage System)	74
2.2.7. Tapidangbu/ChapiDangbu (Head Hunting)	76
2.2.8. Paope-Lui and Paope-Len (Folk Songs and Dances)	77
2.2.9. Chapun and Tatiu-Teta (Dress and Ornaments)	79
<b>2.3. Religious life</b>	<b>80</b>
2.3.1. Charawang/Tingwang (Concept of Supreme Being)	81
2.3.2. Belief of Spirits	82
<b>2.4. Economic Life</b>	<b>84</b>
2.4.1. Agriculture	85
2.4.2. Domestication of Animals	85
2.4.3. Crafting	86
Conclusion	87

## CHAPTER III

### BAPTIST MISSION AMONG THE ZELIANGRONGS IN NAGALAND

Introduction	88
<b>3.1. History of the Baptists</b>	<b>88</b>
3.1.1. First Baptist Church in America	90
3.1.2. The Formation of the American Board of Commission for Foreign Mission	90
<b>3.2. Early Baptist Mission contacts in North East India</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>3.3. Edward Clark's Mission in Nagaland</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>3.4. Co-operation between Mission and Government in the Naga Hills</b>	<b>99</b>
3.4.1. Mission under Colonial Protection	99
3.4.2. Government Assistance towards Mission Work	100
3.4.3. Security from the Government	101
<b>3.5. Beginning of Baptist Mission among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland</b>	<b>102</b>
3.5.1. Kohima Mission Centre	102
3.5.2. Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs: Zemes	104
3.5.3. Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs: Liangmais	107
3.5.4. Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs: Rongmeis	108
<b>3.6. Factors in Church Growth among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland</b>	<b>109</b>
3.6.1. Tribal Structure of the Zeliangrong Society	109
3.6.2. Faith and Courage of the Early Evangelists	110
3.6.3. Revival Movements	111
<b>3.7. Formation of Zeliangrong Baptist Churches Council (N)</b>	<b>112</b>

<b>3.8. Division of the Zeliangrong Baptist Association into Four Groups</b>	<b>113</b>
Conclusion	114

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN MISSION ON ZELIANGRONG SOCIETY**

Introduction	116
<b>4.1. Transformation through Mission Activities</b>	<b>116</b>
4.1.1. Education and Literature	117
4.1.2. Replacement of the Traditional ways of Life	121
4.1.3. Transformation in Religious Life	122
4.1.4. Christianity and a New Life Style	124
4.1.5. Transformation in Socio-Political Life of the Zeliangrongs	127
<b>4.2. Negative Impacts</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>4.2.1. Cultural Degradation</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>4.2.1.1. Naga Context</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>4.2.1.2. Zeliangrong Context</b>	<b>142</b>
4.2.1.2.1. Erosion of Sharing Values	143
4.2.1.2.2. Communitarian Life to Individualism	144
4.2.1.2.3. Loss of Egalitarian Values	147
4.2.1.2.4. Morality and Ethical Issues in the Zeliangrong Society	148
4.2.1.2.5. Undermining Morung (Bachelor Dormitory) Values	150
4.2.1.2. 6. Erosion of Native Cultural Values	156

4.2.1. 2.7. Insecurity of Life	161
4.2.1.2. 8. Exploitation of Community Life	164
4.2.1.2.9. Ecological Crisis	166
4.2.1.2.10. Denominational Issues	172
4.2.1.2.11. Lack of Guidance	175
4.2.1.2.12. Gender Issues	179
4.2.1.2.13. Geographical Demarcation of Zeliangrong People	182
4.2.1. 2.14. The Issue of Identity	183
<b>4.2.2. Christianity and Traditionalism in Conflict</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>4.3. Tradition and Modernity</b>	<b>188</b>
Conclusion	198
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>228</b>

## Introduction

The Zeliangrongs are one of the biggest tribes<sup>1</sup> within the Naga family living in the three North Eastern states of India, namely Manipur,<sup>2</sup> Nagaland<sup>3</sup> and Assam.<sup>4</sup> The Zeliangrong territory covers nearly 12, 000 square kilometers<sup>5</sup> and occupies the areas lying approximately between 93-94 degrees East Longitude and 23.40-24 degrees North Latitude.<sup>6</sup> They are blessed with rich natural resources, and have a rich cultural heritage with all their rich traditional customs, practices and values. Macham Kambo (egalitarianism), Lung aruangbo/ Lung akatbo (community living), Kamajibotu machunbo/gubo (a sense of justice and right), Zouhubo/Zao-hubo/makiukaru-dungbo (feast of merit), Khangchiu-liuchiu jaili (morung system), Kikhun-mpou/Tadiudambo/Pui-nah lad (kitchen talks), indescribable wealth of knowledge and wisdom in their Paope-Lui (folksongs) and folktales were some of the beautiful values and practices in the traditional Zeliangrong society.

The earliest known Christian contacts with Zeliangrong people were through the Kohima mission field in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The people will ever remain grateful to the Christian mission for bringing to them the message of Christ. The Christian mission deserved the praise for introducing modern education, literature and health care etc. Traditional practices such as head hunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds, and superstitious were abolished. While acknowledging the contribution of the missionaries, one should not forget their cultural arrogance. The early missionaries supposed it necessary to give up completely the indigenous practices by the Zeliangrong converts. This study is an attempt to critically evaluate the impact of Christian mission among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland.

---

<sup>1</sup> There is still a debate and disagreement among the Zeme-Liangmai-Rongmai themselves in regard to Zeliangrong people as tribe.

<sup>2</sup> In Manipur, Tamenlong district is the homeland of the Zeliangrong people. They also live in other parts of Manipur state such as Western Sadar Hills, Tabubi Sub-division of Senapati district, Loktak Project area of Churachanpur, Bishenpur and in Imphal valley.

<sup>3</sup> In Nagaland, Peren district is the homeland of the Zeliangrong people. They also live in Dimapur and Kohima.

<sup>4</sup> In Assam, north-east of North Cachar Hills district is the homeland of Zeliangrong people. They also live in Cachar valley of Assam.

<sup>5</sup> Namthiubuiyang Pamei, *The Trail from Makuilongdi: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People* (Tamenglong: Gironta Charitable Foundation, 2011) 28

<sup>6</sup> Dichamang Pamei, *Liberty to Captives* (Tamenglong: ZBCC 1991) 1

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

The Zeliangrong people acknowledge the positive and transformative changes brought by the Christian mission. However, the question is: “whether the process of change that came with the coming of the Christian mission did justice to the traditional Zeliangrong practices and values?” An in-depth study and understanding of several of the traditional Zeliangrong customs are pertinent in understanding the history and mission.

## **2. Elaboration of the Problem**

There was no such great transformation event occurred in the history of Zeliangrongs apart from the introduction of Christianity. The coming of Christianity followed by modern education changed the life style of the Zeliangrong people. Christian mission came in a big way as the formidable agent that brought transformation in the field of modern education and literature, medical service, humanitarian work, abolishing old ways of life<sup>7</sup> and in providing enlightenment. The message of love, forgiveness and salvation brought peace, harmony and good relationship within the family, clan, village and tribe. The Christian mission must be credited for opening and widening the path of universal knowledge among the people by establishing schools. The spread of western education sprang up a native class of intellectuals. The Christian medical centers became the centers of attraction and were magic to the new converts, where many sick persons were treated and successfully cured from many diseases. Whereas, the costly animal sacrifice used by the priestess or sorcerers failed to cure many diseases raised questioned in the minds of the new converts as well as those practicing the traditional religion. Another benevolent aspect of the Christian mission was the advocacy of hygienic and cleanliness. Moreover, Christian mission along with British administration transformed the socio-cultural life of the people by abolishing traditional practices such as head hunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery etc.

---

<sup>7</sup> The British Administration initiated in abolishing the practice of headhunting. And the missionaries took this as a privilege by convincing their converts that headhunting is a sin. Thus, all those who embraced Christianity stopped the practice of headhunting. Moreover, the missionaries deserve the credit for stamping out certain traditional practices such as tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery. See M. Rongsen, “Tribal Culture and Spirituality” in *Encounter Between Gospel and Tribal Culture*, edited by A. Wati Longchar (Jorhat: Tribal Study Center, 1999), 30

There is, however, criticism too. One major criticism, especially voiced today, is the way in which the Christian mission imposed western culture as an integral part of Christian faith, grossly undermining the cultures<sup>8</sup> of the indigenous people. In their efforts to transform the society, the missionaries pursued the ‘translation method’,<sup>9</sup> perceiving that the western culture is superior and the only valid expression of Christian faith. The missionaries landed in the Naga Hills during the period when the basic system of belief was extremely attached to superstitions interwoven with fear and anxiety. Seeing the situation, the missionaries began to discourage the indigenous culture such as morung system, traditional festivals, traditional songs and dances, traditional forms of worship and religious ceremonies etc. The argument is that the missionaries failed to insert the Christian message into the living culture of the people. The general approach of the missionary movement was to lead people to renounce their respective ways of life and to become Christian. In short, their approach was often perceived as being insensitive to the local cultures. There is always a need to adjust or adapt positive values of the people. In Christian mission there are two important features: (a) To eliminate the inhuman and dehumanize aspects of the encountering culture of the people. (b) To assimilate and integrate certain human values.

Gangmumei, one of the prominent Zeliangrong historian is of the opinion that Christian mission had damaged some of the valuable cultural values of the Zelianrongs by means of discouraging the traditional dances, music and songs, morung system etc.<sup>10</sup> The rapid forces of modernization, technological changes and mobility have affected the traditional life style and values of the people. Gradually, as they went along with modern civilization and culture, the young generation consciously or unconsciously developed the egocentrism to its climax, to believe that

---

<sup>8</sup> In simple language culture is defined as a “whole way of life” which includes belief systems, language, symbols, tools, traditions, practices, artifacts, use of space, exercise of power, self-understanding at all levels and sections of society, value systems, morality, transcendence and the transcendent, social, cultural, professional organizations and social intercourse etc. See, Chris Barker, *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2004) 44

<sup>9</sup> Translating the meaning of theology into another language of different cultural context without making any adjustment or change to acknowledge differences in language and culture.

<sup>10</sup> Gangmumei Kamei, *A History of the Zeliangrong Nagas: From Makhel to Rani Gaidinliu*, (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 2004), 300

the native products, styles or ideas are necessarily inferior to those, which originate elsewhere. The feeling of inferiority and low self-esteem has been deeply ingrained in the minds of the people. It has resulted in a derogatory attitude in the minds of the people towards their own culture and customs. Therefore, the researcher is of the opinion that the introduction of Christianity and modern education brought tremendous changes among the Zeliangrong people yet at the cost of undermining of their culture and customs. Delight in ones culture must not be suppressed. Every culture has its own right to exist, maintain and develop. Zeliangrong culture is no exception.

One of the areas that the researcher views with concern is the erosion of some important traditional values in the Zeliangrong society. Then an answer is sought to the question: “What exactly were the values practiced in the traditional Zeliangrong society?” To cite few examples the *ethos of egalitarianism* where there was social equality, *community living* where there was a sense of sharing and belonging, *a feast of merit* in which a rich man instead of hoarding his wealth spends it for the benefit of the community, *morung system* where the young boys learned the techniques of war and combat, wrestling, singing, dancing, oratory, games and sports, handicrafts, sex education, character, traditions, customs, religious philosophy and moral values etc, *kitchen talks* where the kitchen portion of the house acted as an agent that facilitated socialization and transmission of taboos, folktales, folksongs, folk humors and numerous myths of the supernatural were done while sitting around the fire and *indescribable wealth of knowledge and wisdom in their folklores* etc were some of the beautiful values and practices of the traditional Zeliangrongs society.<sup>11</sup> Verrier Elwin, a British administrator in the North East region during the colonial period who turned anthropologists, commented on the significance of the *Naga Feast of Merit*:

*“The traditional Naga attitude to property is a rather charming one. The honorable thing was to get rid of it. The Feasts of Merit which bestowed so much distinction on their donors showed that it was the distribution of wealth rather than its possession that was important. And this distribution*

---

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Kamgi Chawang (86 years old) on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014. He is an expert on Zeliangrong Naga History and Culture.

*included everyone, not merely one's own relations and rich friends, but the poorest and the least important.*"<sup>12</sup>

*Compassion* is also value greatly among the Zeliangrongs like any of the Naga tribes. The people always supported each other at times of need during calamities, war and conflicts. *Hospitability* is highly valued. People travelling by foot could rest and be offered something to eat and drink and be invited to spend the night at a perfect stranger's house. Moreover, they were known for their *hard work, honesty, simplicity, respect to elders and there was a strong sense of justice and right.*<sup>13</sup> Every society has its own customs or guidelines of solving problems and doing development. Though they do not have written laws, they were bound by numerous usages that prescribe rules of conduct to individuals and groups, enforcement procedures and also punishment for violators. The *Customary laws* of the people deal with all aspects of life and regulate day to day human behavior of its members. Every Zeliangrong village has their own distinct set of customary laws. These laws are made and practiced according to the convenience of each individual village. One village cannot impose its customary law on another village claiming it to be superior. All the laws of every village hold equal importance and are honored by one another. Customary laws are the keys of adjudication, through which the aggrieved party avails justice from suppression and oppression. Customary law is the highest authority in the village and it is obeyed by all individual, groups, clans and tribes. Every member has an equal voice in meetings; all opinions and agendas are heard and taken into account. The authority of the village acts as the agent of the customary law, and they interpret on the basis of this law. Every individual is equal before the customary law irrespective of rich or poor. These laws are transmitted from one generation to the next through usages and practices and other oral narratives like folksongs, myths, stories etc.<sup>14</sup> Thus they encompass the totality of customs of the people handed over from one generation to another and in the process acquire a good moral character.

---

<sup>12</sup> Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland*, (Shilong: Research Department Adviser's Secretariat, 1961) 104

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Hugambo Chawang (78 years old) of Ntu village on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2013. A retired govt officer who served as a pastor for 14 years.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Rev. Deuhing Nsarangbe of Benreu village (95 years old) on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015. He was born in 1920 and did his schooling from Kohima Mission School. Served his people as teacher, pastor, and in different capacities.

The beautiful ways of life has been changing rapidly today. Individualism is becoming stronger. The division between the rich and the poor is becoming more pronounced and social inequalities are becoming sharper. At present, the society is notorious for corruption in public life, looking for easy money and conspicuous consumption. Moreover, it is observed that many young Zeliangrong people don't know how to speak their own tongue fluently or sing a folk song accurately- lament the aged people today. For the identity of a person or of a community is linked with the language and culture of the individual or the group. At present there seems to be an increase in the neglect of children. The modern education system does not equip the youth with the knowledge and skills necessary for life. The ethnic movements and insurgency issues pose a challenge to all persons of good will to work towards meaningful solutions. The traditional ideas of protecting the land and mechanism of conservation have become weak. The people as evident in their lifestyle have been deeply impressed by the outside culture which leads them to neglect their culture. Erosion of the beautiful culture of the people can be seen in the fading cultures like folk songs, folk dances, festivals, cultural dresses etc. The process of westernization in this region has become so strong that the local culture is under severe threat.

Therefore, there is a need to reclaim certain positive cultural values as those values and elements represent the primary resource for social and cultural renewal or reconstruction of Zeliangrong society today. The stories and the rich cultural values are embedded in the memories of the old and passing generation. With them the tribal treasures will go if not recorded now. One of the primary tasks is to help the people overcome from psychological feelings of inferiority and self debasement which have been the consequences of modernization. Certain traditional values could be inculcated while adapting to a new faith, may be given a new meaning and none the less can be retained by a Christian community. Theology must be deeply rooted in the culture of the people in which it seeks to translate and take form. It is to address these issues that the researcher attempts to adopt tribal study methods to reclaim certain traditional values. It is also aim to re-read and re-write the Zeliangrong history from people's perspective; history from below using Subaltern method. The concern of this research is to critically study the impact of Christian mission among the Zeliangrong

people in order to enable the people to balance between the tradition and modernity to develop a healthier society. K. Thanzauva, a prominent tribal scholar argues that theology or ideology, unless it takes root in the culture of the people will not be effective.<sup>15</sup> It is not mean to accept the whole account of ‘the past’ and making the past essential for contemporary Zeliangrong people. At the same time, it is also not necessary to discard the past histories, customs, and practices and to accept only ‘the present’. The argument is a matter of reconciling what really is important about the past with what is important in the present. However, one should be careful to guard against the dangerous tendency to assimilate unacceptable elements into the Christian faith because such interference may distort the gospel truth. The teachings of scripture cannot be compromise. The gospel must be rooted in the culture of any given community so that faith expression in the risen Lord will become more meaningful to everyone.

### **3. Objectives of Study**

Numerous research work and literature have produced the history of Zeliangrong Naga tribe and the activities of Christian mission in Zeliangrong area, but so far no systematic study has been done on the impact of Christianity on Zeliangrong community of Nagaland. The in-depth study has not been done by anyone. The disagreements and debates among the people in regard to the impact of Christianity still remain unexplored area of research or without satisfactory investigation. Therefore, the objectives of this study are:

- (1). To critically evaluate the impact of Christian mission among the Zeliangrong Naga tribe which will help the people for better self understanding.
- (2). To investigate the indigenous contributions in the process of change and transformation.
- (3). To examine the traditional values and use their good aspects for the enrichment of the faith and practices today.

---

<sup>15</sup> K. Thanzauva (ed), “Methodological Issues: Subaltern Perspectives” in *Methodological Issues in Theological Research: An Exploration*, Volume-2, edited by H. Vanlalauva (Serampore: Department of Research/SATHRI, 2014) 110

Protection of Zeliangrong culture does not suggest a resuscitation or revival of the traditions already left behind. No culture is static. Development or transition must take place but continuity of culture must be maintained. Total detachment from the past will make people rootless as far as identity is concern. Therefore, it is the task of the Zeliangrong scholars to give a sincere effort to record the cultural heritage through research works. No one can write Zeliangrong history better than themselves.

#### **4. Limitation**

To speak about Christian Mission and its impact on thinking, education and literature, medical care and innumerable other service and social-cultural life among the Zeliangrong people in the three states of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam would call for several volumes. Therefore, this present work is limited only to the Zeliangrong people of Nagaland. Elaborate study on impact of Christian Mission on Zeliangrong Church and Society will be given importance in this study.

#### **5. Method of Study**

The mission story confined mostly to the mission activities; their efforts, their struggles, their contributions and their impact on people. The people's way of life, their culture and indigenous contributions were not given importance. Therefore, the researcher attempts to adopt the *Subaltern method*<sup>16</sup> to critically evaluate the contribution of the local people in the whole process of change and transformation. The subaltern paradigm suggests that people should be the subject, not the object. The historians associated with the subaltern studies declared that they would set the position right by writing the history from the point of view of the common people.

Ranajit Guha, perhaps the most influential figure in subaltern studies, also the founding editor of subaltern studies asserts that in the colonialist and neo-colonialist historiographies, all achievement stories were credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture. In the same way, in the nationalist

---

<sup>16</sup> The term "subaltern" refers to any person or group of inferior rank and it is often used to refer to the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, ethnicity and office or in any other way. One of the important issues of the subaltern studies is to critically evaluate the role of the local people in the whole process of change and transformation. See, V. V. Thomas, *Understanding Subaltern History: Theoretical Tools*, (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2006), 46

and neo-nationalist writings, all achievement stories were credited to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas.<sup>17</sup> This statement conveys that the struggle of the subaltern from their subjectivity and their contributions is totally neglected. Subaltern history is the history of the suffering, oppressed and marginalized people who were forced silence by the dominant elite group. It is true that history will be incomplete unless the common people are included in the framework of the history writings. Vanlalchhuanawma, a historian from North East India in his book *Christianity and Subaltern Culture* studies the Revival Movement in Mizoram as an expression of a culture-conflict between the West and the East, which eventually resulted in a unique form of Christianity in Mizoram.<sup>18</sup> He further argued that revival movement in Mizoram is part and parcel of the Mizo culture and not imported from the West. Similarly, it was the Zeliangrong native evangelists who played a major role in propagating the new religion (Christianity) among their own people. The Revival movement progressed among the Zeliangrongs with great intensity from late 1977 till 1980. Revival movement can be termed as indigenous movement. However, the indigenous contributions in the process of change and transformation were not given due credit.

Moreover, this research work is also an attempt to re-discover the Zeliangrong traditional values using the *Tribal Study methods* in order to enable the people to balance between the tradition and modernity to develop a healthier society. Tribal scholars like Late Renty Keitzar, K. Thanzauva, and A. Wati Longchar are three pioneers who attempted to reclaim traditional values using tribal study methods. Renty Keitzar's vision was to root the gospel in the local soil- indigenization or contextuality. To him theological reflection must relate people's religious heritage to the realities the people face in their own context. In other words, people need to evaluate their own traditional heritage (s), socio-cultural practices, customs and religious beliefs and use their good aspects for the enrichment of people's faith and practice today. He argued that tribals tend to be guided by a spirituality based on

---

<sup>17</sup> Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1

<sup>18</sup> Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity and Subaltern Culture: Revival Movement as a Cultural Response to Western in Mizoram*. (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2007)

emotion and non-theological factors rather than by sober reflection upon God's word- which can be very dangerous. To him proper and sound theological reflection should always (be) dynamic and ever changing reflection upon the unchanging word of God. Keitzar attempted to re-invent the meaning of Christianity by way of changing the worship pattern and make use of their original folk-tune, loving their traditional dresses, festivals and making Christianity a colorful religion through which people can feel God closer and find the true meaning of religion.<sup>19</sup>

Thanzauva, an eminent tribal scholar argues that the relevant methodology for doing indigenous theology must employ a combination of the synthesis and praxis models, or what is referred to as the synthetic-praxis method. Synthesis model is concerned with the development of a new and relevant theology from a synthesis of gospel and culture in a particular context for the purpose of preserving the cultural identity of the people, and Christ may be confessed in the way they understand him. The praxis model is concerned with the transformation of society towards the realization of the Kingdom of God, and emphasizes liberation, social justice and wholeness. It challenges the structure and system of any society responsible for poverty, discrimination, exploitation and injustice. In the words of Thanzauva, the destructive effect of modern individualism so widely observable in modern world is a further reminder of the need for establishing a true community. Tribal communitarian life is an organic togetherness unlike the professional groups of individualistic societies.<sup>20</sup> The synthesis-praxis method proposed by Thanzauva can use useful in construction of indigenous theology for three reasons. First, it takes seriously people's cultures and their distinct socio-economic and political contexts. Second, it allows for critical interaction between Christian traditions and the tribal people's cultures and values that results in a new form of Christian expression of faith and theology. Third, it requires reclaiming past cultural traditions and values.

---

<sup>19</sup> Renty Kietzar, *In Search of Relevant Gospel Message*, (Guwahati: CLC, 1995). Also See, Renty Keitzar, "Tribal Perspective in Biblical Hermeneutics Today" in *Journal of Tribal Studies* vol. XVIII, No.I, Jan-June 2013, edited by L. Imsutoshi Jamir (ETC: Tribal Study Center, 2013)

<sup>20</sup> K. Thanzauva, "Methodology of Tribal Theology: Towards a Synthesis-Praxis" in *Tribal Christian Theology: Methods and Sources for Constructing a Relevant Theology for the Indigenous People of North East India* Tribal Study Series No. 15, edited by Razouselie Laseto and Yankahao Vashum (Jorhat: ETC Program Coordination, 2007) Also See, K. Thanzuava, *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making*, (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997)

Wati Longchar, another distinguished tribal scholar argues that the methodology of indigenous theology must come from within the much wider matrix of an indigenous worldview. The indigenous worldview is characterized by the inter-relatedness of all things, and it recognizes and values the harmony between humanity and nature. The land and its resources that sustain and nourish all human beings and give them an identity and selfhood is not merely a justice issue to be set alongside other justice concerns. It is the foundation of history, existence and identity. This implies that poverty, war, oppression, ethnic conflict and identity problems cannot be understood or solved without relating them to the integrity of creation/land. Justice to creation/land becomes very central to liberation and human dignity and fullness of life.<sup>21</sup> There are many values in the tribal culture which bear universal significance or can be a solution to many of the global issues. For example, the solution to the ecological crisis of our times lies in the eco-friendly culture of the tribals. Many of the taboos in the tribal culture exist for the protection of the environment.

A significant component of a postcolonial –indigenous theological methodology is the reclamation of the past stories and tradition which sustained the people for generations. The missionaries in their zeal to reform declared all the traditional customs to be evil. Their theology (western perspective) failed to suit the indigenous culture and customs. They consider themselves as ‘custodians of knowledge and truth’ and the indigenous people had to be taught and that they do not have much to offer to others other than some customs and cultures which is too inferior and not worth learning. They have rarely gone to a new culture with an understanding of learning from them. The approach of the missionaries was often perceived as being insensitive to the local cultures. Words like ‘pagans’, ‘darkness’ and ‘heathens’ have been used to refer to people of other faiths. Some of the practices like headhunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery etc had to be stopped and no one is sorry to see them go. However, there are many good traditional values which need to be

---

<sup>21</sup> A. Wati Longchar, “The Continuity of Indigenous People in Today’s World” in *Gardening Tribal Resources for Doing Tribal Christian Theology*, Tribal Study Series No. 16, edited by Razouselie Lasetso (Jorhat: ETC Program Coordination, 2008) Also See, A. Wati Longchar, “Tribal Theology: Issues, Method and Perspective” in *In Search of Identity and Tribal Theology: A Tribute to Dr. Renthly Keitzar*, Tribal Study Series No. 9, Edited by A. Wati Longchar, (Jorhat: Tribal Study Center, 2000)

reclaimed. It is not mean to go back to that tradition in its pristine purity. The traditional value system can be treated as a starting point, understood, updated, affirmed, confronted, and transformed in the light of the gospel values. The argument is to appreciate and celebrate the beautiful cultures of the people. Indeed the beauty of creation lies in diversity. It is on this ground that people need to reclaim the cultural past (positive values) rather than condemn them. There are two pertinent issues to be dealt while writing history from people's perspective. Firstly, the task of the historian is to give voice to the hidden, the silenced, the oppressed, the marginalized, the people, the masses, the subaltern, etc and rework the accepted notions of the past. Secondly, the socio-economic, religious, political, and culture of the people be taken into account.

## 6. Previous Research

Among the books on History of Baptist Missions in Nagaland, two books can claim partial credit to writing on the whole Nagaland. P.T. Philip in his book *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*<sup>22</sup> uses Baptist Missionary Magazine, CBCNEI Reports, and Annual Church Council Reports as his main sources. Thus he was able to provide dates and figures in the growth of the Baptist Churches in Nagaland. Joseph Puthenpurakal in his book *Baptist Mission in Nagaland*<sup>23</sup> discusses on how western missionaries came to Nagaland and started its mission. However, P.T. Philip and Joseph Puthenpurakal does not elaborate in detail the role played by the indigenous people in the spread of Christianity in Nagaland.

With regard to the history of Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs, two books provide good accounts on the early mission. Almost all the Zeliangrong theological research scholars acknowledge the pioneering work of Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of the Tribal Christianity*.<sup>24</sup> The book deals with the early history of Christianity among the Zeliangrongs. *Liberty to Captives*<sup>25</sup> written by

---

<sup>22</sup> P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, (Guwahati: Christian Literature Center, 1983)

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*, (Shillong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984)

<sup>24</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1996)

<sup>25</sup> Dichamang Pamei, *Liberty to Captives*, (Tamenglong: ZBCC, 1991)

Dichamang Pamei is another important book which gives a good account of Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs. However, Ramkhun Pamei and Dichamang Pamei work deals mostly of Manipur context. Moreover, it did not discuss in detail the factors why and how Christianity spread so much. In short, factors responsible for the rapid spread of Christianity among the Zeliangrongs. Two scholarly books worth mentioning are Rabi Pame's *The Zeme Naga Baptist Church North Cachar Hills, Assam: A Study of Culture and the Church*,<sup>26</sup> and Elungkiebe Zeliang's *Charismatic Movements in the Baptist Churches in North East India: A Zeliangrong Perspective*.<sup>27</sup> Rabi Pame examines the interaction between culture and Christianity. Elungkiebe Zeliang discusses how charismatic movement plays a vital role in Christianizing the Zeliangrongs. However, Rabi Pame and Elungkiebe Zeliang didn't critically evaluate the impact of Christian mission on Zeliangrong society (as it was not their primary goal of their research work/project). In spite of its own limitations, all the above mentioned books do contain information that can be useful in this research.

## **7. Structure of the Research**

This study is divided into four chapters. The first Chapter deals with the methodological issues in writing of the history of Christianity in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Church in India has been understood in terms of Western missionary expansion. For long, no one questioned the accuracy of what had been written or what had been told by western writers; from western perspective. But in the recent years, there had been a growing interest among the native historians and scholars to study critically the past histories, their methodologies and historiography as a whole and noticed to re-read and re-write from people's perspective; history from below. Chapter two introduces a glimpse of the traditional Zeliangrong society. This chapter attempts to correct the wrong interpretations of the Zeliangrong people by the outsiders. The third chapter discusses the origin and development of Mission work among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland. Moreover, it describes the factors of the growth of Christianity in the region. Chapter four which is the main focus of this study

---

<sup>26</sup> Rabi Pame, *The Zeme Naga Baptist Church North Cachar Hills, Assam: A Study of Culture and Church*, D. Miss dissertation, South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, Unpublished Thesis, 1996

<sup>27</sup> Elungkiebe Zeliang, *Charismatic Movements in the Baptist Churches in North East India: A Zeliangrong Perspective*, (Delhi: ISPCK, 2014)

critically evaluates the impact of Christian mission among the Zeliangrongs particularly in Nagaland. Section one discusses the rich contribution of the Christian mission. The second section examines the mission attitude towards the indigenous cultures.

## CHAPTER I

### Methodological Issues in Writing of the History of Christianity in India

#### Introduction

The history of India was constructed in accordance with 19<sup>th</sup> century European views on what history should be and what was thought to be Indian history.<sup>28</sup> The first serious study of India and its past began in the late eighteenth century with the works of scholars who have been described as the Orientalists.<sup>29</sup> However, the first important history did not come from the Orientalists, but from a totally different source in the works of James Mill's three volumes *History of British India*, first published in 1817, divided into three major sections: Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization and the British Period.<sup>30</sup> This periodization became axiomatic to the interpretation of Indian history. The division of the Indian past into the Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization and the British period still prevails to this day. In the questioning of existing explanations the validity of periodizing Indian history as Hindu, Muslim and British was increasingly doubted. Romila Thapar argued that there is no space in such periodization for observing social, economic, or even religious change that was clear from the evidence within each period. These doubts were encouraged when history became more than just the study of dynasties.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it is viewed that the earlier Hindu and Muslim forms of government failed miserably, and hence in the scale of civilization they will not rise. This study will narrow down to modern Indian historiography particularly the methodological issues in writing of the history of Christianity in India. The researcher attempts to locate the

---

<sup>28</sup> Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities Through History*, (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2004), 9

<sup>29</sup> The term Orientalist was used in the wider sense of scholars interested in Asia which includes India. Historical writing on ancient India began in the eighteenth century more or less as a sequel to the establishment of the East India Company. For the Orientalists, the most significant discovery was that of the relationship between Sanskrit and certain European languages which led to subsequent work on the common Indo-European heritage.

<sup>30</sup> D. N. Jha, *Ancient India: An Introduction Outline*, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1995) xiii-xiv. James Mill's periodization of Indian history into three civilizations: Hindu, Muslim and British period was later criticized as a seeds of communal bias in Indian historiography. Some historians questioned the forms of the periodization of Indian history and suggested for three periods: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Indian history.

<sup>31</sup> Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities Through History* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2014), 15-16

methodology issues and historiography in the history of Christianity in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **1. 1. History**

The English word for history came from the Greek word *historia*, which is derived from the Greek verb *histore* (amo). This word was used by the Attic Greeks and originally meant to learn by inquiry or investigation.<sup>32</sup> It is also mean for research, exploration or information. The Pocket Oxford Dictionary defines history as a continuous record of events or a study of past event or a total accumulation of past events relating to human affairs or a particular nation, things or persons etc.<sup>33</sup> Every historian has his/her own definition of history. According to E. H. Carr, an eminent historian, history is “a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past”. He gives importance to interpretation of the facts and argues that the selected facts need to be interpreted to become history.<sup>34</sup> Further, Carr is of the opinion that historian is influenced by the context. Therefore, he suggests that before studying history, one must study the historian, study the social and historical environment.<sup>35</sup> It is thus seen that all history is a product of a particular context. Another distinguished historian John C. B. Webster viewed that “history is an unending conversation between the past and the present, carried through the examination of evidence and focused upon concrete events and changes in the past”.<sup>36</sup> Webster suggests five statements about history: (1). The Historian’s immediate objective is to find out and explain what actually happened. (2). History deals with the past. (3). History deals with evidence. (4). History inevitably involves the present. (5). History is a conversation without end. Schneider in his book *How to Study History* explains it in three distinct definitions: (1) History is the study of what men have done and said and thought in the past, (2) History is biography, ie, a work of the creative imagination in which the author attempts to recreate the life and thoughts of particular men who actually lived at a

---

<sup>32</sup> Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, (Tiruvalla: SuVartha Bhavan, 2010) 17

<sup>33</sup> Pocket Oxford Dictionary, *History*, (Walton Street Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

<sup>34</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 35

<sup>35</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?*, 54

<sup>36</sup> John C. B. Webster, *An Introduction to History*, (New Delhi: MacMillan India Limited, 1981),

certain time, (3) History is the study of man in his social aspects both past and present.<sup>37</sup> History is the study of the past with the present eye.

## **1.2. Paradigm Shift in the Historiography of Christianity in India**

### **1.2.1. Imperial/Colonial Historiography**

The term ‘imperial/colonial historiography’<sup>38</sup> applies to (a) the histories of the countries colonized during their period of colonial rule, and (b) to the ideas and approaches commonly associated with historians who were or are characterized by a colonialist ideology. Historiography is the study of the history and methodology of the discipline of history. It can be defined as the study of the way history has been and is written. The term also denotes a body of historical work on a specialized topic. This kind of study is sometimes seen as history of history, knowledge about knowledge, or understanding the understanding of the past events. Historical understandings never absolute and complete and in technical term, are never entirely certain nor free from question. Therefore, historiography attempts at reconstructing the past events by formulating a systematic framework for research, observation, analysis, selection and interpretation of facts. The development of capitalism and the gradual expansion of colonialism in the nineteenth century gave rise to new trends in history writing. One strain of these trends tried to uphold colonialism in various ways, and this strain, for obvious reasons, came to be the dominant trend in the most popular works of history. This gave a new kind of bias in history writing which can be called the colonial bias. This bias is very apparent in the works of history produced in countries which had a colonial experience like Africa, India<sup>39</sup> and the Latin American countries. For more than a century the Indians merely watched the game as passive spectators, but as result of the intellectual renaissance, the Indian scholars and historians competed with the western scholars to refute many of the theories which they regarded as unacceptable. They quickly responded to the call of the moment, and formulated their

---

<sup>37</sup> Richard I Schneider, *How to Study History*, (Illinois: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1967), 17

<sup>38</sup> Robert E. Frykenberg, *History and Belief: The Foundation of Historical Understanding* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996) 6

<sup>39</sup> Many colonial writers and administrators asserted that historical experience of Indian people made them unfit for self-government and democracy, or national unity and nation formation or modern development, or even defense against invasion by outsiders. The colonial writers also maintained that because of their religious and social organizations, Indians lacked moral character. They also claimed that Indians lacked the quality of innovation and creativity.

own ideas on history. Looking at the scenario in the development of history in India, we find a paradigm shift of emphasis in the historiography<sup>40</sup> and methodology.

With the advent of the Europeans in India, the historiography underwent a drastic change not merely in approach, treatment and technique but also in volume of historical literature. B. Sheik Ali, the former Vice-Chancellor of Mangalore University is of the opinion that no other period or country can boast of such a rich harvest of historical materials as India from 1757 to 1947.<sup>41</sup> The fact that a commercial Company of London<sup>42</sup> established its political supremacy over vast areas, in a region thousands of miles away from its seat of power necessitated a kind of administration which was all paper works. Every policy had to be put down in writing, every opinion expressed in minutes and every business of the state transacted through dispatches, consultations and proceedings, and through secret letters and secret correspondences, resulting in the growth of an inconceivable volume of historical material. By the time the British established their authority in India they formulated their historical ideas and had been much influenced by the Enlightenment school of historiography. Therefore, the process of history writing proceeded along with history in India. The administrators and even the merchants who came to India were saturated with historical notions, and they attempted to influence the policy makers by publishing works of a politically didactic character.

To understand how the History of India became a means of propagating British interests, philosophies and ideologies,<sup>43</sup> one needs to look at the works of some of the early British historians of India like James Mill, Elphinstone, Macaulay, Robert

---

<sup>40</sup> The word 'Historiography' is derived from the Greek word which means the writing of history or written history. Some define it as the study of the techniques of historical writings or simply as the art of history writing. However, more often historiography means a study of perspectives.

28. B. Sheik Ali, *History: Its Theory and Method*, (New Delhi: MacMillan India Limited, 2004), 331

<sup>42</sup> The Portuguese were the first to come to establish their power in India, followed by the Dutch who carried on a flourishing trade in spices and the France who started the game of converting a peaceful commercial company into political body. However, these were all minor powers, and it is only with Britain that destiny pushed India to play the historic role.

<sup>43</sup> Promoting the idea of superior of modern Western civilization. That India had no unity full of chaos and barbarity until the British unified the country. That British rule would show the path of progress to a higher level.

Orme, and Ramsay Muir etc.<sup>44</sup> It was James Mill who wrote the first important comprehensive history of India, published in 1817 entitled *The History of British India*,<sup>45</sup> a lengthy work divided into three major sections: Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization and the British period.<sup>46</sup>

According to James Mill,<sup>47</sup> the earlier Hindu and Muslim forms of government failed miserably, and hence in the scale of civilization they will not rise high. Indian civilization was said to lack the qualities that Europe admired. For instance, the perceived emphasis on the values of rational thought and individualism was said to be absent, and India's culture was seen as stagnant. For Mill the principal value of a culture was the degree to which it contributed to the furtherance of rationalism and individualism. He saw neither these two values in previous civilization and therefore condemned it severely. Furthermore, Indian civilization showed no great concern for political values, for the Indian people had been ruled by a series of despotic and tyrannical rulers until the coming of the British. Mill was a firm believer in the Utilitarian principle that legislation can improve society. In the Indian context this belief implied that British administrator in applying legislation could change India from a traditional, unchanging society to a progressive and dynamic society, tradition, and progress being defined in Unitarian terms.<sup>48</sup> As for actual governing, the underlying assumption was that British administration was superior and a centralized bureaucracy was the best form of administration. His suggestions suited the aims and needs of imperial requirements. Mill's views were echoed in aspects of colonial policy, increasingly concerned with the conquest of the subcontinent and the restructuring of its economy to suit colonial requirements. Therefore, his book *The*

---

<sup>44</sup> Manorama Sharma, *History and History Writing in North East India*, (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2006) 61

<sup>45</sup> The first three volumes included a survey of ancient and medieval India, while the last three volumes were specifically about British rule in India.

<sup>46</sup> In the conventional textbooks of Indian history, the first cycle is called the Hindu, the second cycle is called the Muhammadan, and the third cycle is called the British period. In the criterion of cultural character, the first cycle is called Hindu, the second Islamic, and the third Europeans. By the ethnic test, the first is Indo-Aryan, the second Indo-Turkish, and the third European. Linguistically, in the first cycle India used Sanskrit with the Prakrits, in the second Persian with the new Indian vernaculars, and in the third English with the modern Indian languages.

<sup>47</sup> James .Mill, *The History of British India*, Vol. I, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1968 reprint) 33 ff

<sup>48</sup> Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2010) 4

*History of British India* became a textbook on India at the Hailey bury College, where the British officers of the Indian Civil Service were trained.<sup>49</sup> Those who came to administer India assumed the essential viability of the theory, and some among them were also the pre-eminent historians of the period writing on India. However, James Mills' presentation of the earlier regimes created confusion in the mind of the intellectuals. A.C. Sinha remark: "The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 appeared to be a turning point in the Indian administrative history in more than one way. By then, travelers, adventures, missionaries, explorers and administrators had joined the ethnographers on reporting on queer, exotic, barbarian and savage tribes spreads across the globe within the British Empire. Ethnographic investigation proved to be a boon to the colonial administrators for collecting data on life and lore of the colonized peoples so that they could rule them effectively."<sup>50</sup> One of James Mills' major historical problems was that he (writer) had never been to India. He depended on traveler's report and hence his verdicts on the ancient and medieval periods suffer seriously from tendentious motives resulting in a sweeping condemnation of the entire earlier period. Likewise, most of the writers confined mostly to the British period, British activities, and were written from British perspective. Meant mainly for readers in England, the works invariably contained the trilling story of the British conquest of India. The tone and utilitarian aspects of the colonial literature did not appeal many of the colonized people. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar who is sometimes called "the dean of Indian historians" for his colossal contribution to the study of Indian history commented:

*"The fertile plains of India, with easy means of irrigation, made it one of the richest agricultural countries in the world. Metallic ores, deposited in the soil, and huge timber forests stimulated industry and manufacture. Large navigable rivers and extensive sea-coasts, studded with good anchorages, developed inland and foreign trade and carried Indian products all over the civilized world. To crown all, gold, jewels, pearls, and various precious stones are found in abundance in the soil. All these*

---

<sup>49</sup> Romila Thapar, *Interpreting Early India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6

<sup>50</sup> A.C. Sinha, "Culture Change among the Tribes of Northeast India: Some Conceptual and Methodological Issues" in *Christianity and Changes in Northeast India* edited by T. B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal and Shai Joseph Puykunnel, (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2009), 20

*factors made India the richest country in the world. The wealth of India became proverbial and tempted greedy invaders from beyond the mountain passes..... The wild and sublime beauty of nature, in which India is peculiarly rich, gave a philosophic and poetic turn to the Indian mind, and remarkable progress was made in religion, philosophy, art and literature”.*<sup>51</sup>

Just as the Indian national movement developed to oppose colonialism, so did nationalist historiography develop as a response to and in confrontation with colonial historiography and as an effort to built national self-respect in the face of colonial denigration of Indian people and their historical record. Both sides appealed to history in their every day speech and writing. The colonial explanation of the Indian past was not always acceptable to Indian historians. Nationalist historians tended to endorse the more favorable views from colonial readings of the early past, but criticized the unfavorable. There was the extremist school of Rajanarian Bose, Chandranath Basu, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, A. C. Das, B. G. Tilak and others who asserted the superiority of Hindus over Western culture. Secondly, there was the rationalist school of R. C. Dutt, R. G. Bhandarkar, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri and others who were not intoxicated by the national sentiments, but viewed events more objectively in order to rectify the errors committed by Europeans in respect of Indian history. The third school represented by D. Basu, A. C. Majumdar, S. Banerjee and others exposed the economic exploitation of India by the British. The fourth school consisted of such historians as Hiren Mukherjee, R. P. Dutt, Kosambi and others who were greatly impressed by Marxian thought and who attempted to explain problems of Indian problem from this standpoint. This school extended its influence to include scholars of the order of Professor Muhammad Habib, Professor Romilla Thapar, Dr. Bipin Chandra, Professor Irfan Habib and others. In fact, Subaltern school started with a criticism of the historiography of Indian nationalism, which has for a long time been

---

<sup>51</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *Ancient India*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2013), 5-6

dominated by elitism-colonialist<sup>52</sup> elitism and bourgeois- nationalist<sup>53</sup> elitism.<sup>54</sup> The argument is that the contribution of the common people were completely ignored.

### 1.2.2. Colonial Mission Historiography

One cannot deny the fact that the mission history records the interests of the missionaries, their values and priorities. The history of Christianity in India was first written by western writers with common colonial characteristics and features where they recorded only the successful stories of the missionaries whereas the native contributions were ignored. There is no appreciation for local culture, tradition and customs etc. D. N. Jha in his book *Ancient India: An Introduction Outline* is critical of the mission activities when he said:

*“The Christian missionaries had little sympathy for Hinduism which, in their view was at best the work of human folly and at worst the outcome of diabolic inspiration. The people of India, according to Charles Grant, lived in a degenerate condition because of Hinduism which was the source of such evils as dishonesty, perjury, selfishness, social divisions, the low positions of women, sexual vice, etc. He saw their salvation through conversion to Christianity. Though not a missionary himself, Grant was an important personage in the missionary circle, and exercised a lasting and strong influence on the nineteenth-century missionary thinking and writing on India.”*<sup>55</sup>

There is significant History of Christianity in India written by western writers such as James Hugh,<sup>56</sup> John Kaye,<sup>57</sup> M. A. Sherring,<sup>58</sup> Julius Richter,<sup>59</sup> and Victor H.

---

<sup>52</sup> Achievements were credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture.

<sup>53</sup> Achievements were credited to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas.

<sup>54</sup> Ranajit Guha, “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India”, in *Subaltern Studies 1: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1

<sup>55</sup> D. N. Jha, *Ancient India: An Introduction Outline*, xiv

<sup>56</sup> *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1839)

<sup>57</sup> *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative* (London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1859)

<sup>58</sup> *The History of Protestant Missions in India from the Commencement in 1706 to 1871* (London: Trubner and Co. 1875)

<sup>59</sup> *A History of Missions in India*, translated by Sydney H. Moore (London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1908)

Sword.<sup>60</sup> Most of these writers failed to touch upon the weaknesses of the colonial powers. Their writings are seen not only as an Eastward extension of Western ecclesiastical history but as a self-contained unit with an exclusive history of the Western colonial power. Therefore, A. M. Mundadan, one of the distinguished Indian Church historians commented:

*“The histories written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were generally by western authors and they were histories of the missions and missionaries from the west and not of the Indian Church but western attempts to create one. India was the stage on which the great missionary drama was acted out or a kind of laboratory, in which a variety of missionary methods were tested. The people of India had no history of their own in these accounts; they were not actors but were simply acted upon”*.<sup>61</sup>

Merithung Tungoe holds a similar view on mission history that most of the writings on History of Christianity in India were not written from the perspective of or for the enlightenment of the Indian Church, but for the supporter of missionary work in India living in the west.<sup>62</sup> Jacob S. Dharmaraj argued that “the mission historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century devalued the social, religious, and cultural values of the colonized East, and wrote history from European imperialistic, colonial, and political perspective”.<sup>63</sup> Frederick Downs, a prominent western church historian who served in India for a long period of time in different capacities admits that the pre-independence writings were aimed at getting the support of their western sponsors for their activities in India.<sup>64</sup> It is true that the mission history of India during the 19<sup>th</sup> century seldom examine the missionaries’ problems of religious and cultural encounters in their work. V. V.

---

<sup>60</sup> *Baptists in Assam: A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936* (Chicago: Conference Press, 1935)

<sup>61</sup> A. Mathias Mundadan, *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy*, (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2003), 208

<sup>62</sup> Merithung Tungoe, *Administrators Missionaries and A World Turned Upside Down* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 5

<sup>63</sup> Jacob S. Dharmaraj, *Colonialism and Christian Mission: Postcolonial Reflections*, (Delhi: ISPCK, 1993), 2

<sup>64</sup> Frederick S. Downs, “Historiographical issues in the Study of Christianity in North East India” in *Essays on Christianity in North East India*, edited by Milton S. Sangma and David R. Syiemlieh, (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994) 13

Thomas, one of the leading Church historians in India observed several common colonial characteristics and features of the colonial mission historiography<sup>65</sup>:

- Majority of the writers were westerners
- Christianity in India is pictured as an extension of western Christianity
- Successful story of the missionaries and missions from the west
- Mostly male oriented historiography
- The native contributions were ignored
- There is no appreciation for local culture, tradition and customs etc.

### **1.3. Post Colonial Reading of History**

Post-colonialism designates the perspective of the colonial countries, especially the three southern continents- Asia, Africa and Latin America. Post colonialism has developed a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed. It means turning the world upside down and looking from the other side of the photograph, experiencing how differently things look.<sup>66</sup> With the late 1980s cultural critics such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha gave post colonialism its theorization and practice.<sup>67</sup> While each works form distinct site and each employs different philosophical categories, they have a common objective in their approach which is ‘to investigate and expose the link between knowledge and power’ in the literary works of the West. The major affirmations of post-colonial theory are-to reconstruct the colonial assumptions, representations and ideologies, to analyze sources and documents on colonies and colonial societies produced by the colonial discourses. Consequently, historiography in general has undergone great shifts. Such phrases as history from below, subaltern history, etc., are indicative of these shifts.

---

<sup>65</sup> V. V. Thomas, *Dalit and Tribal Christians of India: Issues and Challenges*, (Kerala: Focus India Trust, 2014), 60-61

<sup>66</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *Post-Colonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2

<sup>67</sup> R. S. Sugirthajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 4

### 1.3.1. CHAI Historiography

Cyril Bruce Firth's book entitled *An Introduction to Indian Church* is considered as the first general history of Christianity in India to be published in India. He sought to trace the outline of Indian Church History from the foundation down to the present times and was critical and just in treatment of his sources. Moreover, his viewpoints on the mission of the Church in India were much broader than that of his 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors, as it includes the Protestant as well as non-Protestant missions.<sup>68</sup> He maintained a well balance judgment as he attempted to include the overview mission history of India eg, South, North and North East mission stories.

Kaj Baago<sup>69</sup> enhanced the scope of history of Christianity in India. He remarked that "there is a great need for a completely new approach to Indian Church history.... to see the history of Christianity in the context of the political and social history of India as a whole.... the Indian Church has been presented as isolated phenomena of a special little world; but of course, in actual fact, they are closely linked up with the secular history".<sup>70</sup> In his historical writings, Kaj Baago focused on Indians and their efforts to build an Indian Church, and also on efforts to establish continuities between the Indian Christian community and Indian culture, philosophy and religion.<sup>71</sup> He insisted that the history of Christianity in India should be studied from a new perspective i.e., Indian perspective. He deserved appreciation for his fourth fold contributions: the development of post-graduate studies on Church History at United Theological College Bangalore, in making additional source materials available in archives abroad, in starting *The Indian Church History Review* in 1967 and for posing a serious challenge to the perspectives from which the history of Christianity had been written.<sup>72</sup> Edited book *Christianity in India: A History in Ecumenical Perspective*, by H. C. Perumalil and E.R. Hambye attempts to study the History of Christianity in India from a new perspective, where historians were drawn from various

---

<sup>68</sup> John B. Webster, "The History of Christianity in India: Aims and Methods" in *Indian Church History Review*, XIII, (December 1979), 106.

<sup>69</sup> Kaj Baago a missionary from Denmark joined the faculty of United Theological College, Bangalore in 1960.

<sup>70</sup> Editorial, *Indian Church History Review* 1/1 (1967): 1-2

<sup>71</sup> Merithung Tungoe, *Administrators Missionaries*, 25

<sup>72</sup> C. B. Webster, *History of Christianity in India: Aims and Methods*, 111-112

denominations of native people.<sup>73</sup> It was in this context that Church History Association of India (CHAI) historiography developed. CHAI appointed an editorial board in 1973 to write a new multi-volume comprehensive history of Christianity in India. As a result, a very significant document entitled *Guidelines for the six volume history of Christianity in India* was produced in 1974. The CHAI guidelines identify four ingredients in the perspective from which the CHAI History of Christianity is to be written. To write history of Christianity in the context of Indian history by focusing attention upon the socio-cultural history of the Christian people of India, by using a framework which is both national and ecumenical, and using the region as their basic working unit. According to S. Immanuel David, the credit for making History of Christianity in India a respectable undertaking goes to a growing group of historians including Geoffrey A. Oddie, Duncan Forrester, John Webster and others who explored into mission and church archives helped to inform all historical scholarship.<sup>74</sup> The Editorial Board of the Church History Association of India has already published Six Volumes of CHAI series. Many of the Indian Church historians are of the opinion that whatever has been published (CHAI Publications) so far maintains a wider and contextual perspective.

However, A.M Abraham was critical in a way in which the history of Christianity was written in regard to the struggles of the dalit Christians.<sup>75</sup> V. V. Thomas also takes a similar opinion with regard to historiography of Indian Church history where he states: “A socio-cultural perspective (CHAI) may not do justice to certain sections of the people, especially the oppressed masses, who struggle for meaning in their lives, and to see them the embodiment of truth. People’s root and historical consciousness are very important. A historiography for today should inform, equip, energize and empower people. It also means making meaning available to those who seek justice and truth”.<sup>76</sup> The historians or scholars should focus not only to the achievement of

---

<sup>73</sup> H. C. Perumalil and E. R. Hambye (ed), *Christianity in India: A History in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Alleppey: Prakasam Publications, 1972)

<sup>74</sup> S. Immanuel David, *History of Christianity in India: Changing Perspectives*, Indian Church History Review 30/1 (June, 1986), 9-10

<sup>75</sup> A. M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, “Dalits’ Challenges to Religious System: A People Ignored by Church History”, *Indian Church History Review* 23/2 (December, 1989); 131

<sup>76</sup> V. V. Thomas, *Dalit and Tribal Christians of India: Issues and Challenges*, (Kerala: Focus India Trust, 2014), 67

the missionaries and pioneer Christian leaders but also to the ignored sections particularly the dalits, tribals and women in writing history who really involved in the historical formation of Christianity in India.

### **1.3.2. Subaltern Historiography**

One of the characteristics of the modern period is the vigorous awakening among the subaltern sections in India. Inspired by creative leaders' conscious of their own experiences and above all of their power, the people are now seen to be asserting themselves as subjects and agents of their own deliverance. In the Church too, the subaltern perspective of mission is characterized by re-reading of the Church history and the missionary movement.

The term 'Subaltern' is derived from the writings of the Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist and Communist Party leader which means of 'class', to refer to the subordinate groups in the society.<sup>77</sup> It was initially applied to the serfs and peasants in England during the middle ages. Later, by 1700, it was used for the subordinate ranks in military. It however, gained wide currency in scholarly circles after the works of Antonio Gramsci. Ranajit Guha also takes a similar opinion and termed the word subaltern as people of inferior rank, and it was used as a name for general attitude of subordination in South Asian Society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way.<sup>78</sup> Specific groups belonging to the subaltern classes may vary from place to place due to the regional disparity in social and economic development in the country. However, subaltern classes usually refer to those social classes and groups not included under elite.

In the true sense, subaltern studies<sup>79</sup> started in India with a criticism of the historiography of Indian nationalism which has for a long time been dominated by

---

<sup>77</sup> E. Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography: 500 BC to AD 2000*, (Delhi: Orient: Black Swan, 2009), 493

<sup>78</sup> Ranajit Guha, "Preface", in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), vii.

<sup>79</sup> The *Subaltern Studies* is the title given to a series of volumes initially published under the founding editor of Ranajit Guha. The first six volumes are edited by Ranajit Guha, and the next five volumes are edited by other scholars associated with the project. Besides the articles published in the volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, these writes also contributed in other journals and edited volumes. The

elitism-colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism. Ranajit Guha asserts that in the colonialist and neo-colonialist historiographies, all achievement stories were credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture. In the same way, in the nationalist and neo-nationalist writings, all achievement stories were credited to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas.<sup>80</sup> Despite their differences, both (British colonial rulers and nationalist) shared certain things in common and the most important of these was the absence of the policies of the people from their accounts. This statement conveys that the struggle of the subaltern from their subjectivity and their contributions is totally neglected. Subaltern history is the history of the suffering, oppressed and marginalized people who were forced silence by the dominant elite group. Interestingly, historians have realized that history will be incomplete unless the common people are included in the framework of the history writings.

The methodology of the subaltern people is from below; the grass root. One of the central concerns of the subaltern historiography school is to give due recognition to the subaltern as a subject of history. It is to re-read and re-write the history from people's perspective by including and incorporating their contribution in the making of history. Within this framework some of the prominent emerging historiographies of the marginalized people in Indian context are discussed below viz; the Dalit Historiography, Feminist Historiography and Tribal Historiography.

### **1.3.2.1. Dalit Historiography**

Since after the attainment of Indian independence, the dalits began to raise their voice and started their movements for liberation and empowerment in India. It was in such a situation that the Churches realized the importance of participating in the struggle for liberation of all the oppressed groups within the country as well as the global oppressed communities.

---

historians associated with the *Subaltern Studies* declared that they would set the position right by writing the history from the point of view of the common people.

<sup>80</sup> Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1

According to M. E. Prabhakar, the dalits are excluded from the caste system and hence are out of castes, as untouchables they are pushed out for fear of pollution; made to live on outskirts of villages, hence segregated.<sup>81</sup> They have become a people without their own history,<sup>82</sup> without their cultural individuality, though they retain a certain amount of cultural distinctiveness.<sup>83</sup> Dalit history is a history of the subjugated and oppressed people.<sup>84</sup> Because of their struggles, the word ‘dalit’ has gained meaning, and it is used in a positive sense.<sup>85</sup> Since 1980’s the word or term ‘dalit’ has become common usage among the Indian Christians particularly those who belong to Christian fold from the outcaste or untouchable background. The Christian Dalits Liberation Movement (CDLM) with two main objectives to fight against the caste discrimination of Dalits in Churches and society was founded in 1984. Two movements such as CDLM and CISRS (Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society) organized a workshop on Dalit Theology at Guntur and an all-India consultation at Madras on theme “Towards a Dalit Theology” during 1986. Another significant step was taken up by the dalit groups of 25 delegates from different parts of India at a National Consultation from 16-19 June 1989 at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute organized by their Department of Dalit Theology with an aim and objective to search for a common dalit ideology to express the aspiration.<sup>86</sup> Ravi Tiwari, the former Registrar of the Senate of Serampore rightly remarked: “We are now becoming conscious of a paradigm shift that demands a fresh approach, looking at subject matters from the perspectives of the poor, subaltern and exploited group.”<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> M. E. Prabhakar, “The Search for a Dalit Theology”, in *Towards a Dalit Theology*, edited by M. E. Prabhakar (Delhi: CISRS/ISPCK, 1988), 40

<sup>82</sup> By losing their history, the dalits have lost their land, culture, language, religion, social and political rights.

<sup>83</sup> A. M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, “*Dalits’ Challenges to Religious Systems: A People Ignored by Church History*”, 116

<sup>84</sup> James Massey, “History and Dalit Theology” in *Frontiers of Theology*, edited by V. Devasahayam, Gurukul: ISPCK, 1997), 181

<sup>85</sup> James Massey, “Christian Dalits in India: An Analysis”, in *Religion and Science* 37/3 (September, 1990), 41

<sup>86</sup> Arvind P. Nirmal, “Seminar Statement” in *Towards a Common Dalit Ideology*, edited by Arvind P. Nirmal, (Madras: GLTCRC, 1989), 127-128

<sup>87</sup> Ravi Tiwari, “Inaugural Address” in *Dalit- Tribal Theological Interface: Current Trends in Subaltern Theologies*, edited by James Massey and Shimreingam Shimray, (Jorhat: TSC/WSC & New Delhi: CDS, 2007), 12

A number of dalit thinkers, activists and educators are undertaking constructive dalit studies with an aim at developing a common ideology from dalit perspective. Arvind .P. Nirmal, Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, M. E. Prabhakar, Devasahayam and particularly James Massey,<sup>88</sup> with vast experience in the field of dalit literature and movement identified certain methodological issues in reconstructing Dalit historiography<sup>89</sup>:

- The living experience of the dalit themselves would serve as one of the central tools for dalit scholars and historians to write history from dalit perspective.
- Social sciences like history, sociology and anthropology can be assisting tools for the new hermeneutics.
- Beliefs, values, customs, traditions and institutions of a particular society should be taken into account while reconstructing dalit historiography.
- Acceptance of diversity is central to solidarity. Dalits cannot continue to move with their struggles without unity. Therefore the community building agenda of dalits have to be stimulated for creating the new dialogical spaces between dalits and other subaltern groups.<sup>90</sup>
- Theological articulation has to be in the language of the very people in whom, with whom and for whom theological reflection is undertaken.
- The foundation of the dalit theology is the Bible. Dalit perception and interpretation of the Word of God is an essential requirement.

### **1.3.2.2. Feminist Historiography**

Feminist historians pointed out that, women are neglected in the writing of history although the effects of their lives and actions are a reality in history. The patriarchal domination was all pervasive that not only did men dominate social, political and economic life of the society, but the values also came to be male oriented values, and everyone in the society, including the women came to be socialized in these male

---

<sup>88</sup> Late Prof. Dr. James Massey humbly worked for the cause of the dalits in different capacities as a member of the National Commission for minorities, Government of India. He was the former General Secretary of All India inter-religious organization 'Dalit Solitary Peoples'. He was also the Director of Center for Dalit/Subaltern Studies (CDS). Authored and edited a number of books on dalit issues and published a number of papers in academic books and journals.

<sup>89</sup> James Massey, "Revisiting and Resignifying the Methodology of Dalit Theology" in *Revisiting and Resignifying Methodology for Dalit Theology*, edited by James Massey and Indukur John Mohan Razu, (New Delhi: CDS, Bangalore: UTC, 2008) 57-62

<sup>90</sup> James Massey, Samson Prabhakar, "Preface" in *Frontiers in Dalit Hermeneutics*, edited by James Massey and Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI & Delhi: CDSS, 2005), 1

values. Thus histories of societies came to be written from male perspective and the women were totally forgotten; their contribution was ignored. In the words of Gerda Lerner, “it omits the past of half of humankind, and it is distorted, in that it tells the story from the viewpoint of the male half of the humanity only”.<sup>91</sup> Until the recent past, the historians have been men and what they have recorded is what men have done and experienced and found significant. What women have done and experienced has been left unrecorded, neglected and ignored in interpretation. Historians have always used records left behind by formal institutions and organizations in the society, and since these institutions have been male dominated, the life of the women has obviously been wiped out of history. If history is the progress and advancement of civilization, then it is absolutely impossible that progress could have been achieved without the participation of the women who form about half the society. The feminist perspective represents a particular analysis centered on patriarchy as the central problem. Interest in women’s position in the past has grown as women’s liberation has grown, partly because the existence of a new feminist movement has stimulated enquiry among other historians.<sup>92</sup>

According to Romila Thapar, the feminist movements have proved important for the development of a women’s history “because these movements through a variety of protests, have sensitized, as it were, the role of women in society at various levels... and has illumined areas of human social relationship”.<sup>93</sup> The writing of woman back into history, therefore, cannot be separated from various strains of the Feminist Movements such as the Liberal Feminist strain,<sup>94</sup> the Traditional Marxist Feminist strain<sup>95</sup>, the Radical Feminist strain<sup>96</sup> and the Socialist Feminist strain.<sup>97</sup> Ivy Sign

---

<sup>91</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 4

<sup>92</sup> Shield Rowbotham, *Hidden From History* (New York, 1974), xiv

<sup>93</sup> Romila Thapar, “Looking Back in History” in *Indian Women*, edited by Devaki Jain, (New Delhi, 1975), 5

<sup>94</sup> That laws should not grant to women fewer rights than they allow men and liberal feminists have fought against laws which do this. The major emphasis is that equality of women before law, in educational and professional opportunities, change in marriage laws, property rights, inequitable divorce, equal pay for equal work, protection from rape, wife battering in the home and liberation from all dehumanizing forces.

<sup>95</sup> To examine the kind of labor women perform. Marxist feminism holds that freedom is not just the absence of discrimination against women but rather as freedom from coercion of economic necessity.

points out that feminism is an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation at work, within the family and society, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation and uplift the life of women.<sup>98</sup> Its primary commitment is women's liberation. In the Indian situation, the main feminist issues are poverty, illiteracy, bonded labor, dowry systems, caste discriminations and religious dominations etc. Writing of the Church history, Elizabeth Fiorenza argued that feminist historiography attempts to reconstruct early Christian history as women's stories in order to restore women's stories to early Christian history and to reclaim this history as the history of both man and woman. Further, she argues that as long as stories and histories of women in early Christianity are not theologically conceptualized as an integral part of the proclamation of the gospel, biblical texts and traditions formulated and codified by men will remain oppressive to women. There is thus the need for the development of feminist biblical hermeneutics.<sup>99</sup>

When we critically study the history of Christianity, both men and women actively involved in the making of the Christian history, however, until recently the writers of such history has been done by men culminating to gender paradigms.<sup>100</sup> Reputed Church historians like William R. Cannon,<sup>101</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette,<sup>102</sup> Williston Walker<sup>103</sup> and Justo L. Gonzalez<sup>104</sup> hardly mentioned except Gonzalez the role and contribution of Catherine of Sienna during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the Indian context the bias attitude in the writings of history appeared in the history of Christianity in India.

---

<sup>96</sup> Concern with providing feminist alternatives in literature, music, spirituality, health services and sexuality.

<sup>97</sup> The belief that older, established, political theories are not capable of giving an adequate account of women's oppression and in order to do so it is necessary to develop new political and economic categories.

<sup>98</sup> Ivy Singh, "Feminism: Various Approaches and its Values," in *Indian Journal of Theology* 37/1 (1995): 58

<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, (New York: Cross road, 1985), xiv

<sup>100</sup> Barbara J. Mac Haffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986),

<sup>101</sup> William R. Cannon, *History of Christianity in the Middle Ages: From the Fall of Constantinople*, (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960)

<sup>102</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The Thousand Year of Uncertainty*, Vol. 2, (New York & London: Harpers & Brothers, 1938)

<sup>103</sup> Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1959)

<sup>104</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1 (New York: Harpers San Francisco, 1984)

In other words, the women's contribution was not fairly treated in the early writings of the history of Christianity in India.<sup>105</sup> Surprisingly, even during the formation of the CHAI, all the Editorial Board members were men, which did not give much importance to the study of the role of women in the History of Christianity in India. In the words of Narola Imchen,<sup>106</sup> the subordinate place of women in the Church is justified mainly by three things: misinterpretation of the Scripture, traditional attitudes, cultural context and impact of an inferiority complex. Therefore, the task of the feminist historiography lies within the structure of re-reading, re-writing, reconstruction and re-interpretation in the context of their specific experiences and questions. It sets the mind to look for the role of women in history critically and helps to discover the place of women in history. Narrowing down to the North East tribal context, Manorama Sharma, a prominent secular historian from North East India in her book *History and History Writing in North East India* commented that:

*“Most of the writings which exist have seemed to totally ignore the fact that men and women must have made civilization together. The gender bias of the works that are making the rounds is thus very obvious. The historians of today will thus have to make a special effort to fill up not only this data gap but also bring about change in the entire perception of history so that women do not remain in the peripheries of history as also been but get integrated into the whole process of history so that a more total history of the socio-economic developments of the early societies of the North East can be written”.*<sup>107</sup>

A number of sources are available to write women back into history with the help of the works done by various scholars:

- E. H. Carr, an eminent historian who sees history as *“a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his fact, and an unending dialogue*

---

<sup>105</sup> The wives of the protestant missionaries felt the need to uplift Indian women from their degraded position to a place of honor and respect. It was the women missionaries who started a society for the Indian women. By almost 1854 there were 256 schools for girls in Madras, 288 in Bengal, 56 in Bombay and 17 in the North West frontier of India. The Zenana missions are missions by women missionaries to Indian women in their own homes. By 188's, the Zenana missions added medical work to its ministry and became Zenana Bible and medical mission.

<sup>106</sup> Narola Imchen, “Women's Issues in the Ministry” in *Women in Ministry: Practical Issues and Challenges*, edited by Narola Imchen, (Jorhat: Women Study Center, ETC 2012), 39-41

<sup>107</sup> Manorama Sharma, *History and History Writing in North East India*, 93

*between the present and the past*<sup>108</sup> can be one of the vital tools in reconstructing feminist historiography. He gives importance to interpretation of the facts and argues that the selected facts need to be interpreted to become history. Further, Carr is of the opinion that historian is influenced by the context. Therefore, he suggests that before studying history, one must study the historian, study the social and historical environment. Until recently, historians had always been men; so the dialogues in history have only been between men. If the historian is a woman, the *dialogues* would be different and certainly women's role would be given different. In the same manner, if the historian had been a woman, the *interpretation* would have been different. Therefore, there is a need to re-interpret history from a feminist perspective in order to restore women's stories. In other words, to reclaim this history as the history of both men and women. Moreover, in every historical writings, the *context* is to be taken seriously. All history is a product of a particular context. The historian is a product of a particular period and conveys the message of that period, not individual feelings. Historians are influenced by the context. It is therefore important to know the context in which a particular history was written. If it is done, women and their roles cannot be ruled out because they also like men are part of the context.

- In the words of Kitson Clark, "*No version of history ought to be believed without questions. No historian be trusted implicitly. If possible, learn something of historian's personality and preoccupations to Church bias. Work be considered critically in relation to evidence, if accepted should be tentatively not as definitive but as workable hypothesis, which may be modified or replaced by further work of scholarship and accumulation of new evidence.*"<sup>109</sup> It is important for feminist historians to ask or invent new questions to restore women their rightful place in history. Since the historian's purpose is to find out and explain what actually happened, his/her basic questions would be: (a). 'What were the role of women in the family and society?' (b). 'What were the roles played by the missionary women in India?'

---

<sup>108</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* 35

<sup>109</sup> G. Kitson Clark, *The Critical Historian* (New York: Basic Books Inc, 1967), 10

(c). ‘Why is only men’s history written?’ (d). ‘What was the context of history?’ (d). ‘What would have been the history if it was written by women?’ etc.

- Oral history could be an important means of discovering what woman thought and felt in the immediate past.<sup>110</sup> For instance, when a woman relates the kind of labor which her grandmother did it would be a very different version from what a man would say, because for a man the unpaid labor of the woman in the household was not sufficient enough to be considered as labor. When oral traditions like folklore are studied, they would become open to reinterpretations which would yield a lot of information on women in the early societies.
- Anthropological studies on the early societies which have been conducted from a woman’s perspective can provide a lot of information of women in history.
- There has also been the sophistication of methods to study hidden consciousness in the society through the examination of clues, symbols, etc which open up new ways of looking at woman in the past.

Methodological issues in the feminist historiography lies within the structure of re-reading, re-writing, deconstruction, retrieving, reconstruction, re-interpretation etc that has to be articulated in the context of their specific experiences and questions.

### **1.3.2.3. Tribal Historiography: A North East Perspective**

Writing of the theological formation in Northeastern India, O. L. Snaitang rightly states:

*“Christianity came to Northeast India from the West and native converts who were appointed as evangelists, teachers or pastors have carried on their work and preached the Gospel following the line and pattern of the missionaries and with convictions derived from Western theology. Tribal priests were trained in the region under Western type of teaching and pattern or were*

---

<sup>110</sup> Shield Rowbotham, *Hidden From History*, xxi

*trained in the West. Most theological schools and colleges like the Welsh Mission School of Theology, Cherrapunji known today as John Roberts Theological Seminary, Mawklot; Eastern Theological College, Jorhat; Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram; Sacred Heart Theological Seminary, Shillong and others were started by the missionaries. It was therefore, not surprising that the introduction of Western theology become conspicuous in these institutions.”<sup>111</sup>*

Christianization in the tribal areas was accompanied by radical social changes too. Missionaries introduced modern education and literature. Education and medicine ministries were part and parcel of mission and evangelism. Perhaps one of the greatest contributions than any other factor was the social reform. While acknowledging the rich contribution of the missionaries, it is also significant that the tribal scholars and theologians do not consider the missionary era as an unmixed blessing. The general approach of the missionary movement was to lead people to renounce their respective beliefs and customs and to become Christian. The approach of the missionaries was often perceived as being insensitive to the local cultures. The administrators as well as missionaries were of the strong belief that they knew others and they defined who others were.

Is it justifiable to project the tribal society particularly the context of Northeast India as uncivilized, savaged, and good for nothing? The indigenous communities do not have texts which they call their scripture and which gives testimony with regard to their God, and human beings and their relation to their God, and human beings among themselves. However, they do have their unique religious beliefs, ethical values, myths, legends, stories, proverbs that are handed down from generation to generation. Their worldview, views on God and human beings, their ethical codes and the values all derive from these. They have the civilization having all sorts of work culture. They have priests, teachers, religious leaders, and business people within the framework of their system. They have their own living system where they allowed themselves to be governed by their own primordial and customary traditional laws

---

<sup>111</sup> O. L. Snaitang, “Tribal Theology in Historical Perspectives” in *The Quest for Harmony: Christian and Tribal Perspectives*, edited by Alphonsus D’Souza, Yangkahao Vashum and Lalrindiki Ralte (Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Center, 2013) 77

and rituals, caring for each other and for the natural resources and forced to their own fate. Every system of values is naturally imperfect and needs to be further perfected, but the living ethos in the community, the cherished values, which were handed down from one generation to another, and which have sustained and supported to community down the centuries constitutes its strength. For example the Jews have survived conquest, exile and persecution, because they had absolute confidence in the beliefs and values they cherished, and developed a sense of uniqueness that have survived with them.

Nirmal Minz asserted that the tribal social and cultural values are ignored and pushed aside by the dominant society.<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately their beliefs and customs have been obliterated. They are culturally alienated, socially stigmatized, economically exploited, poor and politically powerless,<sup>113</sup> theologically unheard or voiceless and historically did not find much space of their contribution. It is culturally inadequate in view of the evident decline and increasing lack of appeal of western culture today on the one hand, and the resurgence of non-western cultures on the other. The argument is that the missionaries failed to imitate Jesus Christ. Become incarnate among the tribals so that the word of the missionaries becomes flesh of their flesh. Christ would have become the key to their interpretation and their new point of reference for understanding life.<sup>114</sup> Gospel does not destroy but fulfills it. The tribal studies are today contributing greatly to a rethinking on the history of Christian mission in the country.

The publication of *Towards Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspectives* in 1989 was the first publication of Tribal Theology in North East India.<sup>115</sup> The real development of Tribal theology in North East India in a systematic and coherent way was due to effort of Eastern Theological College, Jorhat under the leadership of late Prof. Renthly

---

<sup>112</sup> Nirmal Minz, "Mission in the Context of Diversity- Mission in Tribal Context" in *Religion and Society* 36/1 (March, 1989), 10

<sup>113</sup> K. Thanzauva, *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making*, (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997), 22-23

<sup>114</sup> Carlos Maesters, "Indian Myths and the Two Testaments" in *Sedos Bulletin* 24 (8) 1992, 228

<sup>115</sup> Vanlalchhunawma and Rosiamliana Tochwawng, "Identification of Commonalities and Divergences in doing Theology: Tribal Perspective" in *Dalit-Tribal Theological Interface: Current Trends in Subaltern Theologies*, edited by James Massey and Shimreingam Shimray (Jorhat: TSC/WSC & New Delhi: CDS, 2007), 227

Keitzar. The college (ETC) inaugurated a *Tribal Study Center* in 1995 with three major objectives: (a) To reflect theologically on the tribal people's experiences of struggles for the emancipation and a rapid social change, (b) To rediscover some of the traditional values for the interpretations as well as expression of Christian faith in tribal people's context, (3) To study and understand the phenomena and heritage of the tribal people's identity, religion, culture and society.<sup>116</sup> The *Journal of Tribal Theology* was started in 1996. Pioneers of Tribal Theology at the Center included late Prof. Renty Keitzar, Prof. A. Wati Longchar and Rev. Dr. K. Thanzauva. It was this trio who did substantial work for the development of Tribal Theology and makes it recognized in national and international theological discourses. Some of the colleges and centers worthy to be mentioned into the development of Tribal Theology in North East India are: Sacred Heart Theological, Shillong; Don Bosco Center for Indigenous Cultures, Meghalaya; North Eastern Social Research Center, Guwahati; and Clark Theological College, Nagaland.

F. S. Downs who worked among the tribals in North East India for several decades has published a number of articles and scholarly books mainly on Christianity in North East India. In one of his major works entitled '*History of Christianity in India, Vol. V, part 5: North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century's*',<sup>117</sup> he attempted to adopt the socio-cultural perspective as formulated by Church History Association of India (CHAI). O. L. Snaitang a prominent scholar in his book "*Christianity and Social Change in North East India*"<sup>118</sup> also takes a similar method where he attempts to interpret the history of the people from socio-cultural perspective. He takes a further step and argues on the recommended books of the Senate of Serampore for their exclusion of the North East Indian tribals.<sup>119</sup> O. M. Rao, who taught in North East India over four decades, also remarks the need 'to evolve a curriculum adaptable to North East India within the larger framework of the Senate

---

<sup>116</sup> Prospectus of Eastern Theological College, 2005, 10

<sup>117</sup> (Bangalore: CHAI, 2003)

<sup>118</sup> (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1993)

<sup>119</sup> O. L. Snaitang, "Theologizing in Khasi-Jaintia Context", in *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, edited by J. Puthenpurakal, (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publication, 1996), 128

curriculum'.<sup>120</sup> *'Christianity and Change in Northeast India'* a collection of scholarly articles edited by T. B. Subba, Joseph P and Shaji J. P was published in 2009. The contributors mainly dealt on positive impact of Christian mission in North East India. However, the critical studies on tribal values were not done. In short, the traditional values were not mention in their writings. Moreover, most of them didn't acknowledge the contribution of the native evangelists who played a very important role to take the gospel to their own people. The historians and scholars need to include the rich traditional values of the people and the activities of the indigenous people in the framework of history.

A prominent secular historian Manorama Sharma<sup>121</sup> was critical of the outsider's works on North East India. Pioneer tribal scholars such as late Renty Keitzar,<sup>122</sup> K. Thanzauva<sup>123</sup> and Wati Longchar<sup>124</sup> were more critical in their approach in evaluating the mission activities in North East India where they speak of the positive contributions of Christian Missions and well as its negative aspects. Though they are grateful to the missionaries for what they have done, they argued that the type of Christianity introduced in the North East India is responsible for the erosion of the tribal culture. They have done some commendable works on North East people from the tribal perspective and suggested certain tools to reconstruct tribal methodology:

- The tribal experience of oppression and hardships become a vital resource for their own history and methodology. To take the side of the oppressed, to liberate and redeem them.
- The tribal festivals, rituals, customs, folksongs, folktales, dances, spirituality and traditional values need to be taken into account while reconstructing tribal historiography from tribal Christian perspective.

---

<sup>120</sup> O. M. Roa, *The Call to Ministry and Theological Training in India*, (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 76

<sup>121</sup> She has been teaching Modern Indian History since 1973 in Dibrugarb University, Guwahati University and North Eastern Hill Universe. She is a member of various academic bodies/associations/organizations and also of administrative bodies and also headed the department of History in NEHU for a term. Has published a large number of articles in various journals on issues of historical interest and in recent years on gender history.

<sup>122</sup> Renty Keitzar, *In Search of Relevant Gospel Message*, (Guwahati: CLC, 1995)

<sup>123</sup> K. Thanzauva, *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making*, (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997)

<sup>124</sup> Wati Longchar, *An Emerging Asian Theology- Tribal Theology: Issues, Nature and Methods* (Jorhat: TSC, 2000)

- There are people with whom several good memories are stored, and such people should be interviewed where their knowledge can become important sources.
- Rereading and redefining the historical text is another essential component to be incorporated in reconstructing the tribal historiography.
- The significant component of a postcolonial-indigenous theology methodology to reclaim the past stories and traditions is crucial in reconstructing tribal historiography. A willingness to accept and integrate all the positive elements of tribal cultures into Christian theology and belief system. This is an attempt to integrate Christianity and tribal values so that genuine Christianity expressed in congenial cultural symbols and expression will be evolved.
- The issue of land and space is the central point of tribal theology.<sup>125</sup> There is an urgent need for an eco-theology to reinstate the importance of nature and to restore the elemental relationship that used to exist between nature and men.
- To reconstruct a tribal theology, one should be able to distinguish between good and bad cultural elements. One should be careful to guard against the dangerous tendency to assimilate unacceptable elements into the Christian faith because such interference may distort the gospel truth. The teachings of scripture cannot be compromise. The gospel must be rooted in the culture of any given community so that faith expression in the risen Lord will become more meaningful to everyone. The Christian faith stands or falls on the Word becoming flesh, and on God becoming a human person. In any human struggles Bible is the source and Christ is the answer. Therefore, the very center of the tribal theology should be a reflection where biblical proclamation of Christ stands. The argument is to rediscover traditional values and cultures through a threefold process of rejection, adoption and transformation.

---

<sup>125</sup> One reason why land is sacred for indigenous people is that it is the dwelling place of the spirits; the ancestors have lived and work in the same land and they take their final rest where their bones become the land. Moreover, the indigenous people treated land with respect and reverence because their basic necessities like food, shelter, fuel, clothing materials, timber, medicines, and materials for all the traditional industries etc are from nature.

Tribal scholars and thinkers in this context are to rewrite their history from below to restore tribal identity. Their questions can be answered only when they re-read and re-write their past history from people's perspective because the history has gone unrecorded. It is not mean to return to the past. That simply is not possible and at the same time undesirable. No culture in the world is static. There are many things that must be discarded but all traditions or old ways of the tribals' life are not appalling. At this context the scholars must start recording the peoples' stories and experiences before they are totally annihilated. Remembering the past glories such as the beautiful folktales, memories and experiences, songs and dances, integrity and ethical living, community spirit, justice and equality, and struggle for liberation etc are essential tools in developing tribal historiography. The vision and worldview of Jesus Christ in His praxis is one of helping to reconstruct the suppressed identities of people such as Samaritans, lepers, and the poor etc who were relegated in the society. In the same manner, Paul and his companions battled for space for the Gentiles within the early Christianity and upheld their identity.

### **1.3.2.3.1. Reconstructing Tribal Historiography: A Zeliangrong Perspective**

#### **1.3.2.3.1.1. Outsider's Perspective**

Nirad C. Chaudhuri in his book *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* critically analyzed the attitude of the Europeans to Indians who said to lack the qualities that Europe admired. He said:

*“After the publication of the English translation of the Gitanjali there was a proposal to confer a degree of doctorate of Oxford on Tagore. Upon this Lord Curzon as Chancellor sought information from Sir Denison Ross, the Orientalist, whether Tagore was up to the mark, and with a disarmingly naïve expression of John Bull's disbelief in the merits of foreigners completely the query by throwing out a hint himself that Tagore was not. Today Indians of far lesser caliber are being advertised by a class of fawning Englishmen as some of the greatest men of the modern world”.*<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>126</sup> Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Autobiography of An Unknown Indian*, (Delhi: Jaico Publishing House, 2003), 604

Similar to administrators, the missionaries came to India with a pre-determined idea of *the* darkness of the Indian world which prevented them from seeing good in Indian society. It was in such a context that the Indian social, religious and cultural virtues of the people were devalued and the history was written from colonial perspective.<sup>127</sup> It is right to say that the predominant nineteenth century view of non-Christian religions and non-western cultures amongst western Christians is one of rejection. David J. Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* argued that one of the results of the Enlightenment paradigm on mission thinking was that the belief in the superiority of the Christian faith lead also to beliefs of cultural superiority.<sup>128</sup> The idea of superiority was implied in all aspects of life including political, social, cultural and religious. Most of the western writers came to the tribal land with a superior attitude. Their writings do not reinforce the tribal values, actions, customs, culture and identity. They completely ignored the existence of the tribals and considered tribal people as good for nothing.<sup>129</sup>

From outsiders'<sup>130</sup> reading, one of the supposed characteristics of the tribal people was that 'the tribals could not use their minds or intellects', 'the tribals could not invent things', the tribals could not create institutions or history, 'the tribals could not imagine'. In short, the tribals could not and cannot produce anything of value. Tribals have often been equated with being backward, primitive and irrational. For these reasons, local cultures and their wisdom has been systematically suppressed and marginalized.<sup>131</sup> Mary Mead Clark in her book *A Corner in India* used the term "savage tribes," "wilds of barbarism," "savage hill," etc, while referring to the Nagas.<sup>132</sup> Anything that does not conform to the western way of life was considered heathen, old cruel faith and as old time superstitions.<sup>133</sup> Describing the difficulties

---

<sup>127</sup> T. V. Philip, "Christianity in India during Western Colonialism: Conflict, Reconciliation and Adjustment," *Indian Church Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, 1987, 15, 20

<sup>128</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991) 365-366

<sup>129</sup> L. Imsutoshi Jamir, "Developing Tribal Face in Tribal Cultural Studies: Few Footnotes," *The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia*, vol. 6, 2007, 33-34

<sup>130</sup> 'Outsiders' includes all the researchers involved in the tribal cultural and related studies from outside of tribal communities.

<sup>131</sup> L. Imsutoshi Jamir, "Developing Tribal Face in Tribal Cultural Studies: Few Footnotes," in *The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia*, Vol. VI, 2007, 27

<sup>132</sup> Mary Maid Clark, *A Corner in India*, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 2-3, 15

<sup>133</sup> Mary Maid Clark, *A Corner in India*, 17, 61

what the missionaries faced in the Naga Hills while making the beginning of education, S. W. Rivenburg, a prominent American Baptist missionary who worked at Kohima Mission Field from 1887 to 1923 writes: “These savage (Nagas) naturally do not appreciate the value of schools, and hence one difficult is to overcome in making school work success among them”.<sup>134</sup> S.A Perrine another American Baptist missionary who worked among the Nagas from 1892 to 1905 wrote: “Here (at Impur) we are on the edge of the world, surrounded as we are by dark and dense heathenism”.<sup>135</sup>

The writings of the administrators and missionaries can be very good sources of information but it cannot be accepted uncritically by a historian. The Zeliangrongs have been called in different names by outsiders, which complicate the Zeliangrong identity. For instance some early British writers such as W. McCulloh,<sup>136</sup> R. Brown,<sup>137</sup> C. A. Soppit,<sup>138</sup> James Johnstone,<sup>139</sup> J.H. Hutton,<sup>140</sup> and Robert Reid<sup>141</sup> etc used the term “*Koupooes/Koupui//Kowpoi*” to mean the Zeme, Rongmei and Inpui; “*Quoireng*” to mean Liangmai. Latter, the terms “*Kacha Naga*” have been used to refer to Zeme and Liangmai, and “*Kabui*” to refer to Rongmei and Inpui/Puimei. Whatever sample history and literature produced by the outsiders sometimes creates confusion and controversy on matters of nomenclatures, and also on matters of age old oral history, traditions, concepts, interpretations and values of the tribe. Certain changes have taken place today. However, the issue of tribe recognition as “Zeliangrong” tribe still remains unresolved. The central as well as state governments (Manipur and Nagaland) refused to recognize the nomenclature “Zeliangrong tribe” despite several memoranda submitted. This social stigma has to be removed by

---

<sup>134</sup> 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report, July 1887, Baptist Mission Movement (BMM), American Baptist Missionary Union, Boston, July, 1887, 257-58

<sup>135</sup> Quoted by Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Mission in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspectives* (Calcutta: KLM Private Limited, 1984), 153

<sup>136</sup> W. McCulloh, *Valley of Manipur* (1859) (Delhi: Giant Publications, 1980) 41-55

<sup>137</sup> R. Brown, *Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur and the Hills Territory under its Rule* (1874) (Delhi: KM Mittal Sanskaran Prakashak, 1975) 22-31

<sup>138</sup> C. A. Soppit, *A Short Account of the Kachcha Naga Tribe in the North Cachar Hills, 1885*

<sup>139</sup> James Johnstone, *My Experiences in Manipur and the Naga Hills* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1896) 17 & 27

<sup>140</sup> J. H. Hutton, *Angami Nagas*, (London: Macmillan and Co; Ltd, 1921) 351-52

<sup>141</sup> Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam: From 1883-1941* (Delhi: Eastern Publishing House, 1983) 167-75

instilling positive assertions and restoring the indigenous values and ethos of the people. This calls for an urgent rewriting and detribalizing the history of the Zeliangrongs from people's/native perspective in order to deconstruct the colonial understanding and interpretations. Zeliangrong people have to strive hard to get rid of the imposed (wrong) nomenclatures and seize one's own name and identity. In the words of Sebastian Karotemprel, identity is a quest for dignity and identity as human beings are created in the image of God.<sup>142</sup>

A proper investigation need to be followed in writing the history of the people. F.S Downs in his book *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of CBCNEI* recorded that Keneise and Nsarangbe were the first Christians from Benreu village;<sup>143</sup> the first village to received Christianity among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland. However, it contradicts to the original source of *Benreu Baptist Church Centenary (1997) Souvenir* where the original people claimed Heizieluing as the first convert.<sup>144</sup> Without any confusion it is a fact that Benreus were the first people among the Zeliangrongs to have accepted Christianity in the person of Heizieluing: the landmark Christian historical event on Zeliangrong soil in Nagaland. No Zeliangrong Church history can leave this event unnamed: the humble beginning of the Zeliangrong Church.

According to K. A. Nizami, colonial method of writing history is a twisted one. She is of the opinion that it was written to suit the colonial interest.<sup>145</sup> History is often tailored to suit the tastes and conveniences of the dominating class.<sup>146</sup> Once they asserted their domination, they sought to enforce their particular culture as the culture of the people. Most of the time the efforts of the ruling class to make their culture as the culture of the people became successful, and also the history of the rulers came generally accepted as the history of the whole people. It is an open secret that they projected the people's past as though it was totally dark and not worthy to be holding

---

<sup>142</sup> Sebastian Karotemprel, "Reflections on Identity, Culture, Cultural Change and Christianity" in *Christianity and Change in Northeast India*, edited by T. B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal and Shaji Joseph Puykunnel (New Delhi: Concept, 2009), 46

<sup>143</sup> F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of CBCNEI*, (Guwahati: CLC) 146

<sup>144</sup> *Benreu Baptist Church Centenary (1997) Souvenir*, 19-25

<sup>145</sup> K. A. Nizami, "Bias in Indian Historiography" *Manthan*, 2 (No. 1, 1979) 5

<sup>146</sup> V. V. Thomas, *Understanding Subaltern History: Theoretical Tools*, (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2006), 34

on to. They wrote 'history' from their perspective. The marginalized and the weaker sections were not given their proper place in the writings of those so-called "historians". It is a known fact that in the development of history, the views of the people were not taken seriously nor were they given their proper place in developing the conversion history. People's contribution are not given due credit. They always felt that they have got everything to give and do not have to learn from the people. This is the reason people are now demanding a thorough reevaluation of what has been written or held during the colonial period.

#### **1.3.2.3.1.2. Insiders' Perspective**

History generally has been written or recorded around the events of the outsiders, neglecting the role of the indigenous people in making the history. Very few have done studies from the perspective of the people, for people and by the people- the Zeliangrongs themselves. It resulted from the syndrome of thinking that what others write (have written) is better or has to be better. The feeling of inferiority and low esteem has been deeply ingrained in the minds of the people for so long. Unless this stops, the people are always going to continue being psychologically colonized. Therefore, the study needs to apply the insiders'<sup>147</sup> methodology in addressing issues that concern their own people. Subaltern method of re-reading the text/history can be one of the important tools in tribal studies.<sup>148</sup> Subaltern history is the history of a suffering, oppressed and the marginalized people who were forced silence by the dominant elite group. Several volumes of Subaltern Studies have been published by Ranajit Guha and a team of historians. Guha propounded the contribution of the Subaltern groups to Indian Nationalism which had been overlooked by the so called elite historians with 16 points referring to bourgeoisie nationalistic, colonialist, elite and subaltern tendencies in the writing of Indian History.<sup>149</sup> One of the central concerns of the Subaltern school of history is to give due recognition to the Subaltern

---

<sup>147</sup> The 'insiders' refers to the researchers who themselves are from the tribal communities of the region.

<sup>148</sup> George Oommen, "A Commentary on Subaltern Studies Collective: Methodological Implications for Theological research" in *Interweaving Methodology and Praxis- Exploring Disciplinary Options in Today's World*, Edited by Indukuri John Mohan Raju, (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2007), 137

<sup>149</sup> Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982). 1-7

as a subject of history and one of the components of Subaltern methodology is reading and redefining the historical texts. Thus Subaltern perspective can be a critical tool in writing the history of the Zeliangrongs from a new perspective. In order to give subjectivity to the Zeliangrongs, one must re-read the text and reconstruct history from the perspective of the Zeliangrongs. In reading the text one should unearth the power structure dominating the discourse and must find out the consciousness of the subaltern reflected in the discourse. In the sense, to redefine the text from the Zeliangrong perspective is to use the elements like the customs, cultures, festivals and traditional values.

When people become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. The critical issue with the insider research is the constant need for reflexivity. At the general level, insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationship and the quality and richness of their data and analysis. The insider has to live with even more with the consequences of their process on a day to day basis, and so do their families and communities; consequences of the communities' joys and sorrows. Here, people do not simply become objects, but subjects themselves which begins with faith in the people and their capacity to take their own decisions. It becomes clear that people are capable of contributing ideas, information, insights, analysis and above all provide the context for enquiry.

In the words of Emmanuel David, the history of the present generation can be characterized as history 'from below'. One of the interesting features of this development is that it gives priority to the community and people. The need was felt to shift the focus from administration to the common people.<sup>150</sup> It must be said here that to develop a Zeliangrong perspective, an important point must be to look for the local people who played important roles in the whole process of change and transformation. To identify and collect the tribal sources will not be easy task. However, such sources will be found only when one intentionally begins to seek. Sources are hidden in the form of folktales, sayings, folk songs, traditions and traditional values. The challenge before the present day scholars is to take the people

---

<sup>150</sup> Emmanuel David, "*History of Christianity in India: Changing Perspective*", ICHR, 30 (No. 1, 1986),5

along with them and make them the subjects of their research and not merely objects. This will make the people heard and would provide an opportunity to voice their opinion and feelings.

According to F. S. Downs, one tremendous valuable source that is fast disappearing among the tribals in North East is the oral history. Once the tribals become convinced of the importance of finding their source, much more will be found than the realize exists.<sup>151</sup> Outsiders' sources can be used as well, but they have to be used with care. Such sources when critically reviewed from the native's eye can help to identify how it contributed to the general impressions and the milieu of ideas that have informed western knowledge and constructions of the tribals. It is here a re-reading of the so called history of the past becomes inevitable. Ways of knowing history came under close inspection especially the literary sources on which the historians relied. In that process, culture became one of the focal points from which historians began to view historical happenings and the meaning systems that represented the actions and the beliefs of the people. So the post colonial writings broke new grounds in reading or re-reading the colonial text, produced and committed to a colonial mindset, and who perceived reality within the environment of colonialism, whether they were insiders or outsiders.<sup>152</sup> By rewriting the history of the indigenous people, it will be possible to bring back their glorious past into the present so that the future of the world may be free of the utterly hopeless hegemonic order that is gripping the world today. Something positive that can be seen today is the discovery that the insiders who are the real experts of their own culture. It doesn't mean that people are ungrateful for the outsider's writings. Of course, they have contributed much but people cannot continue to be defined by outsider's way of thinking and writing. The local people can question what have been written about them wherever it is inaccurate. Today, people can start writing their own history and be proud and grateful for what they have inherited from their forefathers (fore- parents).

---

<sup>151</sup> Fredrick S. Downs, *Essays on Christianity in North East India*, (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994), 26

<sup>152</sup> George Oommen, "A Commentary on Subaltern Studies Collective: Methodological Implications for Theological Research" in *Interweaving Methodological and Praxis- Exploring Disciplinary Options in Today's World*, Edited by Indukuri John Mohan Razu, (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2007) 137-138

The early writers have not given sufficient attention to the Zeliangrong tribal values in writing their history. Moreover, the involvement of the local people in the process of change and transformation were not given due credit. Therefore, the researcher attempts to reconstruct Zeliangrong historiography from insider's perspective utilizing the vital people's resources:

- **To Acknowledge the Role of the Native People**

The Christian mission among the Zeliangrongs was more or less an indigenous effort. In spite of all the hard works and sacrifices, the contribution of the indigenous people is not given due recognition which need to be taken into account in writing the history of the Christianity among the Zeliangrongs. The evangelistic zeal of the early Zeliangrong evangelists such as Late Rev. Keniese, Late Rev. H.K. Lungalang, Late Mr. Irangchangbe, Late Rev. Lungzie, Late Mr. Iloiheing,<sup>153</sup> Late Mr. Wisung, Late Mr. Hugangbo, Late Rev. Turi, and Late Mr. Gadaubo<sup>154</sup> played a major in the growth of the Zeliangrong Church. In spite of the oppositions, threats, problems of transportation, food provisions and many others, the early evangelists courageously face the persecutions and problems to win their opponents to Christ.<sup>155</sup> Some of the Zeliangrong villages strongly opposed the new religion (Christianity) and were driven from their villages. The early evangelists were aware of the danger to tour around the non-Christian villages yet their devotion and dedication to the Lord's command led them to work among the people and as a result converted many to new religion (Christianity) and established Churches. Nothing has contributed more to the growth of the Baptist movement in the Zeliangrong area than the services rendered by the Zeliangrongs themselves. Moreover, Gaikhuang Gangmei, Namthiurei, K.G.

---

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Rev. Deuhing Nsarangbe on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015. He is one of the prominent church leaders among the Zemes in Nagaland

<sup>154</sup> Telephone interview with Rev. Kamwang Rentta of Ntu village on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014. He is the former executive secretary of Liangmai Baptist Association, Nagaland.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Hugambo Chawang of Ntu Village on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2013. He is the former pastor of Liangmai Baptist Church, Samziuram village

Simon, N.K. Shing, Heutui, Keneise Meru and Kuame were some of the pioneers who translated the Bible into Zeme-Liangmai-Rongmei dialects.<sup>156</sup>

- **Folksongs as one of the Tools in Reconstructing Zeliangrong Historiography**

The rich oral history which is handed down from generation to generation through folksongs can be incorporated in reconstructing the Zeliangrong historiography. Zeliangrong people had their own ways of recording and narrating their history. Much of their stories have been transmitted from generation to generation through folk songs, folk tales and oral historical traditions etc. Their wisdom has a valuable character.<sup>157</sup> The folk songs reveal the historical background of the tribe, the community, the village, the clan or well known individuals of the community. The Zeliangrong people have varied songs which is connected with legends and mythologies and dances connected with traditional and cultural ceremonies. In the absence of written culture, their history, biography, love stories, victories in wars, ways of life and life achievements are preserved in their songs. The Zeliangrong people communicate and preserve their heritage through songs sung at work's place, in festivals and at leisure time. Songs are very poetic, repeat the verses/lines, and have a very deep meaning. The meaning of the song is difficult to understand, unless explained by the composer. One of the beautiful traditional songs goes as under<sup>158</sup>:

Liangmai	English
Hei sanglam lung karun mai	Oh! Brethren who resides abroad
Akin agu loud a nakin suang wi	We have better abode and realm than

<sup>156</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House) 105-107

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Dr. Elungkiebe Zeliang on 19th December 2013. He teaches History of Christianity at ETC, Jorhat.

<sup>158</sup> The above traditional song is collected from Lungphu Nring of Nchangram village, Nagaland in July 2015. He is popular for having known a number of traditional songs.

Kasangram lung apuipu ram ga	others
Aram malan wang lung rau meki	Entreat and recall back to our native
Khau lam suang lui ye.....	Fairer than other land/place.....

*[The above traditional Liangmai song indicates the love of their people and native land with varieties of good values; inviting people to live together where all members can participate and live in joy and security. The song also indicates that the land is fertile with forest and water provided enough sustenance to the people. In short the land is blessed with rich natural resources].*

Astonished by the beautiful Naga songs, M. Horam, a prominent Naga scholar commented: “Naga songs are events usually topical, for they speak of events, sad events, joyous events, memorable events are all translated into and preserved in songs”.<sup>159</sup> Folk song is also called the music of the heart because it communicates especially about the people, life, inner feelings and experiences, and about various events in the society. On all occasions, such as feast, festivals, ceremonies, and change of seasons are always accompanied by singing. Songs are very poetic and have a very deep meaning. The songs were composed in a particular context with a definite purpose and meaning, which were intended to communicate to the people. Folk songs and ritual hymns are mostly sung in Liangmai dialect or in improvised form region to region and village to village. The songs and hymns vary according to festivals, work, war and sacrifice etc. for all occasions to be sung individually or in groups. Competitions of traditional songs are common and popular among boys and girls in various festivals and cultural functions. It is compulsory for every boy and girl to learn and know singing and dancing.<sup>160</sup> Children learn songs both from home and their respective dormitories. As singing is the best form of

<sup>159</sup> M. Horam, *Nagas Old Ways New Trends*, (New Delhi: Cosmos Publication, 1988) 49

<sup>160</sup> Poujairung Thaimai, “The Theatrical Movement in Zeliangrong Society” in *North East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-Cum-Seminar 1995*, 53 .

communication, they express themselves through their singings in times of both sorrow and joy. Songs serves as important sources of traditions and history, and they are more reliable as songs seldom change. A simple song of few lines is a whole piece of history. Therefore, folksongs can be an important tool in reconstructing the Zeliangrong history.

- **Restoring Traditional Values**

There are people with whom several good memories are stored, and such people should be interviewed where their knowledge can become important sources in reconstructing tribal historiography. Some of the beautiful traditional values which need to be considered are: the *ethos of egalitarianism* where there was social equality, *community living* where there was a sense of sharing and belonging, the system of *a feast of merit* in which a rich man instead of hoarding his wealth spends it for the benefit of the community, *morung system* where the young boys learned the techniques of war and combat, wrestling, singing, dancing, oratory, games and sports, handicrafts, sex education, character, traditions, customs, religious philosophy and moral values etc, *kitchen talks* where the kitchen portion of the house acted as an agent that facilitated socialization and transmission of taboos, folktales, folksongs, folk humors and numerous myths of the supernatural were done while sitting around the fire. Taboos which compromise of the dos and don'ts in society are communicated more effectively through such means as kitchen talks.<sup>161</sup> However, the beautiful values of the Zeliangrong people were ignored in the writings of the outsiders. It is pertinent therefore, that the Zeliangrong history be examined and reconstruct using the available resources. Zeliangrong people can still call for restoration as they still have some available sources which are retained in the deep memory of the aged people.

---

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Kamgi Chawang on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014. He has a vast knowledge on Zeliangrong History and culture.

- **Self Identity**

The identity of a particular society is one important issue to be taken into account while reconstructing people's historiography. It is a struggle for liberation. When the British Administration came in contact with the Zeliangrong people, they called them in different names.<sup>162</sup> As a result of the identity confusion created by the British ethnographers and the official chronicles of Manipur, at the end of the British rule in 1947 two nomenclatures (a). "Kacha Naga"<sup>163</sup> remained to mean the Zeme and Liangmai, and (b). "Kabui"<sup>164</sup> to Rongmai and Puimei. Today the Zeliangrong tribe is recognized by different nomenclatures in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur. "Zeliang" is given the scheduled tribe status under the category of "Any Naga tribe" in Nagaland. "Zeme" is given the scheduled tribe status under the category of "Any Naga tribe" in Assam. And in Manipur the Zeliangrongs are recognized as scheduled tribes by the nomenclatures of Kacha Naga and Kabui. "Kacha Naga" covers Zeme and Liangmai, and "Kabui" covers Rongmei and Puimei. Such wrong terms are unacceptable to the Zeliangrong people imposed by the outsiders. There has been lots of confusion about the nomenclatures of the Zeliangrongs till today. Therefore, it is important to notice such misrepresentation of the people and strive for justice and liberation. It is the responsibility of the Zeliangrong leaders with the support of the common people to reclaim their original nomenclature- i.e., 'Zeliangrong' with an aim to liberate the people from oppression of a mistaken identity (unwanted nomenclatures) imposed by the outsiders. The Zeliangrong people have been experiencing sad consequences of their division<sup>165</sup> such as politically minority, socially and economically exploited and educationally backward in all three states of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. Therefore, the

---

<sup>162</sup> Namthiubuiyang Pamei, *The Trail from Makuilongdi: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People*, Tamenlong: Girona Charitable Foundation, 2001), 37

<sup>163</sup> "Kacha" is an Angami word derived from "Ketsa" or "Ketsu" which means deep forest or dweller of the forests.

<sup>164</sup> "Kabui" is a Meitei name for the Rongmei and Puimei.

<sup>165</sup> The British Administration placed the Zeliangrong people under various administrative jurisdictions in the pretext of administration convenience, dividing the Zeliangrongs in their own land by making the rivers, mountain ranges and the valleys as the district/provincial boundaries.

people's experience of oppression and hardships become a vital resource for their own history and methodology.

- **Importance of Tribal Language**

Use of local language can be an important tool in writing Zeliangrong history. It is true that language carries culture and its meaning. The only use of foreign language in literature and discussion results in the alienation of the people from their history, geography, music, and other aspects of culture. Therefore, in interpreting the tribal culture using language as a tool, the very language of the tribal people themselves, through which the tribal interpret their surroundings, beliefs and day-to-day activities, must be used. The Language of the indigenous people can be one of the important tools in writing the history through which the local people interpret their beliefs and day to day activities. It is important to make use of native language, its terms and terminology in tribal theological interpretation. Language not only encodes and transmits culture but also, most importantly gives identity to individuals and groups. A serious issue to be noted is the negative connotations imposed on tribals. They have often been equated with being “backward”, “primitive” and “irrational”. In short, the tribals could not and cannot produce anything of value. Such negative connotations are to be replaced by positive language. There was no written script or text of their own in the traditional society but their culture and oral history flourished. One of the most beautiful ingredients of the traditional Zeliangrong village state was its *community life*.<sup>166</sup> Their social set-up is such that everyone knows all the members of the village, and they are by nature happy to share their possessions and also their services in times of both joy and sorrow. Their feeling for community is so strong that they give priority to their community rather than to their individual personal needs. Moreover, all things were done in groups such as mixing and working together in the fields, house building, cleansing the village road, collecting the fire woods, community feasts and festivals, etc. This practice of coming together creates better understanding, love, harmony and even reconciliation. Community life

---

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Kwetzinbe Newme (78 years old) of Samziuram village on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

is not only of togetherness. They help one another especially in times of difficulty and crisis. To cite few examples, if a person had a poor harvest, he/she was given grain. If a house is burnt, the people set about with one accord to build a new house. People who were poor due to certain circumstances like sickness, destitution, accident etc were well looked after by their relatives as well as by the whole community. Moreover, they have the concept of Supreme God who is also the creator and dispenser of everything.

- **Traditional Understanding of Land**

The traditional understanding of land need to be re-examined. While for many modern cultures, land is regarded as a productive economic resource; however, in the case of the Zeliangrongs, the concept of land is far greater and far more inclusive. In the Zeliangrong traditional society, land as a commodity that can be sold was not just strange but unthinkable. Land for them, is more than just a habitat or a political boundary; it is the basis of their social organization, economic system and cultural identification. Land is very central to the Zeliangrong people like any of the Naga tribes for land gives life and is the source of all life. People observe a number of festivals throughout the year and the festivals are not only for eating, drinking and merry making. They are deeply connected and centered on soil invoking blessings from the Supreme Being to be kind, generous and fertile. Therefore, land connects not only the clan,<sup>167</sup> village<sup>168</sup> and tribe as one unit. It also unites with the Supreme Being and spirit. It is land that gives the basis for the co-existence and interrelationship of all creatures. Thus, land is the foundation of social, religious, political and religious activities of the people. But today land is no longer regarded as a life sustaining entity. At this juncture the urgency for right perception, direction and action is pressing. It involves personal, communal and social commitment. This is an area where tribal worldview must be carefully considered. The issue of land and space is the central point

---

<sup>167</sup> Clan land comprises of specific lots of land over which each clan possesses absolute rights and ownership.

<sup>168</sup> Common village land comprises the graveyard, village community platform, roads, monuments, reserved forests and residential sites.

of Zeliangrong tribal theology. There is an urgent need for an eco-theology to reinstate the importance of nature and to restore the elemental relationship that used to exist between nature and men. The tribal understanding of land can be another vital tool towards reconstructing Zeliangrong historiography.

The projection has been on what ‘others’ have contributed to the people and it totally neglected the positive values of the people. Overriding of other culture that came along with the process of colonization and imperialism must be removed. Therefore, the Zeliangrong scholars and thinkers in this context are to rewrite their history from below to restore tribal identity. Their questions can be answered only when they re-read and re-write their past history from people’s perspective because the history has gone unrecorded. Remembering the past glories such as the beautiful folktales, memories and experiences, songs and dances, customs and practices, and struggle for liberation etc are essential tools in developing Zeliangrong tribal historiography.

By rewriting the history of the Zeliangrongs from people’s perspective, it will be possible to bring back their valuable past glorious into the present. A cooperative research study consisting of a team of researchers should undertake this task apart from those individual academic researches. The theologians as a facilitator can work with others like the social scientists, social activists, youths and tribal leaders in the task of combining their tradition and modernity. However, one should be able to distinguish between good and bad cultural elements. One should be careful to guard against the dangerous tendency to assimilate unacceptable elements into the Christian faith because such interference may distort the gospel truth. The teachings of scripture cannot be compromised. The gospel must be rooted in the culture of any given community so that faith expression in the risen Lord will become more meaningful to everyone. The very center of the tribal theology should be a reflection where biblical proclamation of Christ stands. The Christian faith stands or falls on the Word becoming flesh, and on God becoming a human person. In any human struggles Bible is the source and Christ is the answer. Putting the blame on the outsiders and the method they have laid down will not help. Instead, finding a relevant method to make the Bible applicable to the present context is vital.

## **Conclusion**

The earlier histories of India by the outsiders were written from the dominant perspective. Regardless of the colonial ideology deep-rooted in outsider's historiography, their documents and official records laid the foundations of historiography, an opportunity for Indian historians to obtain entry in profession and into academic research. However, if a historian does not assess the sources before using them and does not become aware of the bias of the sources, then the resultant work will be far cry from the depiction of a historical reality. The uncritical use of official records would also lead to mere documentation of the available records of the period; it would not reflect the historical evolution of a people. To present this historical picture, all written documents have to be used with due caution and have always to be used in collaboration with various other available sources of the time, so that the historical perspective is not lost. It is here a re-reading of the so called history of the past becomes inevitable. Even if the written records are not sufficient or available for a particular period, various non written records like traditions could be used to examine the validity of the past records.

Researches on Zeliangrong people and culture demands people's involvement in writing, knowing and understanding the tribal way of life, their likes and dislikes, and their aspirations and hopes, therefore require dissemination of that knowledge to the people. The emergence of new consciousness for identity and preservation of culture within the communities becomes essential which need to be taken into consideration while writing history. In proposing tools for re-constructing tribal historiography focuses a gradual shift from colonial perspectives to tribal.<sup>169</sup> Zeliangrong history should be written from tribal perspective and not from the dominant view point. Zeliangrongs need to know their past and it is possible only when their history is their point of view that 'views from below'. Such endeavor will require reclaiming tribal stories and songs, etc. It is not mean to accept the whole account of 'the past' and making the past essential for contemporary Zeliangrong people. At the same time, it is also not necessary to discard the past histories, customs, and practices and to accept

---

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Dr. L. Imsutoshi Jamir on 18th December, 2013. He teaches Communication at ETC, Jorhat.

only 'the present'. The argument is a matter of reconciling what really is important about the past with what is important in the present.

## CHAPTER II

### Traditional Zeliangrong Society

#### Introduction

The Zeliangrong Naga tribe is one of the biggest Naga tribes living in the three states namely Assam,<sup>170</sup> Manipur<sup>171</sup> and Nagaland.<sup>172</sup> They are blessed with rich natural resources like green forest, rivers, abundance of rainfalls and have a rich cultural heritage with all their rich traditional customs and practices. The *ethos of egalitarianism* where there was social equality, *community living* where there was a sense of sharing and belonging, *feast of merit* in which a rich man instead of hoarding his wealth spends it for the benefit of the community and *morung system* where the young boys learned the techniques of war and combat, wrestling, singing, dancing, oratory, games and sports, handicrafts, sex education, character, traditions, customs, religious philosophy and moral values etc were some of the beautiful values and practices of the traditional Zeliangrong society. *Kitchen talks* where the kitchen portion of the house acted as an agent that facilitated socialization and transmission of taboos, folktales, folksongs, folk humors and numerous myths of the supernatural were done while sitting around the fire and *indescribable wealth of knowledge and wisdom in their folklore* is also a popular activity.<sup>173</sup> However, in the eyes of the dominant society, the Zeliangrong people lack the clarity of reasoning; not good for anything. Therefore, the researcher attempts to closely study the traditional Zeliangrong ways of life from insider's perspective to discover the (extinct) cultures and traditions. History should be written with an aim to liberate the indigenous people from their inferior complex and oppression and by attempting to rediscover the liberative motifs of their beautiful values. There is some strength in all cultures that one should not judge another culture by the values of their own culture.

---

<sup>170</sup> In Assam, they have District Autonomous Council with Halflong and Mahur town.

<sup>171</sup> In Manipur, they have a separate district with Tamenglong as district headquarters plus four towns, namely Nungba, Noney, Tamei and Taosem.

<sup>172</sup> In Nagaland, they have a separate district, with Peren Town as the headquarters plus five other towns, namely Jalukie, Tening, Athibung, Nsong and Ngwalwa.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with Kamgi Chawang (86 years old) on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

## 2. 1. The Zeliangrongs

### 2.1.1. Oral Traditions

One major area to which Zeliangrong historians and scholars has to give special importance to is the field of oral history.<sup>174</sup> If the historical evolution of the society have to be reconstructed and analyzed then recourse to the tradition of oral history becomes necessary. Aspects of the oral tradition, when used in a comparative manner, have often illustrated the methods that are used to preserve information, either by societies that are not literate or by those that chose to use the oral form in preference to the literate. The possibility of applying these methods to an earlier oral tradition has been revealing. Zeliangrong people have various oral traditions regarding their origin, migrations and ways of life. Makhel<sup>175</sup> is believed to be a village of their origin by several Naga tribes including the Zeliangrongs. According to one of the most reliable sources, the ancestors of the Zeliangrong people migrated from Makhel to Ramting Kabin<sup>176</sup> and then to Chawangphungning which means the King's complex (or Guangphungning). As the population increased, the people started to spread out forming different colonies namely Ndainam, N'kaphung, Jangtining, Malingli, N'kanglung, Tamshangki-Phungning, Tapu etc which as a whole was known as Makuilongdi.<sup>177</sup> Legends and traditions narrate that the ancestors of Zeliangrong people lived at Makuilongdi for many generations. It is said that at Makuilongdi, the Zeliangrong people prospered so much so that their households numbered 7777.<sup>178</sup> It is believed that it was at Makuilongdi a polity was developed under a chief. Religious beliefs and social customs developed and flourished. Clans and lineages also grew up. It can be said that the inspiration and wisdom instilled into the hearts and minds of the

---

<sup>174</sup> It is the oral tradition, compiled of stories handed down from one generation to the next, as well as the recording of personal history or experiences. It may take the form of eye-witness evidence about the past, but can include folktales, folksongs etc passed down over the years by word of mouth. It can involve a formal interview examining a particular topic or issue. Using this oral history could be a powerful tool for discovering, exploring and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory.

<sup>175</sup> Many people believed Makhel (located at the present Mao village, Senapati district, Manipur), as a point of settlement after a long period of migration from South-west China to Myanmar and to South-East Asia and finally to North East India.

<sup>176</sup> A deep narrow canyon located a few miles below Oklong village (Chawangphungning) at Senapati district, Manipur. It is said to be a safe place from the enemies and animals but not suitable for human to settle because the climate was stifling (airless or hot).

<sup>177</sup> *Guangphungning (Oklong) Baptist Church Platinum Jubilee (1938-2013) Souvenir* (Guangphungning: Souvenir Committee, GBC Guangphungning, 2013), 12

<sup>178</sup> The researcher has visited the original village for his research work in 2010.

fore parents which in turn enabled them to become authors of the rich culture came from God. If the story of Makuilongdi with 7777 households is to be considered seriously, it can be assumed that Makuilongdi was a land with rich natural resources like green forest, rivers, animals and abundance of rainfalls as the Zeliangrong people like any of the tribals depend completely on nature for their sustenance-economic needs and medicines in times of sickness. The tribals solely depend on forest resources for their livelihood. Moreover, to provide firewood facilities to the whole community requires big forests/lands as making fire and sitting around the fire in the kitchen is part of their culture. All the materials needed for building the houses such as wood, thatch, cane, bamboo etc come from the forest. Balubo Newmai, a renowned singer and composer in one of his songs recorded about the beautiful stories of the traditional Zeliangrong community. One of the popular songs goes<sup>179</sup>:

Liangmai	English
Makhel gane Ramting kabin gelung keulei, Makhel gasu Ramting kabin galung kumei, Makhel khourui kabin khou lung kaithe.	Descendents ( <i>Zeliangrongs</i> ) of Makhel migrated to Ramtingkabin, Chawangphungning to Makuilongdi....
Chawang phuning gene Makuilongdi namdi, Chawang phungning gasu Makuilongdi namdi, Chawang phungning khourui Makuilongdi namdi.	A big village with 7777 households lived in peace, unity and riches where one people with one vision spoke one common language.
Rehei-rehei lungyi-tengei lei, Chakin-chakin lungwi singkhiu wei, Chakin-chakin lunggai-chinkhiu the.	
Chakhun khat niu fah-din jiu lungdei....	We have a great patriotic hero Haipao Jadonang and Padmabhusan Rani

<sup>179</sup> This song “*Zeliangrong*” was presented during the General Assembly of Zeliangrong Baudi (Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland) dated 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2013 at Yangkhullen village, Senapati, Manipur. Taken from the Audio Cassette & CD “Makuilongdi Khuan Choir”. Lyries and Tune by Balubo Newmai. The song indicates the migration routes of the Zeliangrong people. Generally it is believed that the ancestors lived at Makuilongdi for many generations where the fertile land, forest and water provided enough sustenance to the people. It is believed that the people maintained their social organization with the guidance of the customary laws where protection and justice was extended to all people under customary procedure. They spoke a language akin to the present Liangmai dialect.

<p>Tanhubo Haipao Jadonang.....Pajat-param duan ga ringting kat khai dei..... Au weeh! Zeliangrong maipiu...</p> <p>Padmabhusan Rani Gaidinliu, Freedom Fighter..... Paken-pangiu dibu Zeliangrong maipui.....</p> <p>Pao-peh gu ramrai: Tingpi lam Tamaki gasu Chin, Malong katang Barail longriang gasu Churachandpur, Tungtang buhai tingrun ramrai. Tingbang lam Koubru, Malong gasu Leimaton Thangjing longriang mengtang, Bhuban longriang, Jiri giuki gasu Hallong longthom gumtang buhai tingnu ramrai.</p> <p>Tasibu thina Tragopan lungbu Paona luang, Kisha, Essau, Angola, Bhuban, hai kubu malong dung. Singgiu dibu Nbiuki, Ahangki, Makru giuki. Pajan dibu Zeilad, Thalon Tuki, Dzukuo, Npiulong, Paman kungbu mariu Ntangki National park.</p> <p>Apui ram hai withu-wei..... Wahina machang buram ei..... Tingwang tu thoan-ei... Tingwang tu thoan-ei. ye ye ye.</p>	<p>Gaidinliu Freedom Fighter, hail the great souls of Zeliangrongs, we cherish your name.</p> <p>We have boundaries set by our ancestral: Tamaki river to Chin mountain in the North; Barail Range to Churachandpur in the South;</p> <p>Mt. Koubru to Leimaton Thangjing range in the East and Bhuban range to Jiri river to Haflong plateaus in the West.</p> <p>Lofty/high mountains of our land are: Paona, the home of the rare/peculiar bird Tragopan, Kisha, Essau, Angola and Bhuban.</p> <p>Great rivers: Nbiuki, Ahangki and Makru. Eye-catching and heart trilling places: Zeilad lake, Thalon cave and scenic meadows of Dzukuo and Npiulong. Precious/treasured forest: Ntangki National park.</p> <p>My motherland, the best. Land of beauty and abundance. Praise God the Creator....ye ye ye..</p>
---	--

The present Liangmai dialect is believed to be the common spoken language. Several migration teams were sent out to established new villages in different directions. In the course of time, they dispersed to the present settlements. What has not been

investigated is the cause of dispersal. It has suggested that one of the factors for dispersal could probably be due to the pressure of rapid growth of population and non-availability of land for jhum cultivation near their settlement.<sup>180</sup> There are other views as well that the dispersal occurred after a divine warning for violating the law of nature and regular social life of the village. Difference also cropped up over the succession to the office of the chief. Some even suggested that people started to search for a healthier and free space, as the stalling of animals together with human in the same hut, as often happens in agrarian societies cause a variety of devastating diseases (for such system, they need a bigger free space for permanent settlement). Other reasons, besides the causes mentioned above could have also prompted to the exodus from Makuilongdi.

There is a general consensus among the Zeliangrong elders and historians to agree to the popular tradition of Nguiba/Nguibou as the chief of Makuilongdi. Since his first wife could not bear a child, he married another woman who gave birth to a son; named him Namgong (also called Namhegang or Magantubo). After some years, the first wife gave birth to a male child; and named him Kading (also called Kadingbo). Again she gave birth to a son Rembangbe (also called Rengbangbou or Nrimbangbe). Nguiba, the chief or king in his old age was faced with a dilemma of choosing his successor. Finally, Kading the second son (first son from the first wife) was made the chieftainship of Makuilongdi.<sup>181</sup> Namgong left his native village along with his group and moved to directions of their choices. Rembangbe also led a large group of people from Makuilongdi and moved to their choices. The original inhabitants of Makuilongdi remained at their village under the chieftainship of Kading. This group of people is popularly known as Liangmais. Group by group Liangmais also moved to directions of their choices.

Zeliangrong people have various oral traditions regarding their origin, migration and descendants. According to Rongmei tradition, there are two views regarding the descendants. One view holds that Dirannang and Dichalu had three sons such as Kadhi, Rembangdhi and Dichalen. Another view suggests four sons such as Kadhi,

---

<sup>180</sup> *A Brief Account of Zeliangrong Nagas*, (Dimapur: All Zeliangrong Students' Union, 2009)

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Kamgi Chawang (86 years old) on 27 December 2012.

Rembangdhi, Dichalen and Namgong.<sup>182</sup> Whatever may be the opinion expressed or views held, it is certain that the ancestors of Zeliangrong people once lived/settled at Makuilongdi what people popularly called “Makuilongdi: A Cradle of Zeliangrong Culture”.

The Zemes, Liangmais, and Rongmais (including Puimeis) started to migrate and spread to the present Nagaland, Manipur, and North Cachar Hills of Assam who pushed down their settlement as far as Churachandpur district of Manipur and beyond Halflong, Assam.<sup>183</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that, from Makuilongdi, Zeliangrong people migrated to different directions and scattered at different places. Their dispersal to different directions and inability to have interaction for a long period of time had resulted in the emergence of some local variation in their language and way of life as an adaptation to their new environment. Nevertheless, the basic traits that identify them as “Zeliangrongs” are still engrained in their history, social and cultural life. Chawangphungning people (Oklong), under Senapati district, Manipur happen to be the only people to stay back in the Zeliangrong original homeland. They had been preserving, protecting and looking after the old site and land of the original homeland since the great ‘Exodus’ deserting the original village.<sup>184</sup>

Owing to long confinement to their own geographical areas after the exodus event from Makuilongdi, the various kindred groups developed different dialects which they speak today. Therefore, to rekindle the spirit of oneness among them and also to uphold the unity and integrity of the tribe who traced their origin to Makuilongdi village, who share a common ancestry, traditions, social, ethnic, linguistic and culture, the leaders of the kindred tribes met at Kaishamthong, Imphal on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1947 and coined the common nomenclature called ‘Zeliangrong’ which is a combination of the prefixes of the names Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmai.<sup>185</sup> However, Puimai, one of the component tribe of the Zeliangrong union were not happy as they felt that their

---

<sup>182</sup> G. Makuga, *Introduction to the Rongmei*, (Imphal: Mr & Mrs. Makuga, 1947) 9-10

<sup>183</sup> Namthiubuiyang Pamei, *The Trail from Makuilongdi: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People*, (Tamenglong: Girona Charitable Foundation, 2001), 5-14

<sup>184</sup> *Makuilongdi Zeme Baptist Church Silver Jubilee, (1984-2009) Souvenir*, (Makuilongdi: Souvenir Committee, MZBC Manipur, 2009) 11

<sup>185</sup> Achung Xavier Longmei, “Zeliangrong Movement: A Search for Identity” in *North East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-Cum-Seminar*, (Imphal: Literature & Souvenir Committee, 1995) 15

identities were left in the oblivion being not mentioned in the nomenclature “Zeliangrong”. This issue still remains unresolved.

## **2. 2. Social, Political and Cultural Life of the Zeliangrongs**

Romila Thapar, a distinguished Indian historian in her book *The Past as Present* commented:

*“A few decades ago the study of history was geared primarily to listing the activity of those in power, largely rulers of various kinds, and placing them in chronological order, the order being as accurate as the source of study would allow. In the last three decades of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, the interest in the past came to be re-oriented in a significant way. It was no longer limited to political and dynastic history. It introduced the interface of those aspects with others such as social and economic history and the flow of what was called culture/civilization that largely addressed religion, language, literature, the arts and philosophy. This change can be illustrated in various ways in the themes that younger historians started researching that were concerned with trying to construct a larger picture of society.”<sup>186</sup>*

Culture is the living experience of a particular society. It attends to fundamental human needs like identity, dignity and self-expression. It penetrates into every area of life-family, society, nation- and occupies a central place in every sphere of action, socio-cultural, economic, political and religious. To explore history relating to society, economy, culture, political and religion and the interconnections between them will be attractive and interesting. The most praise worthy thing about the traditional Zeliangrong people was their belief in casteless and classless society and the social life was grounded in various forms of organization. They were known for simplicity, hospitality, loyalty, respect towards their elders as well as obedience to the established authority. In the Zeliangrong fold, honor was life’s most desired characteristics. They achieved “honor” only through honesty, humility, truthfulness and hardworking. It was an honor to be called a hard working person. There were no beggars. For if someone falls into misfortune, he/she was looked after by the relatives

---

<sup>186</sup> Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities Through History*, (New Delhi: Aleph Company 2014), 3-4

or clan or the whole community. One of the finest ways of life of the Zeliangrong people was, they never lock the doors as stealing and robbery is not common. Words like rape, homosexuality, lesbianism, prostitution, drugs, were unknown in the traditional Zeliangrong society. They were conservative people. They do not easily embrace changes and new ways. They strongly hold that their forefather's ways are the best. New methods and systems of doing things do not appeal to them immediately. One who easily adopts a new thing is considered unstable and shallow. They maintained social life rather than individual which is vividly seen in their society. There is a general consensus among many Zeliangrong aged people and scholars that in traditional Zeliangrong society, the principles of egalitarianism, solidarity and communality (non-ownership of land by individuals as private property) were held true.

The traditional Zeliangrong social life was grounded in the family system, the village system, the clan system and morung system.<sup>187</sup> Zeliangrong people are legitimately proud of their cultural heritage going back to ancient past: a unique system of thoughts and values, an egalitarian pattern of bonds and relationships, a style of fair dealing and interactions, a most enviable gift of human touch, and an in-built optimism and confidence in humanity. Not to forget, annual cultural festivals, beautiful dances, diversely classified songs have greatly enriched the Zeliangrong culture.

### **2.2.1. Kikhun Jai (The Family System)**

A family is the smallest unit in the Zeliangrong society. Parents and their children constitute the family. The joint family system was also practiced. It is not because of scarcity of land but love of their parents and family members. However, joint family system was not compulsory. It is left to the will of the couple to remain or live separately.<sup>188</sup> Father is the head of the family and is responsible for the whole family affairs. Obedience to father is expected from each family members. The father is also the priest of the family for he performs all kinds of religious duties during festivals

---

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Hugambo on 26<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

<sup>188</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House), 28

and other ceremonies. Mother manages the family internally. It was mother who managed the home; to cook, to feed and care for her husband and children. The children help their parents in different ways and so are obedient and respectful. Zeliangrong families were very closely knit with bonds of affection and respect. The old parents were highly respected and proper care was given to them. In the case of the father's death, the eldest son takes over the place of his father. Descent and inheritance was from male.<sup>189</sup> The property of the father is divided equally among the sons during the father's life time. When a son marries he received his portion of inheritance from the father.

### **2.2.2. The Village Set-Up**

The traditional Zeliangrong village is an independent, democratic and classless society.<sup>190</sup> Village is bounded together by social, political, and religious rites. Every Zeliangrong village functioned as what amounted to a separate state, a small republic meeting virtually all its requirements from within the village lands. Chosen representatives of the dominant clans governed the villages. They built villages at the summit of a hill or on the ridge of a high sloping range. Interestingly, there were certain criteria for choosing the village site. To build a new village a few selected elders are entrusted to look for a suitable location where all essential natural resources are available.<sup>191</sup> The first and the most important consideration for choosing the site of the new village were security and safety from enemies.<sup>192</sup> The second consideration is the availability and accessibility of water spring. Thirdly, where communication could be easy. When the above cited criteria were met then they usually perform a sacrifice for a place and finally it becomes a common ground forever. The name of the village is actually either derived from some peculiarity of the site or it commemorates an ancient settlement. Moreover, the village is named after the characteristics of the places, hills, rivers and founder's name. To cite few examples,

---

<sup>189</sup> A woman could inherit moveable property such as paddy, ornaments, fowls, clothes, clothing etc, but had no share in the inheritance of immovable property. Woman has no share with regard to land.

<sup>190</sup> Namthiubuiyang Pamei, *The Trail from Makuilongdi: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People*, 33

<sup>191</sup> Namnabi Hegui, *A Study of the Customary Laws of the Zeliangrong Nagas*, (Unpublished BD Thesis, Jorhat, ETC, 1997), 45

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Kaichun of Nzau village on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2013

'Ntu' (village) is given after the characteristics of the place, where the entire range is covered by rocks, and they named it 'Ntu' village which means a 'village with a heap of rocks'. 'Samziuram' (village) got its name from the founder of the village 'Samziurambe'. Normally the village is surrounded by trees, light jungles and bamboo clumps, so that it will not be exposed and visible to enemy villages. The village was well defended by stone (or hard wood) walls around the village. Village gates were erected at strategic places with a narrow foot path with stone walls on both the sides which extends to certain meters depending on the landscape. The entrances of the gates were closed with huge pieces of woods. All these were done in order to insure security from the enemies' attack.

### **2.2.3. Nnamga Apaimai (Village Council)**

Traditional Zeliangrong system of government is an interesting blend of village democracy. The democratic element in the arrangement is reflected in the village assembly/council, a gathering of all the male members of the community (young and old) where serious issues are discussed and decisions reached on the basis of popular consensus.

After a village was founded, one of the first things done was to establish a village council made up of representatives chosen by the dominant clans. The village councilors are elected male elders from each clan. The entire administration of a village is managed by a council of elders.<sup>193</sup> The village council was the most important political institution in Zeliangrong society. Every Zeliangrong village had a council with *singku* (chief) as the chairman and the councilors as the members of the council. A village chief (*singku*) played multiple roles like convening and presiding the village council which the elders from various clans and sometimes every male in the village. However, he was never a dictator.<sup>194</sup> Like many of the Naga tribes, the Zeliangrong council village system is more egalitarian and democratic instead of the polity of Chieftainship. The village administration is democracy as far as the majority decision-makings were concerned because each decision was taken in public. Like

---

<sup>193</sup> G. Makuga, *The Rongmei Customary Laws: A Collection of Ancient Rongmei Traditional and Social usages, custom and culture*, (Dimapur: Jinkulu, 2007), 57

<sup>194</sup> Ursula Graham Bower, *Naga path*, 72-73

many of the Naga tribes, Zeliangrong village council exerts authority (legislative, executive and judiciary).<sup>195</sup> The village council is responsible for any case and problems that arises in the village. Matters of law, justice and administration, civil, criminal, and political matters of the village were settled in the village court. They were judged in accordance with the tribal law. Issues like divorce, inheritance, homicide, adultery, theft etc and all the disputes are settled by meeting of the elders according to the customary law.<sup>196</sup> The entire administration of the Zeliangrong village is managed by a council of elders. The village council is headed by the chief who belongs to the founder-clan of the village. The council has various functions, some of which are listed below:<sup>197</sup>

- General administration of the village
- Judicial functions (court of justice)
- Regulator and controller of the social institution of the village like the dormitory and other institutions based on age and sex.
- Defense and security of the village
- Regulation and management of the religious affairs
- Regulation of the forests and lands for agriculture purpose

Hearing of the cases was generally done either by the council or by the public in the open place. Having heard from both parties, the court settled the case according to the customary law and past experience.<sup>198</sup> More reliance is given on individual intention than on patient observation of facts.<sup>199</sup> As the village court is the Supreme Court, there is no more appeal after the decision of the court. Both the parties had to accept it once the judgment is given. Judgment once given is irrevocable. The village council sees that all citizens live and act according to the norms and laws of the village. The village has its judicial laws to safeguard the welfare of the villagers. Maintenance of

---

<sup>195</sup> T. Lanusosang, *A Story of Social Geography*, (Kohima: Directorate of School Education, Nagaland, 1989), 163

<sup>196</sup> Customary law (unwritten law) is the highest authority in the village and it is obeyed by all individuals, groups and clans. In the village, the chief and his councilors are custodians of customary law. Customary law is simply a code of conduct of the people living within the jurisdiction of a governing body. It cannot be mis-interpreted since it is the tradition of the people.

<sup>197</sup> *A Brief Account of Zeliangrong Nagas*, .44

<sup>198</sup> Majid Hussain, *Nagaland*, (Delhi: Rima Publishing House, 1988), 84-87

<sup>199</sup> M. Horam, *North East India: A Profile*, (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1990), 36

peace and harmony in the village, making diplomatic relations with other etc were some of the administrative powers and functions of the village council. Developmental works like village defense, community hall, maintenance of village paths, wells etc were their concern. Besides, the councilors were also responsible for the effective implementation of all the decisions of the council relating to any matter whether it is a religious or secular and also responsible to punish or impose fines on the defaulters.

#### **2.2.4. Puina Jai (The Clan System)**

Any clan can be traced back to a single family which has multiplied into numerous families but remain connected to each other.<sup>200</sup> A clan is a social unit consisting of several families who are related by blood. Each household in the village belongs to a particular clan. They are related to one another through a common ancestor. Interestingly, they have common property, traditions, status and inheritance. The members of the clan feel closely bound together, almost like members of a family. The clan members share their products especially to the poorer families. They also help each other in times of marriage, construction of house, harvest, death etc.<sup>201</sup> The people's attachment to their own clan is at times stronger than the ties based on flesh and blood. In fact, the people of different parents, but of the same clan, are considered brothers and sisters.<sup>202</sup> The head of the clan performs several functions. He represents the village council, performs religious sacrifice on behalf of the clan and also exercises as guardian over the clan's properties, lands etc. Each clan has its own court. All disputes within the clan are settled in the clan's court. Attempt to settle inter-clan disputes and crimes are first made in the joint court of the two clans in the presence of in-laws and nephews. Only those matters that cannot be settled in the inter-clan court are brought to the village court.

---

<sup>200</sup> M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas*, (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1977), 62-63

<sup>201</sup> A. Wati Longchar, *Interaction between Gospel and Culture among the Nagas*, 52

<sup>202</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Mission in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*, (Calutta: KLM Private Limited, 1984), 147

In the words of Gangmumei, the Zeliangrong people had developed at least two major clans namely, Pamie and Newmei at Makuilongdi.<sup>203</sup> Even after the mass exodus of the Zeliangrong people from Makuilongdi, some of them remained at Makuilongdi. And in the course of time, they established many villages. Over and above the original clans, several lineages and sub-lineages emerged. However, a few words are to be stated in connection with Chawang lineages. The settlement history of Chawangphungning, which is identified with the present Oklong village at Senapati district, Manipur shows that this village was a single lineage. Only the Chawang lineage lived in the Oklong village. Therefore, there is a possibility that Chawang lineage confined to Chawangphungning preceded other clan.

#### **2.2.5. Khangchiu Ki (Morung/Bachelor's Dormitory)**

In every society, whether simple or complex, has its way of training and educating its youth although the goals and methods of approach would differ from place to place and culture to culture. In regard to Nagas and so among the Zeliangrongs, morung can be said as their educational center. Morung (originally Assamese word) is a dormitory for the young people in Naga traditional society. In simple words, morung can be term as a center of total learning offering holistic teachings. It was the tradition of the Nagas that all the boys after they reached the age of puberty were required to enter the morung. Soon after the establishment of a village, one of the important duties for the Nagas was to select the site to construct the morung. The rules and regulations of the morung were laid down and also supervised by the village council. Morung's management and its functions differed slightly from tribe to tribe even among the Nagas. The morung serves as a man's club and a sleeping place for unmarried boys. It was a place where the young people were trained, disciplined and given instruction. Elderly people narrate the great deeds of the past. Each generation was taught to carry on the old traditions. Much of the Naga culture, its customs and traditions have been transmitted from generation to generation through the media of folk songs and dance, folk tales and oral historical traditions, carvings of figures on stone and wood, and

---

<sup>203</sup> Gangmumei Kamei, *A History of the Zeliangrong Nagas: From Makhel to Rani Gaidinliu*, 36

designs on clothes. Much of this teaching-learning process took place at morung.<sup>204</sup> It was in morung where the young boys learned the techniques of war and combat, wrestling, singing, dancing, oratory, games and sports, handicrafts, sex education, character, traditions, customs, religious philosophy and moral values etc. Therefore, morung can be term as the center of learning: moral, spiritual, ways of life, and martial training for young people.

The girls also had their counterpart of dormitory (Liuchiuki) in tribal villages. The female version of morung was the female dormitory which was often looked after by an elderly spinster or woman. It was here that young girls practiced socialization and learnt weaving, crafts, folksongs, dances and other skills etc under the strict supervision. Social activities of girls' morung includes collection and giving of firewood etc to the destitute families. Participation in digging of fresh water ponds for the whole village in collaboration with the corresponding boy's morung appears prominent. They were taught to learn different skills and to be morally upright and hardworking at all times. Mothers and aunties also taught the young girls about different issues related to life. All these trainings nurtured the young girls into adulthood and womanhood. In the girls' dormitory there is a single category of membership of unmarried girls. Above the girl's dormitory there is the married women's house; house of old woman. They were given specific duties in the social and religious life of the village. The boys' dormitory and the girls' dormitory will work together when social functions are organized.<sup>205</sup> The inmates are strictly bound by the morung rules and regulations as instituted by the village council according to its customs and traditions.

Zeliangrong people like any of the Naga tribes have the dormitory system.<sup>206</sup> There were both male (Khangchiuki) and female (Liuchiuki) dormitories.<sup>207</sup> Ursula Graham Bower, a British anthropologist who had spent a considerable time among the Zemes

---

<sup>204</sup> Tuisem A. Shishak, "Nagas and Education", in *Nagas at Work*, edited by R. Vashum & Friends, (New Delhi: Naga Students' Union Delhi, 1996), 28

<sup>205</sup> Dichamang Pamei, *Liberty to Captives*, 50-52

<sup>206</sup> Elungkiebe Zeliang, *Traditional Methods of Nurturing and Upbringing Children in the Zeliangrong Naga Society*, Paper Presentation at Eastern Theological College, Jorhat November 2013, 5-6

<sup>207</sup> *A Brief Account of the Zeliangrong Nagas*, .34

(Zeliangrongs) in the N.C Hills, recorded the Morung system of the Zemes (Zeliangrongs) in her book *Naga Path*:

*“The (morung) system taught early the meaning of co-operation and responsibility. They (morung inmates) are more self-reliant, with commonsense and better discipline, and above all their loyalty and sense of service to a corporate body is well developed.”*<sup>208</sup>

It is interesting to know that in some villages, rich people offer their house for the morung. Membership of the dormitory was compulsory for boys and girls so they are introduced at the pre-puberty stage. The membership is also granted according to the age and marital status. The girls retain membership till their marriage whereas for boys it is for life long. The morung is looked after by the elderly people of good moral conduct, courteous, skillful and well versed in customs and traditions of the village.<sup>209</sup> Boys of the age of between seven to eight will sleep in the junior boy’s dormitory. The older members of the dormitory have many groups according to age and marital status. Seniors acts as the leader of the dormitory. The boys in the dormitory will obey the older members and they act according to their decisions and instructions. Any kind of tribal education and discipline such as the art of warfare, defending the village, moral values, obedience to elders, dignity of labor, hard working, handicraft, music, songs, dance etc were taught in the Morung. In other words, it is a place where youths learn *tacheng-charea* (social and ethical principles). It is also a place where youths were trained to become *liangtuang* (an ideal person). Moreover, young people were taught how to be respectful, polite, to put others above self, think of the common good and behave in socially acceptable ways. Values such as to bind families together, create harmony in relationships which makes the society strong and unite whole communities and make life meaningful were taught in the morung. It is the responsibility of the elders and parents to see to it that children are raised appropriately and that as they grow into adulthood they will provide for other members of the community. Society wants to prepare their members to become not only good fathers and mothers, but people who care life; individual, society and

---

<sup>208</sup> Ursula Graham Bower, *Naga Path* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1952), 75

<sup>209</sup> Namnabi Hegui, *A Study of the Customary Laws of the Zeliangrong Nagas*, 28

spiritual aspects. As a result, the major goal of traditional education in Zeliangrong society is to produce a complete individual; one who is respectful, cultured and well disciplined and also responsive to the needs of the family and neighbors. Common wise-sayings taught at Morung are listed below:

- Npui npiu tu chakhuang thiulo (Honor your parents)
- Namaidung katingmai lat piulo (Children must obey elders)
- Katingmai tu wadao di tanui thiutulo (Never make fun of old folk)
- Kasha-kason maitu nkha lo (Help the disabled people)
- Mai-khiutu/chakhiu masia mak ra ye (Never envy others' wealth)
- Maranmai lungwi ye/Changam maran mainiu lungwiraye (Hard workers become rich)
- Makemai kele saye/Makemai niu kale saraye (Lazy people become poor)
- Ka-aratmai agah ye/Ka-aratmai aga-di-aga ye (Liars do steal as well).

Morung serves as a social,<sup>210</sup> economic,<sup>211</sup> political<sup>212</sup> and religious<sup>213</sup> institution. Very often there were raids and inter-village feuds. Therefore, morung is also used as a center for training young people for guarding and protecting the village from the attacks of enemies.<sup>214</sup> They keep their weapons in the morung. Guards were appointed to keep watch and protect the village from attacks and to be alert from any other kind of emergency. The young morung boys were exempted from going to fields as they must guard the village both day and night from enemies' attack. They also do some repairing of foot paths, villages ponds etc. Some of the important duties and responsibilities of the morung boys are as follows<sup>215</sup>:

- To help the poor, needy, widows, widowers and strangers.

---

<sup>210</sup> As a social institution, it disciplines the boys, teaches the philosophy of love and sharing, and imparts the social customs, traditions, songs, legends, games and sports etc.

<sup>211</sup> As an economic institution, the boys learn the art of crafting, carving and engraving etc. The art of cultivation is also learned through the hearing of the elder's experience.

<sup>212</sup> As a political institution, it administers the clan directly and village indirectly.

<sup>213</sup> As a religious institution, it imparts all kinds of religious practices, prohibitions, etc. Clan's religious rites and sacrifices are performed in the Morung.

<sup>214</sup> Namthiubuiyang Pamei, *The Trail from Makuilongdi: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People*, (Tamenlong: Girona Charitable Foundation, 2001), 33

<sup>215</sup> *Zeliangrong Students' Union Manipur Diamond Jubilee (1949-2009) Cum 20<sup>th</sup> General Conference of All Zeliangrong Students' Union 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Souvenir* (Imphal: Diamond Jubilee Cum General Conference Souvenir Committee, 2010), 54

- Construction of village gate, road, bridge, ponds, fencing, etc.
- Preparation for the internment of the dead and spending time with the bereaved family.
- Guarding and protecting the village from the attacks of enemies.
- It also meets the religious ceremonies and cultural festivals.

Morung boys also play a very important role in managing the village drums. The functions of log drum are various: (1). When the enemies attack the village, the sentry/gatekeeper will immediately beat the drum so that the male members of the village will come out from their homes and assemble with war equipments and stand on battle footing. (2). When the warriors return home with their heads, the message is first signaled through the drum beats. (3). When the village is on fire or when ferocious animals enter the village, the message is conveyed by beating the drum. (4). Drum beats give information for public meeting. According to the sound and rhythm of the log drum, the villagers used to get the message and thus acted accordingly.

#### **2.2.6. Magiangbu Jai (The Marriage System)**

For Zeliangrong people, marriage is not just a simple contract between the two spouses. Marriage is the union of the bride and the bridegroom to start a family with religious and social sanctions in which the spouses, their parents and village elders are involved and the kinship relations are maintained for generations.<sup>216</sup> Every proper or genuine marriage is to fulfill the code of marriage prescribed under the social custom of marriage.<sup>217</sup> Zeliangrong people follow both monogamy and polygamy, but in reality polygamy is very rare. Polygamy is practiced in the villages where chieftainship existed.<sup>218</sup> Deviation from the clan exogamy is condemned and punished. Parallel cousin marriage is forbidden however cross cousin marriage is permitted. Marriage within the same clan or kin is always considered as taboo for it is believed that such marriages often bear abnormal child or bear no child at all. The practice of child marriage is not known among the Zeliangrong people.

---

<sup>216</sup> *A Brief Account of Zeliangrong Nagas*, 34

<sup>217</sup> G. Makuga, *The Rongmei Customary Laws: A Collection of Ancient Rongmei Traditional and social usages, custom and culture*, (Dimapur: Jinkulu, 2007), 131

<sup>218</sup> Namnabi Hegui, *A Study of the Customary Laws of the Zeliangrong Nagas*, 30

As a tradition, the boy's parents approach to girl's parents for marriage. The bride price varies from village to village. In the olden days, the bride price was made in kind but when money was introduced the bride price is paid with money. After the engagement, a girl should live a careful life unlike before. No engagement made can be cancelled. The marriage feast is always a community feast which includes singing competition between bride and bridegroom parities, dancing, fun time (jokes or entertainment) etc. The bride brings shawls for her husband and parents as marriage gifts. As soon as the marriage is over, the new couple set up their new house and live there performing the rites and sacrifices. True marital union starts when the couple shifts to the new house. On the death of the husband the younger brother can marry the widow of his brother and not the elder brother. A man can marry his wife's younger sister but not the elder sister if his wife dies.

There are various types of marriages and they may be broadly categorized into three as given below<sup>219</sup>:

- Masanbo Magian/Maniu Naothak- Virgin marriage or genuine marriage by proper engagement and solemnization which is the most popular marriage.
- Lachamibo Magiang – Widow/widower marriage.
- Marai Lathak- Love marriage by elopement without proper solemnization.

Other types of marriages are like the force abduction or kidnapping against the will of the girl, the marriage of other fellow man's wife by force or trick of wooing, marriage between close relatives etc. Improper marriages are taken seriously with punishment. They will be excommunicated and turned out of the village. They will be allowed to come back to the village under certain considerations. Sacrifices will be performed for the purification of the couple and the village. Even after they are received back, they are seldom allowed in the important rituals of the village.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Hungambo, Ex-Pastor, Liangmai Baptist Church, Samziuram Village, 21 September, 2002

<sup>220</sup> Dichamang Pamei, *Liberty to Captives*, 37-38

### 2.2.7. Tapidangbu/Chapi Dangbu (Head Hunting)

Head hunting was common to all Naga tribes.<sup>221</sup> Head-hunting means cutting the head of the enemy. The enemy is killed by throwing spears at them or by shooting the arrow and then the victim is beheaded with dao. The heads are carried home as trophies by singing and chanting in praise and glory of their god. However, head hunting was restricted only to enemies' heads. High honor were heaped on those brave warrior who brought the heads of woman and children as trophies, for woman and children were usually protected in the heart of the village, and could only be killed through exceptional feats of courage.<sup>222</sup>

In common with the other Nagas, the Zeliangrong Nagas waged wars with different villages (among Zeliangrong themselves) and other neighboring tribes. Ramkhun Pamei in his book "*The Zeliangrong Nagas*" clearly stated that the Zeliangrong people continued the headhunting culture till the coming of British administration in Manipur and Nagaland.<sup>223</sup> The causes for head hunting may be classified as social, political, economy and religious. Socially, the warriors are respected by all and given social status by giving the privilege of wearing certain warrior's ornaments and dress which is not entitled to others. And also, it is an important factor to get a beautiful girl for partner. Politically, they fight and wage war for justice when there is a dispute between two villages on the ground of land encroachment, insult to a villager, unreasonable divorce, etc. They also fight to maintain the village prestige when another village challenges them. The victims' party or village to take revenge of their dead relatives. Economically, when the fertility was diminishing, when its economy was deteriorating, they believed that head hunting would bring prosperity to the people. Religiously, heads were required to appease the gods in worship and also for human sacrifice to their deities for their general well being. The head of the strong warrior and child is considered valuable. However, the head of a woman with long hair is considered more valuable. The reason could be where woman were always given the maximum protection by the village folk, and taking a woman's head meant

---

<sup>221</sup> J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968), 169

<sup>222</sup> Joseph S. Thong, *Head Hunters Culture: Historic Culture of Nagas*, (Tseminyu: Khinyi Woch, 1997), 10-11

<sup>223</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: The Study of Tribal Christianity*, 29

penetrating deep into the adversaries ranks with all its concomitant risks. Another reason could be the desire for woman's hair, which was used for ornamental purpose.

#### **2.2.8. Paope-Lui and Paope- Len (Folk Songs and Dances)**

The Zeliangrong people are endowed with rich cultural heritages, especially the folk songs, dances and oral recitals or hymns linked with corresponding feasts, festivals, occupations and rites and ritual activities. The beautiful dance, songs for each and every occasion, festivals and various merit feasts speak of the magnificence of Zeliangrong culture. Songs and dances are accompanied with beating of drums in a particular rhythm.<sup>224</sup> Folk song is also called the music of the heart because it communicates especially about the people, life, inner feelings and experiences, and about various events in the society. The folk song can also be differentiated into individual and communal types where the individual type is sung by a person at anytime, whereas the community type is used on festive occasions in which the whole community can participate in singing. On all occasions, such as feast, festivals, ceremonies, and change of seasons are always accompanied by singing. Songs are very poetic and have a very deep meaning. The songs were composed in a particular context with a definite purpose and meaning, which were intended to communicate to the people. The folk songs reveal the historical background of the tribe, the community, the village, the clan or well known individuals of the community. Astonished by the beautiful Naga songs, M. Horam, a prominent Naga scholar commented: "Naga songs are events usually topical, for they speak of events, sad events, joyous events, memorable events are all translated into and preserved in songs".<sup>225</sup> Moreover, it is interesting to know where people used to communicate to one another more often through songs instead of verbal conversation.

Singing and dancing form an integral part of the Zeliangrong life. The Zeliangrong people have varied songs which is connected with legends and mythologies and dances connected with traditional and cultural ceremonies. In the absence of written culture, their history, biography, love stories, victories in wars, ways of life and life

---

<sup>224</sup> Ragongning Gangmei, "Huay: Speciality of the Zeliangrongs" in *North East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-Cum-Seminar 1995*, 1

<sup>225</sup> M. Horam, *Nagas Old Ways New Trends*, (New Delhi: Cosmos Publication, 1988) 49

achievements are preserved in their songs. Folk songs and ritual hymns are mostly sung in Liangmai dialect or in improvised form region to region and village to village. The songs and hymns vary according to festivals, work, war and sacrifice etc for all occasions to be sung individually or in groups. Competitions of traditional songs are common and popular among boys and girls in various festivals and cultural functions. It is compulsory for every boy and girl to learn and know singing and dancing.<sup>226</sup> Children learn songs both from home and their respective dormitories. As singing is the best form of communication, they express themselves through their singings in times of both sorrow and joy. Songs serves as important sources of traditions and history, and they are more reliable as songs seldom change. A simple song of few lines is a whole piece of history. Generally Zeliangrong folksongs can be divided into the following categories:<sup>227</sup>

- Chahot/Tachen lui (Work songs based on agriculture operation)
- Tathoi/Rathak lui (Ritual songs sung during the religious ceremonial dances)
- Atit/Achetbo lui (Harvest songs)
- Changee/Cha-ga lui (Festival songs)
- Magiangbo lui (Praising songs sung on the occasion of wedding)
- Chari lui (Warrior songs sung by the warrior guarding the village)
- Chakin thiubo/Khangliu lui (Romantic songs)
- Luichang (Poetical lyrics)
- Lullaby (children songs)

The Zeliangrong people are very fond of dancing and they are also known for good dancing. It is interesting to learn that the talented artist of ancient people imitates the habitual movements of animals, birds, insects, and cyclone etc. Zeliangrong dances may be broadly classified as ritual dances, war dances, and nature imitating dances. Dance is the art in which the Zeliangrongs find supreme expression of their sense of rhythm and delight. They have elaborate dance costumes and ornaments. The musical instruments are the wood hallowed drum covered in two sides by the animal's skin,

---

<sup>226</sup> Poujairung Thaimai, "The Theatrical Movement in Zeliangrong Society" in *North East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-Cum-Seminar 1995*, 53 .

<sup>227</sup> *A Brief Account of Zeliangrong Nagas*, 42

the horn of the mithun or common bull, the cymbal and the gong. Many dancers dance to celebrate victory in war with spear, shield and dao leap about, spin their spears and utter shouts of challenge. They also have varieties of other dances which are named after the manner in which hands and feet's are executed to resemble the movements of a bird or an insect or an animal. They dance in festivals and in special occasions. The singers and the musicians arrange themselves on either side of the spacious dancing ground, around which the spectators wait to watch the performance. B.B. Ghosh in his book *History of Nagaland* gives the best attributes to the Zeliangrong Naga dance when he said:

*“The Zeliangrong people are very good dancers and their woman also dance together with the men. Of all the dances of the Naga tribes, the dance of the Zeliangrong is the best”.*<sup>228</sup>

### **2.2.9. Chapun and Tatiu Teta (Dress and Ornaments)**

The Zeliangrong people knew the art of weaving since the ancient days. They use various kinds of dresses on the basis of gender, age and occasions. The dress and ornaments reflects the culture of the people.<sup>229</sup> Their clothes are woven by women in their traditional looms in varied styles, colors and designs. They learn the art of spinning and weaving at their young age from their mothers and also in their dormitory. It is also a prestige for a girl to produce fine clothes which matters a lot for their marriage. The clothes may be broadly divided into daily wear, festival wear for both the sexes, as well as warrior dress etc. Dresses are also worn according to their social status. The Zeliangrong people wear ornaments especially during festivals and special occasions. Their ornaments are mostly made of brass, lead, beads, shells and others. Colorful dresses are worn by both male and female during dances.

Some of the important Liangmai dresses are: Ngumthauphai, Nkuangphai, Tasini, Lithuina, Phaijjiana.<sup>230</sup> They also have other dresses like Lohephai, Tatiuni, Phaimiuphai, Nithiuna, Langhuiphai, Langzinina, Tanina, Chakhenphai, etc. Some of the important Zeme dresses are: Nampame, Njingeo, Mareipan, Paimeu, Langtapai,

---

<sup>228</sup> B. B. Ghosh, *History of Nagaland*, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, 1982), 260

<sup>229</sup> *A Brief Account of Zeliangrong Nagas*, .39-40

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Hungambo Chawang of Ntu village on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

Mleupai, Taktui, Henipai, Npaimang, Nphathik, Imphai, etc. And some of the important Rongmei dresses are: Sinaiphei, Themphei, Mareipan, Pheingao, Masin Pheipong, Kharamphei, Lengli Pheishoi, Pheisoi and Nai, etc. Some of the important ornaments are: Chapuangta, Chakeng, Leta, Tabin, Taniutatiu, Tiuke, Tiuchang, Telatiu, Tapengtiu, Tiuphi, Kejutiu, Tiurong, etc.

### **2.3. Religious life**

Culture would be a different kind of reality without religion. The cultural character of religion cannot be ignored. Religious beliefs and practices are endemic to culture. For the believer, religion is the soul of culture and a means that gives meaning to life. Religion animates culture while being structured by it. The influence of religion on culture is paramount and often is the source of cultural coding of human behavior. From the interface of religion and culture emerges a worldview- a system of values, an ethos and an ideology that orient action. Religion is essentially a quest for meaning to fundamental questions of human existence. It is communion with the reality of life and the reality of the ultimate. The quest and the answers to it are closely associated with the way people experience, interpret, organize and celebrate life, and the human relationship they establish.

The tribal religion has been still designated as animism and primitive<sup>231</sup> and therefore, considered inferior. However, the recent studies disagreed with the terms like ‘animism’ or ‘primitive’ as such terms are not applicable to the tribal religion because it has a very negative connotation. “Traditional religion” will be a suitable term. It may be wrong to say that the people worshipped hills, trees, rocks, streams, oceans, animals and objects. The tribal religion does not have a sacred scripture or scriptures like other religion. However, the religious ethos is contained in the people’s hearts, minds, oral history and rituals. Gangmumei, pointed out that the Zeliangrong people had a well developed religion. It is traditional religion which was historically evolved and based on various customs and traditions.<sup>232</sup> The traditional Zeliangrong people do not have the name of their religion yet they were very religious people. They had a

---

<sup>231</sup> A. Wati Longchar, *The Tribal Religious Traditions in North East India: An Introduction*, (Jorhat: A. Wati Longchar, 2000), 6

<sup>232</sup> Gangmumei, *The Zeliangrong Religion: Its Theology and Philosophy, Some Observations*, (Imphal: Manipur University, 1992), 1

deep consciousness of the Supreme Being/God. They see the Supreme Being as being actively present in all creation. The beautiful creation signifies the presence of the Supreme Being. The ethical concept of religious life of the Zeliangrongs cannot be separated from their cosmic relationship and with God. They understood life of the community in totality; which means there was a profound relationship between God-human-creations. The Zeliangrong people also believe in the existence of spirits. Moreover, traditional religion has the concept of life after death (land of the dead and land of better place).

Every Zeliangrong village has a priest whose function is to offer sacrifices for the rich harvest, for healing the sick, and for the general welfare and safety of the entire village. Other important duties of the priests are to name children and to conduct marriage etc. Worship and sacrifice of the Zeliangrong people is mostly associated with festivals, genna (declared a particular day as “holy day” by prohibiting physical works) and many other customary practices. Household rituals are performed by the head of the family; father.

### **2.3.1. Charawang/Tingwang (Concept of Supreme Being)**

R. Brown, a British Political Agent of Manipur recorded in his book *Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur and the Hill Territory under its Rule* (1874) of the Zeliangrong’s belief in the Supreme Being:

*“The Kowpoi (ie, Rongmei and Puime) believes in one supreme deity whose nature is benevolent. This deity is the creator of all things”.*<sup>233</sup>

It is believed that Supreme Being alone is uncreated (eternal) being and everything including spirits, devils, gods, are created and born. The sacrifices and offering made to other spirits and gods are just to set them free from their control and attack and not acts of worshipping them. It is believed that all evils are caused and bring forth by the evil spirits. However, the Supreme Being is worshipped affectionately with reverence. The Supreme Being is believed to be the giver of all blessings and fortunes to all.<sup>234</sup> He is the most powerful and all spirits are under his control. Though the Zeliangrong

---

<sup>233</sup> R. Brown, *Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur and the Naga Hill Territory under its Rule*, (Delhi: K.M Mittal, 1975) 27

<sup>234</sup> Dichamang Pamei, *Liberty to Captives*, 54

people do not have a clear reference of the concept of hell or what will happen to the wicked person after death, as in Christianity, the idea of the immortality of the soul even after a person dies is clearly spelt out. However, there are certain stories told regarding the soul of who live a good life and evil life. In short, they believed in the idea of life after death.

The traditional religion has all the basic features of religious beliefs, practices and moral teachings based on oral traditions and customs, though they did not have written text.<sup>235</sup> The Zelingrongs attributes to the Supreme Being in the following ways:

- Charawang/Tingwang (Supreme Being) is an eternal being.<sup>236</sup>
- He is the creator of the universe.<sup>237</sup>
- He is omniscient, kind and just.
- He is the sustainer of all living being on earth.
- He is believed to be in heaven judging every nation.
- He awards every soul according to one's deeds on earth (which means the Zeliangrong people believed that the human soul is immortal. They believed in life after death).
- He is the sovereign God at the same time loving and merciful.
- He is the source of knowledge and wisdom.<sup>238</sup>

### 2.3.2. Belief of Spirits

Like any other tribal people, the Zeliangrongs also believe in the existence of many spirits. They believed in both benevolent and malevolent spirits. Benevolent spirits

---

<sup>235</sup> Renthly Keitzar, "A Study of the North-East Indian Tribal Christian Theology", in *Society and Culture in North-East India: A Christian Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1996), 120

<sup>236</sup> Tingwang is an eternal being; no beginning and no ending, not created. He is the creator of soul and the ultimate God of the soul. For details see, Gangmumei Kamei, *Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak: The Zeliangrong Primordial Religion* (Imphal: The Zeliangrong Religious Council Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, 2005), 6

<sup>237</sup> The Zeliangrong people believe in the eternal existence of one Supreme God; has no beginning. He is the creator of the universe, gods, men and all living beings. He is the regulator of the universe, giver, and source of life, dispenser of plenty and justice. He is called Tingwang or lord of the heaven and also called Ting Kao Ragwang. He is believed to be omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. For details see, Gangmumei Kamei, *Essay on Primordial Religion* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2006), 65.

<sup>238</sup> Chaoba Kamson, *Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak (TRC): The Speech*, Imphal 5<sup>th</sup> September 2010, 1-30

(good spirits) are believed to be the one who cared for the people, grant good harvest, shower material prosperity, save them from natural calamities etc. Sacrifices were made in honor and pleaded to continue to take care of their future. People offer sacrifices to the benevolent spirits out of reverence and love but not out of fear. Malevolent spirits (bad spirits) are believed to be always dangerous and destructive, and responsible for all misfortunes like causing of sickness, madness, death, damage of properties and all kinds of misfortunes. They are believed to reside in the rivers, lakes, rocks, mountains, thick jungles and in village outskirts etc. The Malevolent spirits are not worshipped. However, in order to propitiate them lest they do harm, people had to offer sacrifices of domestic animals, food and rice beer.<sup>239</sup> Only Supreme Being is worshipped.

#### **2.4. Economic Life**

The economic life of the Zeliangrong people was in general prosperous in the sense that every family owned their land and supports their livelihood. At the same time their land is being blessed with rich natural resources from the forests.

Traditionally, the Zeliangrong people were hard working people and egalitarian aspects was deeply rooted in their lives. They shared their belongings. The Zeliangrong people had enough land to till and led a life of self-sufficiency, which means poverty is not found among the people. There is no beggar in the traditional society. It can be said that unemployment was unknown to the people as no one idled about because people took care of each other. The rich provided foods to the poor neighbors.

Agriculture was their main occupation with shifting cultivation as the main method of cultivation. Besides they also grow horticultural crops in and around their village. People also practiced art and crafts; every necessary item such as clothes, shawls, tools, furniture, and others were produced within the family and village. Barter system was also practiced where they exchange according to their needs. They not only exchanged their products in their village alone, but they had trade relations with the neighboring villages and tribes. In the absence of money, people use baskets, cotton,

---

<sup>239</sup> Dichamang Pamei, *Liberty to Captives*, .53

paddy, salt, and animals like fowl, pig etc, as the currency or medium of exchange. There were folksongs which indicate the abundance or self-sufficient life. One very famous song goes as under:<sup>240</sup>

<b>Liangmai</b>	<b>English</b>
<p>Sangmai aluzam meng ngau lou</p> <p>Amusi keng mai phung kam lulak</p> <p>Abui dung ngau lou abuokam tepuang techang kum hai wiye</p> <p>Zeliang mai pu go yo kasa mai cho ali toh</p> <p>Kawi lui ruang alit sun ne lin khe</p>	<p>Lo! Strangers saw the plentiful crops of my field unable to gather,</p> <p>Watch out my cattle they have grown as good like elephant</p> <p>Man of Zeliang never liken the wicked but let us compete for the good bard</p>

#### **2.4.1. Agriculture**

Climatic conditions relate closely to agricultural productions, which in turn are frequently governed by knowing the best time for sowing and harvesting: a connection which the farmers often calculated on the basis of a lunar-solar calendar. The main source of livelihood for the Zeliangrong people is Agriculture. They cultivate and produce for their direct necessities and consumptions. The slash and burn method known as Malonglu/Ramluang (Jhuming) is the common pattern of cultivation. Jhum cultivation or jhuming is described as the oldest basic industry which is followed by the introduction of terracing. It is known as the shifting

---

<sup>240</sup> This Liangmai folksong is collected from Lunphu Nring of Nchangram village in July 2015. The above song indicates that the Zeliangs (Zeliangrongs) were self-reliance and hard working people admired even by the strangers. It can be assumed that the land is blessed with natural resources like green forest, rivers, animals and abundance of rainfalls. The song also indicates that domestication of cattle and animals were part and parcel of Zeliangrong occupation. Imparting ethical and moral values to young ones was taken seriously. Young people were taught how to be respectful, polite, honest, kind, dignity of labor, skillful, create harmony in relationships and to be united to make life meaningful.

cultivation. The shifting is done in a cyclical way from one area to another area so as to enable the soil to regain its fertility.<sup>241</sup>

In Jhuming the Zeliangrong people have the practice of cultivating together a particular area by the whole village or in group provided the area is big enough. The reasons behind this practice are to save the crops from birds and animals and also to protect one another even from the enemies' attack. After the area is determined, the trees and shrubs are cut down sometime in winter and then set ablaze sometimes in Karehiu (February-March), when the cut trees and shrubs are fully dried. Soon after it, the fields are cultivated and seed is shown. The early crops and the latter crops are harvested sometimes during Changihui (August-September) and Chagahui (October-November) respectively. Chamui (rice) is the main crop. Tathiu (millet), mangte (maize), Kabi/Chariu (yam), Chalang (cotton), potato, cabbage, N-ziang nui (mustard leaf), Aseu (soya bean), etc, are also grown abundantly in the jhum field. The Zeliangrong people also practice Taduili (terrace cultivation). The terrace field is possible due to the geographical suitability. Although terrace cultivation involves more labor input, its harvest is more advantageous. Having many terrace fields is a prestige for the possessor because they are counted as permanent wealth.

#### **2.4.2. Domestication of Animals**

Domestication of animals plays an important role in the economy of the Zeliangrong people. They rear animals for their food, for hunting, for working in the field, for guarding the houses and for sales, etc. Some of the important or common domestic animals are Marui (*chicken*), Kaniuh/Apam (*duck*), Tathi (*dog*), Nguina (*cat*), Kabak (*pig*), Matum (*cow*), Alui (*buffalo*), Buichang (*mithun*) Kami (*goat*), etc. Keeping poultry and other animals is a part of living of every home and people. Mithun is considered as highly prized animal which is used to settle the dispute, pay as fine, bride price, marriage ceremonies, feast of prestige and religious ceremonies. The Zeliangrong festivals and feasts were often involved with several heads of animals; therefore, domestication of animals became part and parcel of Zeliangrong

---

<sup>241</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, 26

occupation. So many people take up fishing as their professions and earn money for their livelihood.

### **2.4.3. Crafting**

Zeliangrong people crafted all their needed utensils out of wood, cane and bamboos. They made different patterns and designs which are indispensable part of their daily life. Crafting was very important as they were made for varieties of uses. The crafts practiced may be divided into the following ways<sup>242</sup>:

- Carrying baskets
- Storage baskets
- Wooden plates, cups and spoons
- Comb making
- Rain-shade
- Shallow circular and rectangular containers
- Fishing equipments
- War equipments like spear, handles of dao, shields and anklets
- Musical instruments like flute, wooden drum, trumpet, etc.

Cane is used as complementary material while making laces, straps, boarder-finishing, leg bindings, etc. In short, most of the household carrying and storage equipments are the products of cane, wood and bamboo. Zeliangrong people also were known for wood carvings. The carvings on wood were of conventional designs which varied from one place to another. The morung (bachelor's dormitory) pillars were adorned with the representations of humans, tigers, elephants, hornbills, pythons, lizards and mithun's head, etc, which are carved on high relief. Rich people's house also was designed with all the beautiful carvings.

---

<sup>242</sup> C.P. Lungkubon, "Traditional Arts and Crafts of the Zeliangrongs", in *North East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival- Cum-Seminar 1995*, 44

## **Conclusion**

Generally elders and scholars agreed with that the ancestors of Zelingrong people lived at Makuilongdi for many generations which is located at Senapati district, Manipur. Several reasons prompted the exodus from Makuilongdi. The study indicates that Zeliangrongs were cultured people, politically well-organized, economically self-sufficient, lover of music and religious people. They were cheerful and have a sense of hospitality, honesty, faithfulness and courageous. The Zeliangrong cultural life revolves around the village community through institutions like village council/court, dormitory system and family. They consider the community life more important than that of an individual person. Whatever is done by a person should be acceptable with the social norms which bind the community. They help one another in times of need and also share the joy together. Moreover, every citizen had a responsibility to the village council or court which provides an easy administration and firm organization.

Today, Zeliangrong people are found in the three states of North East India- Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. The above mentioned customs and practices of the people is an answer to what outsiders questioned about the traditional Zeliangrong society. When there is so much beauty in the Zeliangrong culture that needs to be tapped, it must be done at an accelerating speed since many of the records are passing away with time. The beautiful stories are embedded in the deep memory of the older or aged people who are passing away with the unrecorded stories. Therefore, putting into writing the most annihilated cultures/stories is an important task of the Zeliangrong historians and scholars today.

## CHAPTER III

### Baptist Mission among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland

#### Introduction

The American Baptist Missionaries such as Rev. S. W. Rivenburg, Rev. A. B. Dickson, Mr. George William Supplee, Rev. Selander, and Rev. J. E. Tanquist etc, occasionally toured in the Zeliangrong region in Nagaland.<sup>243</sup> However, it was the native evangelists who played a major role in propagating the new religion (Christianity) among their own people.<sup>244</sup> It is observed that conversion with certain exception was initially from among the young people who attended the mission school and they were among the first converts who formed the nucleus of the Christian community in most villages and latter became agents of Christianity. Christian movement was more or less an indigenous effort. The local evangelists and first converts played a very important role in propagating the new religion (Christianity). However, people's involvement were not given due credit. Therefore, the researcher attempts to write the history of Christianity among the Zeliangrongs from people's/insider's perspective.

#### 3.1. History of the Baptists

A member of a group of Protestant Christians who share the basic beliefs of most Protestants but who hold as an article of faith that believers should be baptized and that it must be done by immersion.<sup>245</sup> According to Jerusalem-Jordan-John Theory or Secessionist Theory, Baptists have been in existence ever since the days of John the Baptist's ministries along the Jordan River.<sup>246</sup> However, the Spiritual Kinship Theory states differently. The second theory holds that there is a succession of regenerated

---

<sup>243</sup> *Benreu Baptist Church Centenary Souvenir, February 7-9, 1997*, (Benreu: Centenary Souvenir Committee, BBC Nagaland 1977), 26

<sup>244</sup> Interview with Rev. Deuhing Nsarangbe (95 years old) on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015. He is one of the pioneer evangelists among the Zemes in Nagaland.

<sup>245</sup> Peter B. Norton, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol.1*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1950) 878

<sup>246</sup> Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, (Philadelphia: The Jordan Press, 1950), 59

baptized believers throughout the centuries until one meets the Christians called “Baptists” in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>247</sup>

The modern Baptist movement arose in Europe early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a later result of the Reformation.<sup>248</sup> Because of persecution, two separatist groups of English immigrants moved to Holland. The Gainsborough branch was the first to leave England, probably in 1607. Led by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys a group of Separatists established in Amsterdam.<sup>249</sup> In 1609 the first Baptist congregation began under the leadership of John Smyth.<sup>250</sup> John contended that churches practicing infant baptism were false constitutions and that to institute the practice of believer’s baptism was to create a church of a true constitution.<sup>251</sup> Some of the first congregation soon returned home in 1612 and formed the first Baptist church at Spitalfields in London under the leadership of Thomas Helwys. This group came to be called “*General Baptist*”. They taught the universal reconciliation of the race by God in Christ which individual Christians ratify by their faith. They showed a strong sense of interdependence.<sup>252</sup> In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the General Baptist declined in number and influence.<sup>253</sup>

Another strand of English Baptist life began in 1633 when a group connected with a Calvinistic separatist Church in London broke away to adopt believer’s baptism. This group came to be called the “*Particular Baptist*”. They taught the reconciliation of specific people whom God has predestined to salvation. Their Church order was more independent.<sup>254</sup> After 1750, the Methodist Movement and new interests in evangelism influenced them and missions brought about renewed growth. Through the leadership of William Carey, the English Baptist Missionary Society was organized in 1792, and William Carey was sent to India as the Society’s first missionary. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century

---

<sup>247</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*, (Shillong: Vendramine Missiological Institute, 1984)19

<sup>248</sup> J.D. Douglas, *New 20<sup>th</sup> Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991)58

<sup>249</sup> Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptist*, 62

<sup>250</sup> Eerdmans Brill, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol. 1*, (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1999) 197

<sup>251</sup> J. D. Douglas, *New 20<sup>th</sup> Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 58

<sup>252</sup> Peter B. Norton, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 1*, 878

<sup>253</sup> The General Baptists were continued by a new group organized in 1770, the New Connection General Baptists, who had influenced by the Methodist revival led by John Wesley.

<sup>254</sup> Eerdmans Brill, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol. 1*, 197

the two groups came together in a union, having settled their conflict about reconciliation and predestination.

### **3.1.1. First Baptist Church in America**

American Baptists largely trace their origins to England. As early as 1631 Roger Williams<sup>255</sup> left England to escape the persecution of Archbishop Charles Laud. He was banished because of his demand for the separation of Church and State. He fled with his family and a few company into the wilderness of Rhode Island. In the course of time he won confidence of the people and established the first Baptist Congregation in 1639, which is generally considered as the first Baptist Church in America. They renounced the baptism they had received in their infancy and took up another baptism. Quickly Williams was followed by other Baptist exiles from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.<sup>256</sup> Though Rhode Island remained a Baptist stronghold, the centre of Baptist life in colonial America was Philadelphia.<sup>257</sup> The first supra-congregational association was formed in 1707, and the Philadelphia Baptist Association proceeded to sponsor new Baptist churches throughout the colonies. Baptist growth was spurred by the Great Awakening<sup>258</sup> of the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3.1.2. The Formation of the American Board of Commission for Foreign Mission**

A group of students at Andover Seminary proposed to the Congregational Association of Massachusetts in 1810 for the formation of Foreign Mission Board. Thus the American Board of Commission for Foreign Mission was incorporated in 1812.<sup>259</sup> The Board's purpose was to propagate the new religion (Christianity) in heathen lands by supporting missionaries and diffusing the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>260</sup> In

---

<sup>255</sup> William Roger was born in London probably in the year 1603, graduated in 1627 from Cambridge, probably ordained in the Church of England. Williams immigrated with his wife Mary to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1631. Ensuing conflict with the authorities over his religious views, he was banished in 1635. For reference see, Gerald H. Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998)737

<sup>256</sup> J. D. Douglas, *New 20<sup>th</sup> Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 61

<sup>257</sup> Peter B. Norton, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 1,878

<sup>258</sup> The term Great Awakening is applied to a widespread religious revival in the USA beginning about 1726

<sup>259</sup> A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000) 55

<sup>260</sup> A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 55

1812 the Board set apart Judson, Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, and Gordon Hall for the Asiatic field. Luther Rice was added at the last moment.<sup>261</sup> Judson and Samuel Newell with their wives Nancy and Harriet respectively set sailed for Calcutta, India on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1812.<sup>262</sup> Judson changed his mind of being baptized again.<sup>263</sup> Consequently Judson and his wife Nancy were baptized (immersed) in the baptistery of Carey's Calcutta Lal Bazaar Chapel on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1812 by William Ward. Luther Rice and others sailed two weeks later. At the advised of Judson, Luther Rice was baptized on 1<sup>st</sup> November of the same year. The news of baptism created a missionary awareness among the Baptist of America. In 1813 Luther Rice returned to America, and Judson's sailed to Burma. Latter, the Baptists in America decided upon to sponsor the Judson's as their first foreign missionary couple and thus Burma became their first foreign mission field. It was with the initiative of Francis Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam that America Baptist Mission of Burma designated two missionary families to Assam. From Assam it reached the Naga Hills.

### **3.2. Early Baptist Mission contacts in North East India**

The American Baptist Mission in Burma was asked if they would be willing to begin a work at Sadiya<sup>264</sup> Assam, in upper Assam.<sup>265</sup> Among the officers who served in the region (Assam) in the early years of British rule, the most important was Francis Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam. He played an important role in the entry of Baptist Missionaries to Assam. He invited what was then called the American Baptist Missionary Union to sent missionaries to sent missionaries to Assam, assuring them of protection and personal assistance. With the receipt of letter from Francis Jenkins,<sup>266</sup> the Burma Mission designated two of its missionary families; the Nathan

---

<sup>261</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Mission in Nagaland*, 48

<sup>262</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Mission in Nagaland*, 48

<sup>263</sup> Milton S. Sangma, *History of American Baptist Mission in North East India 1836-1950*, Vol. 1, (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987), 7

<sup>264</sup> A very important town in upper Assam during the early period, which was latter destroyed by earthquake.

<sup>265</sup> Fredrick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of the Baptist Churches in the North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, (Guwahati; Christian Literature Centre, 1971) 16

<sup>266</sup> In his letter, Jenkins mentioned that the missionaries would labor under their protection, and not be liable to those checks, which the Rangoon Mission has constantly suffered from the jealousy and barbarity of the Ava (Burmese) government. The government also promised to contribute Rs:

Brown and Eliza Brown accompanied by Oliver Cutter<sup>267</sup> and Harriet Cutter for Sadiya Mission.<sup>268</sup> They arrived at Calcutta in September 1835, and started for Sadiya by river on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1835. Finally they arrived at Sadiya on 23rd March 1836 after a strenuous journey up the Brahmaputra River. They soon took up residence in a house, a short distant away from the British garrison and began their work. Their mission was to work among the Khamtis and Singphos.<sup>269</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> July 1837,<sup>270</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Miles Bronson and Mrs. Thomas<sup>271</sup> joined them. The following year, the Bronson's moved to Jaipur at the suggestion of C. A. Bruce<sup>272</sup> to organize work there for Singphos. But it was the Nagas and not the Singphos, who attracted the attention of Bronson. These Nagas lived at Namsang village<sup>273</sup> just above the Jaipur outpost. Bronson found them (Nagas) friendlier than the Singphos, and could communicate with them in Assamese.

The missionaries could not stay long at Sadiya due to the hostility of the Kamptis. They attacked Sadiya on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1839. Anticipating further disturbance in the future, the missionaries abandoned Sadiya and moved to Jaipur on the edge of the Naga Hills in May 1839. There the British established new headquarters.<sup>274</sup> The missionaries left Sadiya without even a single convert. Jaipur would still have been a suitable centre for Shan work if it had been found possible to established contact with

---

1,000. For more detailed discussion of this letter, see Fredrick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India: North East India in the Nineteenth Centuries, Vol. V, Part 5, (Bangalore: CHAI, 2003)*41

<sup>267</sup> Cutter, a printer was included because Jenkins offered Rs: 2,000, (Rs: 1000 initially and the rest after a year if the installation was successful) towards the expenses of setting up a printing press.

<sup>268</sup> Milton S. Sangtam, *History of American Baptist Mission in North East India 1836-1950, Vol. 1, (Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1987), 26*

<sup>269</sup> Khamtis and Singphos are believed to be two tribes of the great Shan family. These two tribes occupied in the North East district. It is believed that Khamtis at Sadiya were not only a nuisance, but treacherous and tricky demon worshippers as well. This could be another reason why the British government invited the missionaries to work in this area and Christianized them.

<sup>270</sup> Milton S. Sangma, in his book *History of American Baptist Mission in North East India 1836-1950, (Vol. I)* in page number 34 points out that Bronsons and Mrs. Jacob Thomas reached Sadiya on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1837. However, Puthuvail Thomas Philip in his book *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective, (Shillong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984)*, in page number 48 states differently. He writes that Bronsons reached Sadiya on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1837.

<sup>271</sup> Unfortunately Thomas was killed by a tree that fell on their boat, on their way to Sadiya.

<sup>272</sup> An Evangelical Anglican British officer (who latter became a Baptist), in-charge of the Tea experimental plantation near Sadiya.

<sup>273</sup> The Namsang village, located in the Southeast of Jaipur is today part of the Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh

<sup>274</sup> Puthuvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland, 48*

the Singphos. But as the prospect of the Shan Mission proved impossible, more attention was given to the work among the Assamese. As Brown was advocating for mission among the Assamese in the Plains, Bronson opted for Naga mission.<sup>275</sup> Bronson made tours among the Nagas. He translated two or three books and finally he moved to the hills on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1840<sup>276</sup> and commenced his work among the Nagas at Namsang.<sup>277</sup> Bronson's love for Naga mission can be seen from the letter of N. Brown dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 1838 in which he requested the Home Board in America for a missionary to help the Naga work<sup>278</sup> of which Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Barker were appointed for the Naga work on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1839. Rhoda Bronson, sister of Bronson soon joined her brother in 1840. However, Mr. and Mrs. Barkers who had come for the Naga work changed their mind in favor of Assamese work. Rhoda became ill and passed away on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1840. The Browns and the Cutters were more convinced that the Nagas were not worth all the trouble in comparison with a possible future harvest among the Assamese. With this, seems to end the early Naga mission without even a single convert.

Missionaries concentrated the work among the Assamese and established schools in Jaipur in Assamese medium. However, similar to Sadiya, the Jaipur mission remained for a short while. As there were few Assamese people living in Jaipur area, it was necessary to find a new centre closer to a place where large numbers of Assamese lived. Another reason could be due to the unhealthiness of the place. Sibsagar was finally decided upon. Nearly six years of labor put in the Sadiya, Jaipur and Namsang fields bore no fruits with the subsequent tragic events. Following this event, the long cherished dream of Shan mission came to an end and diverted in favor of the mission among the Assamese.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May 1841, the Bakers moved into the Northern bank of the great tank at Sibsagar. According to F. S. Downs, Sibsagar was the first permanent center of

---

<sup>275</sup> Victor Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam: A Century of Missionary service 1836-1936* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1992) 66

<sup>276</sup> However Milton S. Sangma recorded that Bronsons moved to Namsang on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1840.

<sup>277</sup> Puthuvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 50

<sup>278</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 50

mission work in Assam.<sup>279</sup> A young Assamese boy by name Nidhima, a former student at Sadiya School was converted and baptized on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1841 by Bronson.<sup>280</sup> The Browns also shifted to Sibsagar in July 1841. Bronson, though reluctant to leave the Namsang village, was impressed by the Sibsagar. While he (Bronson) relinquished the work among the Nagas, he did so with the hope that by winning the Assamese, the Nagas would also come to know Christ.

Initially, the work among the Assamese showed fast progress. Conversion took place in the plains of Assamese valley. And though the work among the Nagas did not continue, a few Nagas were converted from time in the Assam plains.<sup>281</sup> Around 1846-1847, a Naga named Hubi (probably a Konyak Naga) was baptized.<sup>282</sup> Unfortunately he died of Cholera within a few months.<sup>283</sup> The second Naga to receive baptism was Longjanglepzuk, an Ao from Merangkong village. However, it is said that he was killed during a raid on his village.<sup>284</sup> Though the dates given for his conversion in various reports range from 1850 to 1857, the traditional date of 1851 is probably correct. Of the same man, S. W. Rivenburg writes:

*“In the year 1851 Rev. S.W. Whiting in charge of the mission at Sibsagar, Assam, baptized a Naga from Merangkong village of the Ao tribe. This man was then living at Sibsagar. But in short time he was there an attack was made on the village by its enemies and this man was killed. For two or three years of his Church membership at Sibsagar, he is said to have lived an exemplary life. If he taught Christianity in the few days he was visiting the village of his youth, his instruction made no lasting impression.”*<sup>285</sup>

---

<sup>279</sup> Frederick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, 28

<sup>280</sup> Elungkiebe Zeliang, *Pioneer Missionaries of North East India: Selected Missionaries*, vol. 1, 11

<sup>281</sup> Puthuvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 50

<sup>282</sup> Most of the historians considered Hubi to be baptized by Bronson at Sibsagar on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1847. Then he was the first Naga convert.

<sup>283</sup> Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. V, 82

<sup>284</sup> Puthenvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 51

<sup>285</sup> Rivenburg, *Historical Sketch of the Ao Naga Mission* (1889), 80

Yahukonsi Naga is believed to be baptized on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1852.<sup>286</sup> Two other Nagas named Aklong Konyak and Amlai Konyak of Namsang village are also believed to be baptized at Sibsagar by Browns in 1855.<sup>287</sup> The story goes on to say that their own villagers exterminated two of them when they try to preach the about the new religion (Christianity). With this, the mission among the Nagas was never heard again until the 1870's.

### 3.3. Edward Clark's Mission in Nagaland

The reopening of the Naga mission was the work of two families- namely Godhula Brown and his wife Lucy, and Edward Winter Clark and his wife Mary Mead Clark.

Edward Winter Clark and his wife Mary Mead Clark set sail from Boston for Assam on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1868 and arrived at Sibsagar on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1869.<sup>288</sup> It was here at Sibsagar that the Clarks met the Nagas<sup>289</sup> and developed interest in them.<sup>290</sup> Clark and Godhula<sup>291</sup> began to learn about the Ao Naga people, their language and culture from those who use to visit the plains of Sibsagar, Assam. However, the British government<sup>292</sup> and even his own mission board in America did not permit Clark to

---

<sup>286</sup> Puthenvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 51

<sup>287</sup> Yaden, *Nagaland* (Delhi: New Laxmi Press, 1970) 54

<sup>288</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*, (Shillong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984),56

<sup>289</sup> Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India*, (Philadelphia: America Baptist Publication Society, 1907) 9

<sup>290</sup> Nagas used to come down from their mountain to trade in the Sibsagar bazaars, bringing their bamboo mats and baskets in exchange for salt and other necessary articles not obtainable in the hills. In their frequent visits they came to the mission press. To this people (Nagas), the Press building, with it's typesetting, printing, and binding of books was the wonder of the wonders. And it was here that Clark became deeply interested for the Naga Mission.

<sup>291</sup> Godhula was the eldest son of Kolibor, a Sibsagar washer man. He had his primary education in the Orphan school at Nowgong. It is said that Godhula used to disturb the missionaries. But latter he completely changed his life and was converted to Christianity. He was appointed as a teacher in the Sibsagar mission school where Clark made use of him in learning Assamese. See *Joseph Puthenpurakal, Baptist Mission in Nagaland*, 63.

<sup>292</sup> The Inner Line Permit Regulations (1873), prohibited permission for Europeans to any grants beyond the line or under tenure derived directly from any chief or tribe. See S.K. Barpujari, *Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills: An Assessment of their activities*, *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. XLVIII, Part II, (August, 1970) 429

enter the un-administer territory. So Clark decided to send Godhula, who was willing to do so.<sup>293</sup>

With Clark's encouragement and also with the assistance of Supongmeren<sup>294</sup> (along with village traders), Godhula visited Molungkimong, Nagaland in October 1871. The people suspected him to be a spy of the British. Latter the people changed their attitude towards Godhula.<sup>295</sup> By April 1872, Godhula made at least five visits to the Nagas.<sup>296</sup> Gudhula and his wife made a historical trip to Molungkimong village in October 1872 and returned to Sibsagar with nine young men from Molungkimong.<sup>297</sup> They were baptized by Clark in Dikhu River on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1872 and made them the members of Sibsagar Church.<sup>298</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> December 1872, Clark made the first trip to Ao Naga Hills along with Godhula, Supongmeren and sixty Naga warriors as escort and reached Molungkimong on 18<sup>th</sup> December around 12 noon. Clark baptized 15 people on 22<sup>nd</sup> December (Sunday) 1872. The following day Clark returned to Sibsagar leaving the entire task of evangelism to Godhula.<sup>299</sup> Established by the authentic historical evidences and the statements both by pioneer missionaries and contemporary leaders undoubtedly affirmed Molungkimong Village as the cradle of Christianity in Nagaland. A Monolith of "*Light to the Nagas*", erected at Molungkimong reads:

*"Molungkimong (Deka Haimong Village) authority sent 60 (sixty) warriors and Mr. Supongmeren to Sivasagar Mission Centre and escorted Dr. E. W. Clark to Molungkimong by this path through the dense and shelter less forest on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Dec. 1872 and established the*

---

<sup>293</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change, 1872-1972*, (Bangalore: Shalom Ministry Publications, 2004) 69

<sup>294</sup> There was a story about Supongmeren, an Ao Naga from Molungkimong village (in Mokokchung district) who went down to the plains of Sibsagar. And it was during this trip that he happened to meet Godhula. After staying with Godhula and his wife Lucy, he finally accepted Christ as his personal Savior. It is believed that he was baptized by Clark at Sibsagar in the early 1871. And the story goes on to say that Clark and Godhula might have learnt Ao Naga language, culture, and customs which were of great help in their latter mission among the Ao Naga community. See Puthuvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 51

<sup>295</sup> Fredrick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, .64. Also see N. Toshi Ao, *125 Years of Molungkimong Baptist Church: The First Church in Nagaland 1872-1997*, (Molungkimong: Molungkimong Baptist Church, 1997) 16

<sup>296</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 64

<sup>297</sup> Fredrick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, 65

<sup>298</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Source Material*, 71

<sup>299</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Source Material*, 76

*first Baptist Church in Naga soil on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Dec. 1972. In honor of Dr. E. W. Clark, mission walk from Sivasagar Mission Center to Molungkimong Village on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Jan. 2004 organized by Molungkimong Baptist Church under the guidance of Rev. Dr. N. Toshi and Smti. Sentikumla, along with American Baptist Missionaries Shri. Jeff Ward, Shri. Bruce Mc Clean, NBCC officials Rev. T. Lima Sangtam, Shri. Eringti. Honorable Minister of Tourism Nagaland Shri. Vatsu Meru consented Chief Guest of the occasion. Altogether 52 (fifty two) believers from different places participated ratifying this track "A Pilgrim Path."*<sup>300</sup>

The first baptismal service held at Molungkimong Naga village was the landmark Christian historical event on Naga soil. No Naga Church history can leave this date unnamed: the humble beginning of the Naga Church. To study the history of Christianity in Nagaland from insider's view or subaltern perspective, credit also must be given to the brave decision made by the Molungkimong Village Council to have brought Christianity to their land. Moreover, the credit must also be given to the courageous decision of Mr Supongmeren Ao to take Godhula to Molungkimong village. In the true sense, he (Supongmeren) became the bridge between Edward Clark of American Baptist Missionary, Assamese Evangelist Godhula and the Nagas; the cradle of Christianity in Nagaland.

Clark received permission from the Home Board to be transferred to the Naga work.<sup>301</sup> However, to live beyond the English flag at that time<sup>302</sup> required a special permission from the Viceroy of India, residing in Calcutta.<sup>303</sup> On making application, in the end the government granted permission to precede his mission journey at its own risk with the clear understanding that would not guarantee protection. Nothing stops Clark's love for mission and finally he landed at Molungkimong village on 2<sup>nd</sup>

---

<sup>300</sup> A Monolith of *LIGHT TO THE NAGAS*, erected at Molungkimong village in 2013.

<sup>301</sup> Fredrick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, .65

<sup>302</sup> While the British administration had already occupied the Angami Naga territory they did not want to extend their administration to other Naga area except incase of unavoidable circumstances. The government feels that the entry of the missionary in an unadministered area might disturb the environment.

<sup>303</sup> Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India*, 15-16

March 1876 for permanent mission.<sup>304</sup> He was deeply absorbed in learning the Ao language, customary laws, and local village administration. However, due to some unavoidable circumstances, Clark decided to shift from Molungkimong,<sup>305</sup> and as a result formed a new Christian village on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1876, known as Molungyimsen, the *first Naga Baptist Mission Centre* that was just three miles away from Molungkimong.<sup>306</sup> The tribes initially rejected any attempt to change their old customs. However, colonial take over made religious and social change vehemently eminent. In the following decades, mission work made some accomplishment with considerable aid from the British administration.

When Clark left on furlough to America in May 1885<sup>307</sup> there were already two churches such as Molungyimsen and Merangkong with thirty-six and seven members respectively. Clark returned in January 1887 and resumed his works<sup>308</sup> of preaching and baptizing. However, he increasingly dedicated to literary works.<sup>309</sup> Clark translated hymns and the bible, produced textbooks for schools, conducted Sunday schools, Sunday worship services, organized weekly prayer meetings and maintained village schools. It is understood that after several approaches, Chungtia, one of the Ao Naga villages has agreed upon to act as the foster parent of Molungyimsen. Latter, Molungkimong the original village of Molungyimsen too recognized them as their foster parent. Steadily, Churches in the Ao Naga region grew in numbers. By this time (1889), Ao area was already under the British administration. More missionaries

---

<sup>304</sup> Elungkiebe Zeliang, *Pioneer Missionaries of North East India: Selected Missionaries, Vol. I*, (Jorhat: Author, 2003), 47

<sup>305</sup> Scholars and elders give different views on the division of the Molungkimong village. Some argued that non-Christians would always insist on the Christians on observing the practices of drinking rice beer, festivals, etc and also expected to participate in the defense of the village as well as its raids. However, the Molungkimong people said that the main reason for division of the village was not because of Christianity but rather it was due to misunderstanding about the change of leadership in the original village (Molungkimong) and also of economic factors.

<sup>306</sup> E. W. Clark, *Beginnings of Naga Mission in Assam*, (Assam Baptist Missionary Conference of the ABFMS Report of the Twelfth Biennial Session held at Guwahati, January 4-13, 1913, 55

<sup>307</sup> When Rev. Sidney White Rivenburg and wife Elizabeth arrived at Molungyimsen in the early part of 1885, Clark handover the charge of the mission field to Rev. Rivenburg and left for America.

<sup>308</sup> Once again the Clarks took charge of the field from Rev. Revenburg. (Rev. Revenburgs were transferred to Kohima, the Government headquarters).

<sup>309</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 72

joined the mission field. Schools and churches were established in many villages. Thus literary and spiritual transformation took place simultaneously. The mission received grants and aids from the British officials too.<sup>310</sup> However, for many reasons Clark wanted to change the Mission Centre<sup>311</sup> and finally Impur (meaning “pioneer” or “citizen”) was decided upon. This was to become the centre of the Ao mission from that time onwards. Children from all over the Ao territory began to study at Impur Mission School. Young boys and girls from other tribes too poured into this school. Latter, the students (converts) were sent out to propagate the new religion (Christianity) which proved very successful. Impur Mission School produced able indigenous pastors, teachers and Christian leaders. Beginning from Ao territory (Impur), Christian mission extended to other parts of Nagaland. At present there are 20 Baptist Associations under the umbrella of Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), with its headquarter at Kohima.

### **3.4. Co-operation between Mission and Colonialism in Naga Hills**

As the government and missionaries penetrated the Naga Hills each party sought some benefit from each other even though their ultimate objectives were different. Certainly there were common fields of operations. Such collaborate efforts often helped the missionaries as well as British administration to further their objectives.

#### **3.4.1. Mission under Colonial Protection**

The missionaries enjoyed protection and moral support from the British Government. The opening of mission centers at Kohima in 1881 and Wokha in 1885 were in fact the sequel to the establishment of British civil and military stations.<sup>312</sup> Charles DeWitt

---

<sup>310</sup> After the annexation of Ao Naga territory in 1889, the British government started sanctioning grants to the mission schools at Impur mission center. Moreover, the government met expenses on upgrading the schools at Kohima. Many stories were told about the services rendered towards mission activities and vice versa. Then the question arises “if there was a cordial relationship between the British government and missionaries in Nagaland during the mission period?” For details see, Bendangyabang Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland*. Also see Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland* and Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*. However, we cannot deny the opposition between Mission and Government

<sup>311</sup> Shifting of Mission Centre from Molungyimsem to Impur could be of many reasons. Arrival of new missionary families made Molungyimsen very congested which closes the chapter of expansion. To locate near the government headquarter. And most of all Impur seems to be a better place to reach even to the neighboring tribes.

<sup>312</sup> In 1878 an outpost was established at Wokha. Consequently, British occupied Kohima in 1878 and made the chief administrative center.

King, a prominent American Baptist missionary who worked at Kohima Mission Field (1880-1886) made a brief exploration visit to Samaguting (Chumukedima) Nagaland, the headquarters of the British in 1879. It is recorded that he rented a government Bungalow, during his difficult times to which he was venturing.<sup>313</sup> S. W. Rivenburg while giving report of the Kohima Mission Field in 1886 said:

*“The presence of a regiment of infantry and five hundred armed police indicated that the day of peace was at hand and all points among the Nagas this appeared the most favorable for missionary labor.”*<sup>314</sup>

The above statements indicate that Christian missionaries enjoyed protection and moral support from the British government in the Naga Hills. Rev. Witter and Mrs. Witter with the approval of Government protection left Sibsagar for the Lotha territory in the hills. Accompanied by several sepoy and 100 Naga collies, on the evening of 9<sup>th</sup> April 1885, after varied and exciting experience of mountain travel, they reached Wokha station where the rest house was placed at their disposal by the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills.<sup>315</sup> Clark chose Impur as their mission center in 1894 because it was located near the government administrative headquarters<sup>316</sup> that it would give security, helpful in communication and easy access to government. It was also for the scope of expansion and for an effective ministry to the neighboring Naga tribes.<sup>317</sup>

### **3.4.2. Government Assistance towards Mission Work**

Colonel Buckingham along with ten of his Assam tea garden workers made a visit to the Naga Hills and donated Rs: 50/ to Clark to be utilized in mission work. The money was utilized in the establishment of the first school at Molungyimsen. Buckingham's company too donated the same amount for the mission work.<sup>318</sup> On the restoration of peace between the British and the Nagas (Angami area) C. D. King received permission from the government to enter the Naga Hills and finally reached

---

<sup>313</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 92

<sup>314</sup> Quoted from Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 69

<sup>315</sup> W.E. Witter, *Historical Sketch of the Lotha Naga Mission*, 90-91

<sup>316</sup> Ao Naga country was occupied in 1888, and in 1889 new administrative center was established in Mokokchung

<sup>317</sup> Bandanyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change*, 114-115

<sup>318</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change*, 94

Kohima on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1881.<sup>319</sup> The government and the missions' mutual needs were clearly recognized when in 1882 C.A. Elliot; Chief Commissioner of Assam declared his willingness to assist any missionary efforts to establish schools at Kohima with government's grants-in-aids.<sup>320</sup> It was with the help of a political officer at Kohima, C. D. King opened a school.<sup>321</sup> Government closely co-operated with missionaries in publication of school textbooks. Textbooks translated into tribal languages were mostly published at the expense of the government although Christian mission also partly met the cost of some publications.<sup>322</sup> The American Baptist missionaries living in Assam and Naga Hills entrusted C.D. King to obtain government permission for Wokha mission.<sup>323</sup> On government's positive response, William Ellsworth Witter and his family accompanied by several sepoys and 100 Naga collies reached Wokha station from Sibsagar on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1885. It is said that a rest house was placed at their disposal by the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills.<sup>324</sup> It is interesting to learn how Clark successfully persuaded Colonel Buckingham, the then in charge of tea garden about the Sunday markets.<sup>325</sup> The government agreed upon having markets on Saturdays which enabled the tea garden workers to rest on Sundays and observed their special day; Sunday.

### **3.4.3. Security from the Government**

On 4<sup>th</sup> April 1886 a group of people from Noagaon village attacked eight men from Molungkimong who went down in the plains for trade. Two were killed and one wounded. The same night a group of people from Noagaon raided the village, killed five men and burnt down the village completely. Molungyimsen villagers were warned for sheltering the people of Molungkimong. In such a helpless situation, Rivenburg who was taking charge of the Molungyimsen in absence of Clark sent messengers to Sibsagar and the sub divisional officer at Wokha. Within no time a force from Sibsagar arrived to guard Molungyimsen. During 6-7 June 1886, a force

---

<sup>319</sup> Keviyiekielie Linyu, *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, 68

<sup>320</sup> Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 69

<sup>321</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change*, 118

<sup>322</sup> Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 84

<sup>323</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change*, 122

<sup>324</sup> Piketo Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland*, 72

<sup>325</sup> With half-holiday on Saturdays, tea garden workers could take break and attend the Church service on Sundays

marched towards Noagaon and burnt down the village. The Noagaon village paid the collective fine of Rs: 200.<sup>326</sup> The period of Clark's stay at Molungyimsen became uncertain. Establishment of a new village was not easy in those days. Besides physical arrangements, many feared the attack from enemies. Therefore, in order to defend himself and the people of the village, the government gave him five guns.<sup>327</sup> Even armed escort was provided to facilitate the propagating of the new religion among the neighboring Ao village.<sup>328</sup> On the other hand, Clark also motivated the Naga villages to accept the sovereignty of British administration.<sup>329</sup> While Longwell was in the Lotha Naga area, the opposition party (Non-Christians) tried to kill both the missionary and the Christians. However, Longwell managed to escape during the night. Government took against the plotters.<sup>330</sup>

### **3.5. Beginning of Baptist Mission among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland**

The American Baptist Missionaries established four Mission sections in Nagaland namely Impur Mission Center, Kohima Mission center, Wokha Mission Center and Aizuto Mission Center.<sup>331</sup> The Zeliangrongs were evangelized through Kohima Mission center. The American Baptist Missionaries such as Rev. S. W. Rivenburg, Rev. A. B. Dickson, Mr. George William Supplee, Rev. Selander, Rev. J. E. Tanquist etc visited Zeliangrong areas.<sup>332</sup> However, they never establish a permanent mission center in the Zeliangrong territory. It was the native converts who played a very important role in propagating the new religion (Christianity) among the Zeliangrongs.

#### **3.5.1. Kohima Mission Centre**

Clark had already set a great vision of the possibility of establishing a Mission station at Kohima, Nagaland since 1876.<sup>333</sup> It was through his correspondence that the

---

<sup>326</sup> Tajenyuba Ao, *British Occupation of Naga Country*, 91-92

<sup>327</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in India: Social Change*, 105

<sup>328</sup> Nuklu Longkumar, *Pastoral Leadership: St Paul or Ours? A Socio-Cultural, Biblical and Missiological Investigation* (Nagaland: The Changtongya Baptist Church, 1996), 48

<sup>329</sup> Bendangangshi, *Glimpses of Naga History*, 20-21

<sup>330</sup> Puthuvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, 126

<sup>331</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change 1872-1972*, (Bangalore: Shalom Ministry Publication, 2004) 114-125

<sup>332</sup> *Benreu Baptist Church Centenary Souvenir, February 7-9, 1977* (Benreu: Benreu Baptist Church Centenary Committee, 1977), 26

<sup>333</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 90-91

mission board got information on the tribes adjoining the Aos. Repeated reminders from Clark enabled in opening a mission station at Kohima under the supervision of C. D. King. Initially, Kohima Mission Field catered to the tribes of Angamis, Chakhesangs, Rengmas, Pochuries, Zeliangs (rongs), Kukis and others. The long awaited dream of Clark and mission board has finally turned to reality with the arrival of C. D. King. After many trails and delays,<sup>334</sup> C. D. King landed at Kohima on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1881.<sup>335</sup> However, according to Zhabu, a renowned Angami Church leader, King and his wife arrived at Kohima on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1881.<sup>336</sup> King's education ministry was helped by many people such as political officer who is based at Kohima, his Assamese servant by named Robi who came along with him to Kohima, and Henry, another Assamese helper who arrived at Kohima probably the following year. Sometimes later, Serbey too joined the Kings.<sup>337</sup> It is recorded that the first church at Kohima was established on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1883,<sup>338</sup> where members were Assamese teachers and missionary families and no local converts.<sup>339</sup> There are many views regarding the name of the first Angami convert. Rivenburg, the American Baptist missionary who worked at Kohima mission field recorded that he first Angami Naga, named Eurasian was baptized on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1885.<sup>340</sup> However, Bendangyabang, a Naga historian differs when he writes that Lhousietzu was the first Angami convert baptized by C. D. King.<sup>341</sup> Whatever the argument may be, one thing is certain that in 1885, an Angami man was baptized; the first Angami convert.

Besides C.D King (1880-1886), prominent missionaries who joined Kohima Mission Field in the latter years who deserved recognition for their services to the Nagas were

---

<sup>334</sup> When the British Government was shifting its headquarters to Kohima, King arrived at Chumukedima on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1879. But when the hostilities broke out between the British and the Nagas at Kohima in the middle of October 1879, the government found it advisable to ask King to leave Chumukedima.

<sup>335</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 96

<sup>336</sup> Zhabu Terhuza, "Angami Baptist Council of Churches" in *From Darkness to Light: In Commemoration of 125 Years of Christianity in Nagaland*, Edited by Alongla P. Aier, (Kohima: NBCC, 1997) 56

<sup>337</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 97

<sup>338</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, 98

<sup>339</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change*, 118

<sup>340</sup> S. W. Revenburg, "Historical Sketch of the Angami Naga Mission," *The Assam Mission of the ABMU* (December, 1886), 87

<sup>341</sup> Bendangyabang, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change*, 118

Sidney White Rivenburg (1887-1923), J. E. Tanquist (1913-1947) and George Washington Supplee (1922-1949). During the early years of Christianity with the foreign missionaries, all Christians within the Kohima district were group together as Kohima Field or termed it as Kohima Mission Centre. Supplee's contribution towards education was a blessing to the Angamis in particular and neighboring tribes in general. It was through Supplee that Kohima Mission School was upgraded, which expanded and changed the life style of the people. The government helped the mission through grants and aids. Students who studied in this school played a very important role in propagating the new religion (Christianity) to their respective communities. It was here at Kohima Mission Field that the Zeliangrong people of Nagaland encountered the new religion (Christianity) for the first time.

### **3.5.2. Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs: Zemes**

The Zeliangrong people were evangelized through the Kohima Mission Center. Some young people encountered new religion (Christianity) while studying at Kohima Mission School.<sup>342</sup> It was the converts who played a very important role in propagating the new religion to their respective communities. Dichamang Pamei in his book "*Liberty to Captives*" recorded that Heizieluing of Benreu village, Nagaland was the first convert and who also a first pastor among the Zeliangrongs.<sup>343</sup> There is no such record about the date and year of baptism due to ignorance of the people at that time. However, as per the written records of the American Baptist Missionaries and other records (Oral traditions) it has led the Benreu people to believe that Heizieluing, son of Heluikieswang was converted to Christianity well over a hundred years ago. And accordingly the Benreu village celebrated the 100th years of the advent of Christianity in the year 1997 (1897-1997). According to mission history, Heizieluing heard about the new religion preached by Neisier, an Angami<sup>344</sup> and was baptized by Rev. Rivenburg and became the first convert/pastor among the Zemes

---

<sup>342</sup> According to R. B. Longwall: "The instruction which was to follow was not to be secular but strictly of religious nature". For details see, Longwal R. B, *A Report in BMM (Baptist Mission Movement) 1899*, 169-70. The education given till the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Naga Hills covered, no doubt, includes arithmetic, writing, spelling, physiology, hygiene, geography, and history but special attention was given to the study of scriptures and practical Christian works. In short, emphasis was laid on religious teaching.

<sup>343</sup> Dichamang Pamei, *Liberty to Captives*, 62

<sup>344</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, 53

(Zeliangrongs). Educated at Kohima Mission School, and also the first evangelist prior to 1904 he worked faithfully till the end of his life in 1918.<sup>345</sup> Through his work, Benreu became the first village where the first church in the Zeliangrong soil was established. The Zeliangrong area was evangelized under the Kohima field by the native evangelists working in the area.<sup>346</sup> Through the hard work of the earliest evangelists, slowly and gradually the Zeliangrongs were evangelized and Christianity spread to other kindred in Nagaland. Latter, the Zeliangrong Christians sent evangelists and planted churches among their own people who live in the North Cachar Hills and in the Silchar valley of Assam.

A Centenary Monolith erected at Benreu village reads:

*“This Monolith is erected to commemorate the hundredth year of the advent of Christianity in our land with the conversion of Heizieluing through the American Baptist Mission. In gratitude to God for His abundant blessings showered on us the Benreului Baptist Christians celebrated the first Baptist Centenary in Zeliang area from February 7-9, 1997 “Glory to God in the Highest”.*<sup>347</sup>

The early converts faced grave opposition and tough resistance from their own brothers and relatives, and there was no common point between the Christians and Non-Christians.<sup>348</sup> However, after a long struggle between them, Christianity has provided a new philosophy of life to the Zeme society. The philosophy of war, hatred, suspicious and fear was replaced by the philosophy of peace, love, trust, and hatred. Some of the prominent Church workers from Benreu village; the first Christian village among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland worthy mentioned is listed below:

---

<sup>345</sup> *Benreu Baptist Church Centenary Souvenir February 7-9, 1997* (Benreu: Benreu Baptist Church Centenary Committee, 1997) 28

<sup>346</sup> Despite their language differences, the Zeliang Church leaders and the Kuki Church leaders formed an association called “Kacha Naga-Kuki Association” in 1926 which became one of the first tribal associations formed under the Kohima Mission Field. However due to language differences, the Church leaders had their last joint annual session at Tesen in 1953 and decided to form their own associations.

<sup>347</sup> This Monolith was erected by the Benreului Baptist Christians, and was dedicated by Rev. H. K. Lungalang on 8<sup>th</sup> Febraury, 1997

<sup>348</sup> M. P. Namthiurei, *The Great Awakening*, (Tamenglong: Golden Jubilee Publication, 1972),

- Heizieluing, the first convert/pastor, educated at Kohima Mission School. He was also the first evangelist prior to 1904.
- Heirielsing, the second pastor prior to 1920 and also served as an evangelist.
- Rev. Keneise, the third son of Heizieluing, educated at Komima Mission School. He was employed by the British Regime in Health Services. He was an evangelist and later became the first Zeliang ordained Minister in 1939 at Benreu village by Rev. J. E. Tanquist. He was the first to translate the Gospel of Mathew and John in Zeme.
- Rev. H. K. Lungalang served as Head Master of John M. E. School at Viswema during 1945 and also Phek Mission School. He was the first Field Director of ZBCC from 1951 to 1975. He was ordained at Peren Town by Rev. Dilon on 16-01-1955. Latter, he was appointed as Executive Secretary of ZBCC from 1987-88. He translated the Gospel of Luke into Zeme.
- Rev. Visor. H. Zeliang did his M.A at NEHU and MD at Serampore University and further research study at the Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia USA. He was ordained in the year 1985 at Heningkunglwa Baptist Church. He translated the Holy Bible into Zeme-Naga from 1977 to 1991. He served as the Executive Secretary of ZBCC from 1984 to 1987. He later served as the General Secretary of the Council of Naga Baptist Churches from 1987 to 1993.

Local evangelists (converts) played a very important role in spreading the new religion among the Zemes. It became a general mission strategy; wherever a church was founded, a school was simultaneously established. Likewise, the ZBA (Zeliang Baptist Association) established Mission Schools at Peren Town (1964), Tening (1970) and Jalukie Town (1970).

One of the main factors for the growth of the Church was through the Revival movement. As per the Silver Jubilee Souvenir,<sup>349</sup> it is recorded that a revival crusade was held at Peren Baptist Church on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1976. Many people attended the meeting and it was in this meeting that the people had the desire to have the spiritual

---

<sup>349</sup>*Zeliangrong Baptist Association Nagaland Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1954-1979* (Peren: ZBAN Souvenir Committee, 1979), 15-17

revival movement. Eventually, within few years the Church tremendously increased through this movement which marked the important event in the history of the Zeme Church. According to 2011 statistics the ZBCC has 63 churches with 14,602 baptized members.

### **3.5.3 Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs: Liangmais**

Christianity had been accepted and experienced by Nagas in some parts of Nagaland since 1872. However, the wave of Christianity reached the beautiful Liangmai territory only in the later part of 1925. At the beginning Liangmai villages almost always opposed conversion and so many pioneer evangelists and first converts endured untold hostility and persecution from the traditional religionists. Despite all these difficulties, the church grew and it continues to grow. During the British regime, Tening was one of the administrative headquarters of the Naga Hills. Christianity under Tening sub-division was brought by lay Christian Medical officers' station at Tening Civil hospital in those days<sup>350</sup>. The earliest known converts from Tening were Ramu and Namkhiulungbo whose date of baptism and the man who ministered them could not be ascertained due to lack of written records and documents. However, the Liangmais have a recorded document where Rev. Ngulpu performed the earliest baptism on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1925 to four persons. As per the Liangmai Baptist Church Silver Jubilee Souvenir record, Mr. Tasibo, Mr. Phichai, Mr. Ramtungbo and Mrs. Kaithiule were baptized by Rev. Ngulpu in 1925.<sup>351</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> December 1927, Wisung was baptized who later established the first Church at Tening. He served as the first pastor as well as the first evangelist to the neighboring villages.

Gradually through the active involvement of the early converts, Christianity spread to other Liangmai villages. Their evangelistic method was simple; home visitation, preaching in the public gathering and convenient places. The most important factor for the growth of Christianity among the Liangmais was the burning zeal of the indigenous evangelists for teaching and preaching the new religion (Christianity) to

---

<sup>350</sup>*Tening Village Baptist Church Platinum Jubilee 1925-2000, Souvenir* (Tening: TVBC Souvenir Committee, 2000), 15-16

<sup>351</sup>*Liangmai Baptist Aruang Nagaland Silver Jubilee 1984-2009 Souvenir, 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> January 2009* (Tening: LBAN Souvenir Committee, 2009) 17-18

their own family members, relatives, village friends and neighboring villages. Determination, fearlessness, firmness and commitment were some of the aspects of the great personalities of the early evangelists. They deserve appreciation for their sacrifices and valuable contributions. A significant indigenous movement what we usually call '*The Revival Movement*' broke out in the Zeliangrong territory during the 1970's. This revival movement turned out to be very successful where many people accepted the new religion. According to 2011 statistics the LBA has 18 churches with 4368 baptized members.

#### **3.5.4. Christian Mission among the Zeliangrongs: Rongmeis**

The baptism of Namrijinang Kamei (Maipak) by Rev. U. M. Fox at Imphal on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1914<sup>352</sup> was a remarkable historical event in the history of Christianity among the Rongmeis (Zeliangrongs): the first Zeliangrong convert from the mission of Manipur. Namrijinang along with other converts under the leadership of Rev. Pettigrew established the Keishamthong Church at Imphal in 1916, which became the second church in Manipur.<sup>353</sup> Jinlakupou of Kaikao village was converted in 1918 and received baptism on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1923. Through the initiative of Namrijinang, Kaikao Baptist Church was established on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1923, which became the first Zeliangrong Church in Tamenglong district, Manipur.

During the 1960's many Rongmeis (Zeliangrongs) from Manipur migrated to Nagaland (plains of Mhai and Jalukie valley). On their arrival, the Zeliang Baptist Association changed its name to 'Zeliangrong Baptist Association' in 1967. The revival movement which swept over Nagaland (Manipur as well) during the 1970's captured the hardened hearts of the Rongmeis and many were converted to Christianity. The first Rongmai Baptist Church in Nagaland was established in 1978 at Ragailong Village (Burma Camp), Dimapur. The Rongmeis were under Zeliangrong Baptist Church Council till 1987-1988. However, the Church leaders met at Ragailong Baptist Church (Dimapur) and formed 'The Rongmai Baptist Association Nagaland' (RBA) in February 1988. Mr. Rev. H. M. Gonmei was

---

<sup>352</sup> However, Ramkhun Pamie, in his book *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity* recorded that Namrijinang Maipak was Baptized on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1915.

<sup>353</sup> The first Church in Manipur was Ukhrul Church established in 1902 .

appointed as the first executive secretary with its mission center at Jalukie Town.<sup>354</sup> As per the 2011 report, RBA has eight churches and four fellowships with 2,262 baptized members.

### **3.6. Factors in Church Growth among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland**

It is observed that conversion with certain exception was initially from among the young people who attended mission school and they were among first converts who formed the nucleus of the Christianity community in most villages and latter became agents of Christianity. Some factors on why the Zeliangrong people accepted the new religion (Christianity) are listed below:

#### **3.6.1. Tribal Structure of the Zeliangrong Society**

The Zeliangrong people like any of the Naga tribes have a compact community feeling and their social structure is built on the basis of the family, clan and village system.<sup>355</sup> Father as head of the family makes the final decision for the family in all matters and also represents his family in all meetings. The clan is a larger family unit on paternal side. The members of the clan feel closely bound together, almost like members of a family. A village is consists of different clans. The village organization, for all purposes, is formed on the basis of clanship. This oneness of and togetherness of the family, clan and village knits people together, resembling a single unit with uniform behavior. This corporate social structure of the community helps in propagating the Gospel rapidly.

Moreover, most of the Zeliangrong people found their beliefs similar to teachings of new religion (Christianity) like the concept of Supreme Being, life after death etc. The tribals believed in reward and punishment in their monotheistic faith and found easy way to Christianity. They became free from propitiation the evil spirits and from the fear of the witchcraft. The tribal traditional religion gave them the idea that those who lived irresponsible life will live a perilous life after death.

---

<sup>354</sup> *A Brief History of the Rongmei Baptist Association Nagaland (1988-1998): God's Great Faithfulness*, (Nagaland: RBAN 1998) 10

<sup>355</sup> Interview with Hungambo Chawang on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

### 3.6.2. Faith and Courage of the Early Evangelists

The evangelistic zeal of the early evangelists namely Late Rev. Keniese, Late Rev. H.K. Lungalang, Late Mr. Irangchangbe, Late Rev. Lungzie, Late Mr. Iloiheing,<sup>356</sup> Late Mr. Wisung, Late Mr. Hugangbo, Late Rev. Turi, and Late Mr. Gadaubo<sup>357</sup> were significant in the growth of the Church. Many other followed the pioneer evangelists' footsteps to carry the message of Gospel to Zeliangrong villages. It is observed that many of the evangelists and converts suffered persecution one form or other.<sup>358</sup> In spite of the oppositions, threats, problems of transportation, food provisions and many others, the early evangelists courageously face the persecutions and problems to win their opponents to Christ.<sup>359</sup> F.S. Downs, in his book "*The Mighty Works of God*" recorded that Zeliangrong villages strongly opposed to the teachings of the new religion (Christianity) and many a times Christians were driven from their villages.<sup>360</sup> Some early converts were cast out from the villages which resulted in establishing many villages.<sup>361</sup> The old people unexposed to education usually resisted new religion (Christianity).

The early evangelists were aware of the danger to tour around the non-Christian villages yet their devotion and dedication to the Lord's command led them to work among the people and as a result converted many to new religion (Christianity) and established Churches. Nothing has contributed more to the growth of the Baptist movement in the Zeliangrong area than the services rendered by the Zeliangrongs themselves. A few of them were trained by the missionaries at the mission station; whereas the vast majority was untrained. It is necessary to make a critical attempt on early mission methods.

---

<sup>356</sup> Interview with Rev. Izieteilung Terieng on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015. He is the Executive Secretary of Zeme Baptist Church Council Nagaland.

<sup>357</sup> Phone Interview with Rev. Kamwang, 24 September 2013

<sup>358</sup> The early evangelists and converts faced threats from the village people. Some of them were cast out from the village. There were times where they slept at the granary and outskirts of the village. Phone interview with Rev. Kamwang of Ntu viillage on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2015. He is the former executive secretary of Liangmai Baptist Association, Nagaland.

<sup>359</sup> Interview with Hugambo, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2013

<sup>360</sup> F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, (Gauhati: Christian Literature Center, 1971), 147

<sup>361</sup> Phone interview with Rev. Izieteilung Terieng on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

### 3.6.3. Revival Movements

The great revival movement appeared among the Aos in May 1976 and swept across both Manipur and Nagaland, engulfing the entire Zeliangrong area.<sup>362</sup> The revival wave spread out to the Zeliangrong territory in 1976. The movement was its peak during the 1977-1988. There were different instances of revival movements among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland during the 1970's. The first revival service in Zeliangrong area was held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1976 at Peren town Baptist Church and followed by another great revival service from 1-6<sup>th</sup> June 1977 in the same church.<sup>363</sup> The revival movements broke out at Tening Village from 7-9 June in 1977 and Tening town from 10-12 November 1977.<sup>364</sup> The main speakers were Rev. Longri Ao (Tening Village) and Rev. Rikum Ao (Tening Town). Another great Revival movement broke out at Peren Town and Jalukie Town in 1977 and 1978 respectively.<sup>365</sup> The main speakers were Mr. Tali Ao, Mrs. Arenla Ao (Peren Town), Major Sharma and Mr. Tali Ao (Jalukie Town). Another significant revival crusade was held at Samziuram village in the summer of 1977. The movement spread to neighboring Zeliangrong villages. This movement was characterized by singing, praying and worshiping for long hours, mass prayers, fainting and vision. It is the type of movement similar to that of the Pietistic movement in Germany, the Methodist movement in the United Kingdom and the Great Awakening in America. Those attended the revival services/programs were overwhelmed with wonders, felt deep convictions of sins and began to confess their sins with emotions.

The revival movement brought many changes in the life of the people. Hundreds and hundreds of people confessed their sins and committed their lives to the living Lord. People experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and many received charismatic gifts of tongues, vision, prophecy, dreams etc. The immediate result was that many nominal Christians committed to Christ and many non-Christians were converted to new religion (Christianity). A strong bond of community love, willingness to share, readiness to forgive each other, reconciliations, desire for moral purity and the like,

---

362 Akumla Longkumar, *Revival in Nagaland: Fact or Fallacy?* (Mokokchung: Author, 1986), 37

363 Interview with Elungkiebe Zeliang on 19th December 2013.

364 Phone Interview with Rev. kamwang on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015

365 Phone Interview with D. Anui Zeliang and Namnabi Hegui on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2014

grew within the revival fellowship. Apart from the revival influence on individuals, a characteristic distinctive of the revival movement among the Zeliangrongs was that it was a movement of the people. Though the movement had its origin from outside preachers, it produced a number of fine indigenous church leaders who became pillars of the Church.

One of the most fruitful outcomes of the revival movement for the growth of the church was the zeal for evangelism. The natural aptitude for evangelism among the Zeliangrong Christians became more apparent during and after the revival crusades. Groups of young preachers, both man and woman voluntarily took up the task of evangelizing the land. Certain villages which had previously opposed to the new religion (Christianity) were overwhelmed by the revival. The local evangelistic activities were soon to develop in foreign missions, i.e. the work of taking the gospel beyond the boundaries of Zeliangrongs in Nagaland and to other people. The church sent evangelists and planted Baptist Churches among the Zeliangrongs who live in the North Cachar Hills and in the Silchar valley of Assam. The most important impact of the revival movement is the indigenization of Zeliangrong Church. Since the revival movement in the 1970's, the church reintroduced the use of indigenous drum<sup>366</sup> to accompany Christian hymn singing<sup>367</sup> and dance as they sing revival songs in the churches and conferences. Zeliangrongs were known for dancing skills. Even in the pre-Christian era they danced in joy, in sorrow or in traditional festivals. The adaptation of drums and dance in the churches makes Christianity contextual and attractive to the Zeliangrongs. The mass spoken prayer was one of the important characteristics of the revival movement in which everyone in the meeting could express themselves at the top of their voices. Moreover, practices such as cleansing of house, field, property, and so in the name of Holy Spirit were redefined.

---

<sup>366</sup> When the tribals turned to Christianity, the use of drums were discouraged by the missionaries.

<sup>367</sup> Early Zeliangrong Christians adopted the traditional drum for their singing in the Church. And it became very popular during and after the revival movement.

### **3.7. Formation of Zeliangrong Baptist Churches Council (N)**

Previously the Zeliang Churches were included in the Angami Association.<sup>368</sup> As the churches grew further, and having had reached other tribal groups like Kukis, there was a need to form and having fellowship with them. Therefore, they grouped together and formed a Zeliang-Kuki Baptist Association in 1937. However, the Zeliang and Kuki Churches separated in 1953 and it was solely on account of linguistic issue. With the objectives of self-government, self-support and to reach the unreached, 'Zeliang Association' was formally formed in 1953. And in the following year (1954) a full recognition was obtained from the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC). To include the Rongmeis, the nomenclature of the association was changed from 'Zeliang Baptist Association' to 'Zeliangrong Baptist Church Association' in 1966. This association accommodated all the Zeliangrong people (Baptist) in Nagaland.

### **3.8. Division of Zeliangrong Baptist Association into Four Groups**

The three dialectic groups (Zemes, Liangmais and Rongmeis) for their convenience in growth and administration of the churches, felt to form their own separate associations. As stated, language was one of the main problems. The diversity of languages made effective evangelism difficult. It was difficult for a person to do Bible translation and other Christian literature.<sup>369</sup> However, leadership issue cannot be denied. For all these problems the Liangmai people desired to have their own separate association. The Liangmais formed a new fellowship on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1974. After years of meetings and discussions, the Liangmai Church leaders met at Kejanglwa village on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1984 and after two days (29<sup>th</sup> January 1984), the 'Liangmai Baptist Association' was separated from the mother association. The first Liangmai Baptist Association foundation was held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1984 at Nchangram village. Rev. Ramriwang was appointed as the first executive secretary of the association. The Liangmai Baptist Association became a full (fully) fledged member of Nagaland Baptist Church Council in 1991. The Mission Centre of Liangmai Baptist was at Tening and it was inaugurated by Rev. Turi.

---

<sup>368</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, 52

<sup>369</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, 55

The Zemes and Rongmeis continued to work together under the Zeliangrong Baptist Church Council for about eight years until the Zeme and Rongmei groups separated themselves in 1988. When the Zemei group had taken Peren Centre for themselves and formed their own association, the situation compels the Rongmeis to form their own association, separated from the original association. As a result, the Rongmei Baptist Association was formed in February 1988.<sup>370</sup> From there the association was limited to Zeme by changing the nomenclature from Zeliangrong Baptist Church Council to 'Zeme Baptist Church Council'. Today Zeliangrong Baptist Church is divided into four associations, namely (1) Zeme Baptist Church Council, (2) Zeme Baptist Association (Nsong), (3). Liangmai Baptist Association/Aruang and (4). Rongmei Baptist Association.

---

<sup>370</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, 59

**Conclusion:**

The new religion (Christianity) among the Zeliangrong people arose from the initiatives and great efforts of the neighboring tribes and their own early converts. Gradually through the active involvement of the early converts, the new religion spread to the Zeliangrong inhabited areas. Worthy of special mention are the students (converts) of the mission schools who played a very important role in spreading the new religion to their respective communities and also to the neighboring villages. The native workers could reach out to the people in their own languages. Determination, fearlessness, firmness and commitment were some of the aspects of the great personalities of the early local evangelists and that resulted in the rapid numerical growth of the Zeliangrong churches in Nagaland. Indigenous leaders such as Late Rev. Keniese, Late Rev. H.K. Lungalang, Late Mr. Irangchangbe, Late Rev. Lungzie, Late Mr. Iloiheing,<sup>371</sup> Late Mr. Wisung, Late Mr. Hugangbo, Late Rev. Turi, and Late Mr. Gadaubo etc will remain in the record of the Zeliangrong Church history for their contribution towards the growth of Christianity among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland.

One unforgettable historical issue which will be remembered for centuries is the division/ separation of the Zeliangrong Baptist Church (Association) into four groups. Today, the Zeliangrong churches are becoming a self-supporting and self-propagating one. Besides Baptist Mission, the other Christian groups/denominations which make a way into the Zeliangrong region are Presbyterian mission, Roman Catholic mission, Pentecostal mission, Seventh Day Adventists mission etc.

---

<sup>371</sup> Interview with Rev. Izieteilung Terieng on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015. He is the Executive Secretary of Zeme Baptist Church Council Nagaland.

## CHAPTER IV

### **A Critical Appraisal of the Impact of Christian Mission on Zeliangrong Society**

#### **Introduction**

The contribution of the missionaries must be appreciated for their efforts and zeal to transform the whole situation of the people. There was no such great transformation event occurred in the history of the Zeliangrongs apart from the advent of Christianity and its activities. Churches were established and educational institutions were set up. Almost all the Zeliangrong people acknowledge the positive and transformative changes brought by the mission activities; however, their effort lacked an attempt to develop an indigenous Christian faith. The argument is, “was there any space of adjustment/adaptation to the positive cultural values in the process of interaction between Gospel and indigenous culture?” Assimilation and integration of the healthy human values, while eliminating the inhuman and dehumanizing aspects of the encountering culture of the people is a necessary process and an integral part of evangelization. The Christian Mission came and left behind not only the gospel but outside culture which has become the dominant culture. Therefore, this study is an attempt to bring both the positive and negative impact of Christian Mission on Zeliangrong society.

#### **4.1. Transformation through Mission Activities**

Terhuja<sup>372</sup> rightly observed that if one responsible dynamic factor were to single out for an overall change in the life of the Nagas, it would undoubtedly be the introduction of Christianity among them. Churches were established and educational institutions were set up. The missionaries and particularly the local evangelists toured the Zeliangrong territory risking their lives to a hostile world to evangelize and transform them. To speak about its impact on social life, education and literature, medicine and innumerable other services would call for several volumes. The following are some of the major impact of Christian impact upon the Zeliangrong society.

---

<sup>372</sup> Terhuja, *The Christian Church among the Angami Nagas in Tribal Situation in India, Vol. 13*, edited by K. S. Sign, (1972), 294

#### 4.1.1. Education and Literature

The western missionaries arrived in North East India soon after the British administration put their foot in the valley of Brahmaputra. The missionaries made Sibsagar, Assam their main centre from where they continued their mission activities. According to F. S Downs,<sup>373</sup> British administration found the missionaries useful in pacifying the hill tribes.<sup>374</sup> At the beginning the government restricted the missionaries to enter the Naga Hills as the outside interference might disturb their administrative system. Rev. Clark, first missionary landed in the Naga territory not with the support or patronage of the government but at his own risk to sow the seed of the new religion; Christianity.<sup>375</sup> However, in the latter years there developed a cordial relationship between the missionaries and British administration.

The missionaries realized that education was the main weapon to evangelize the Nagas. According to them, educational institutions served double purposes: (1). First, as a means of teaching the Christian truth. (2). Secondly, as a means for recruitment or training of future native workers.<sup>376</sup> Christian missionaries gave importance to school education on the understanding that unless the local people knew the basic art of reading and writing, the proclamation of the gospel would not have produced effective results. It was, hence, looked upon as one of the best means of evangelization. However, to start education among the war-like people was not an easy task. They had to face tough resistance of the local people. Most of the parents disliked to send their children to schools because the parents did not want to spare them from field works. The only means of their livelihood was cultivation, which needed hard manual work. The people did hardly understand the value and need of education.

---

<sup>373</sup> Dr. Frederick S. Downs was formerly a Professor of History of Christianity at UTC, Bangalore.

<sup>374</sup> Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India: North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Vol. V, Part 5*, (Bangalore: CHAI, 2003), 30

<sup>375</sup> After the initial visits of Godhula into the interior parts of Naga Hills, Clark sought permission from the Government to enter Naga Hills. However, in view of the brutal murder of Captain Butler by the Lotha Nagas at Pangti village in December 1875, the British Government was cautious in granting Clark permission to go beyond British territory.

<sup>376</sup> Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in North East India with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988), 91

For years the Nagas encountered people (outsiders) who had either harassed or despised them but at last found the missionaries who treated them as human beings with love. In the course of time the missionaries won the confidence of the Nagas.<sup>377</sup>

On seeing the progress of the mission work among the Nagas, the British officials later realized that advancement among the war-like people would be possible only through mission and education. They felt that the missionary endeavor in the Naga Hills would minimize the constant attack in the plains and also enable them to bring under their control. Christianity and education seemed to be the best instrument of pacification as well as civilization. The British government also needed educated Nagas who could assist the government in running the offices at least at the lower level. Therefore, the British government started giving grants and aids to the mission schools.<sup>378</sup>

It is interesting to know that wherever a church was founded, a school was also established simultaneously by the early missionaries. The missionaries, followed by the British officials first introduced formal education called schooling into the Naga Hills.<sup>379</sup> It was through mission schools that the missionaries sowed the seed of the new religion and established churches. The first Naga converts later played a vital role in propagating the new faith. Wati Longchar rightly stated that it was in these mission schools that people assimilated not only a new faith, but also science, politics, technology and so on.<sup>380</sup> Wherever the schools were established, people were converted in groups every year.<sup>381</sup> George Washington Supplee and his wife Ruth were transferred from Impur to Kohima in December 1922.<sup>382</sup> Supplee's contribution towards education was a great blessing to the people. It was through him that Kohima

---

<sup>377</sup> Murkot Ramunny, *The World of Nagas*, (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, Revised and enlarged 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1993) 10

<sup>378</sup> Bendangyabang Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Change, 1872-1972*, (Bangalore: Shalom Ministry Publications, 2004) 97

<sup>379</sup> Tuisem A. Shishak, "Nagas and Education", in *Nagas at Work*, edited by R. Vashum and friends, (Delhi: Naga Students Union Delhi, 1996) 30

<sup>380</sup> A. Wati Longchar, *The Tribal Religious Traditions in North East India: An Introduction*, (Jorhat: Author, 2000) 145

<sup>381</sup> P. T. Philip, *The Growth of the Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, (Gauhati: CLS, 1983), 187-188

<sup>382</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Mission in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*, (Shilong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984), 122

Mission School was upgraded. This school as a mission agency was reaching almost all tribes in the Kohima district including the Zeliangrongs.

Some young Zeliangrong people encountered new religion (Christianity) while studying at Kohima Mission School. They played a very important role in propagating the new religion to their respective communities. The Zeliangrong boys and girls who studied at Mission Compound School became Church leaders to their respective community. Education played a very crucial role in shaping their society, in producing leaders for their own society, state and nation as well. It brought not only knowledge but also a change in total lifestyle of the people. Education served as a link between villages and other tribes that were previously not linked due to the difference in dialects. Traditionally each village was a state. People were confined to clan and village welfare, without having a general consciousness of the tribe. It was education and literature which eventually provided a common platform and thus a new sense of identity and unity emerged. With education, their eyes were opened to their own need and they began to see things in a better way. The schools which were established by the missionaries began to produce not only teachers but the students got the wisdom to differentiate their past and future and choose to advance their career in various branches of learning. In due course, the Zeliangrong people were gradually convinced that if they want development, it was education only which could help them. There may not be a second thought about the fact that the Zeliangrongs like any of the Naga tribes who were living in isolation and were devoid of all sorts of new life and modern civilization.

The missionaries must be credited for opening and widening the path of universal knowledge among the people by establishing schools and imparting new learnings. Today, education has brought about tremendous changes in the Zeliangrong society like any of the Naga tribes. The schools and colleges have produced hundreds of Zeliangrong graduates and post-graduates who are shouldering the responsibility of the state administrative working at various levels in different departments of the government. Education has produced a number of politicians, administrators, engineers, doctors, contractors, businessman, scholars and theologians etc. As a result of education concepts like nation, nationality, ethnicity, sovereignty etc became

popular among the Zelianrong people like any of the Naga tribes. Education has also been able to create a group of intelligentsia in every tribal community who are able to motivate their people towards achievement of justice, peace, prosperity and equality. A very important contribution of Christianity through education is the growth of indigenous leaders. They were able to raise the level of socio-political consciousness among their people and motivate them to strive for justice and equality. Education has increased the percentage of literate people and the method of conscientization through education has enabled them to become more conscious about their rights, duties and privileges and has motivated them to commit themselves to the transformation of society. Today each of the Zelianrong Baptist associations has their own mission schools.

Down the centuries there was no literature among the Zelianongs like any other Naga tribe. In the initial stage, the Zelianrong Christians were using Angami Bible, Manipuri Bible and English Bible, etc. as they did not have in their own dialect. As the members of the converts increased it was necessary to have the Bible and hymn book in their own language. Today, the Zemes, Liangmais and Rongmais have their own Bibles. Gaikhuang Gangmei, Namthiurei, K.G. Simon, N.K. Shing, Heutui and Kuame were some of the pioneers who translated the Bible into Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmai (Zelianrong) dialects.<sup>383</sup> The language made important contribution to the development of Zelianrong identity. It is true to say that the consciousness of Zelianrong community was revitalized and made a reality especially after the coming of Christianity as a force for change. The translation of English literature brought the works of outstanding scientific values, literary artistic view, political, social, religious, economic and sociological importance for the Zelianongs like any of the Naga tribes. The formation of public opinion in general was accelerated and strengthened with the people's ability to read and with the growing number of newspapers all over the region. These factors in turn are responsible in shaping the socio-cultural and political consciousness of the people.

---

<sup>383</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zelianrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House) 105-107

#### 4.1.2. Replacement of the Traditional ways of Life

Rongsen is right when he said:

*“The missionaries deserve the credit for stamping out certain primitive practices, putting down sanguinary and reprehensible customs and abolishing some of the primitive practices and beliefs, such as headhunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery, etc.”*<sup>384</sup>

Christianity molded the people towards humanism keeping away barbarianism. It helped the people to stop perpetual killings in internal feuds and village warfare. Nagas were once headhunters.<sup>385</sup> The heads are chopped off and carried home as trophies by singing and chanting.<sup>386</sup> The reasons for head hunting are complicated yet interesting.<sup>387</sup> By taking a head from another village, it is believed that a new injection of vital and creative energy would come to the aggressor’s village. It brings prosperity to the village. Headhunters held a great advantage over his fellows in attracting the most beautiful girl of his village for marriage. Heads were also required for human sacrifice. Headhunters were honored by the people as a warrior and hero.<sup>388</sup> The Nagas continued the headhunting culture till the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When the British officials notice the headhunting practices they tried to stop it. Prevention was possible only when the weak and helpless villages approach the government to interfere and stop the headhunting. Violators were severely punished. The missionaries took this as a privilege by convincing their converts that headhunting is a sin. Therefore, all those who embraced Christianity automatically stopped the evil practice of headhunting. It was the combined effort of the government and the missionaries that headhunting was abolished.<sup>389</sup> Today, people are grateful for the combine efforts of Christian Mission and British Administration for eliminating the dreadful head hunting practices.

---

<sup>384</sup> M. Rongsen, “Tribal Culture and Spirituality”, in *Encounter Between New Religion and Tribal Culture*, edited by A. Wati Longchar, (Jorhat: TSC, ETC), 30

<sup>385</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969) 546

<sup>386</sup> Joseph S. Thong, *Head Hunters Culture: Historic Culture of Nagas*, (Nagaland: Khinyi Woch, 1977), 10

<sup>387</sup> Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland*, (Shillong : Dutta for the Research Department, 1961), 11

<sup>388</sup> Joseph S. Thong, *Head Hunters Culture: Historic Culture of Nagas*, 14-15

<sup>389</sup> Puthuvail Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, (Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1983) 166

Like any of the Naga tribes, the Zeliangrong people were once hunters. Had there been no British administration and Christian Mission activities, they would have lost so many lives by those primitive practices. The outsiders could not enter another village during night. Now the context has totally changed. The practice of slavery was once very common among the Zeliangrongs. The slaves were treated not as persons, but as commodities. Initially the government was not interested to interfere with the slavery system. It was the missionaries who initiated and petitioned to the government to ban the evil slavery practices. Accordingly, the British officials severely punished the violators and thus slavery was abolished. Other evil practices such as minor child marriages and human sacrifice were brought to an end. Today any of those primitive practices are considered as evil and uncivilized among the Nagas and thus among the Zeliangrongs.

#### **4.1.3. Transformation in Religious Life**

People firmly believe in the existence of one true God who is the creator of all things. But in practical life, it was believed that the spirits had more direct concern with men. They considered all those sicknesses and misfortunes are caused by the spirits. Therefore, to keep them in place was their main concern and in order to fulfill that, sacrifices was the only means. The Zeliangrong people were under the bondage of the fear of evil spirits where they have to offer several sacrifices and offerings to please the spirits.<sup>390</sup> The village priest is supposed to know which spirit was causing the trouble and what form of sacrifice would appease it. Their sacrifice to the spirits had no limit of time and amount. Moreover, people understood that the outbreak of diseases like cholera, smallpox, malaria and other major ailments as an expression of the displeasure of gods and goddesses. It was believed that human offences against the natural deities led to the incidence of these diseases. Thus the outbreak of various diseases was usually attributed to human shortcomings and failures with regard to personified demons associated with those diseases. These diseases were treated by priests who offer a series of sacrifices based on traditional processes of divination and other traditional healing techniques. Therefore, in the real sense the forefather's religious life was a burdensome to the poor. It was to such a situation the Christian

---

<sup>390</sup> Interviewed with Kamgi Chawang on 30th December 2011

message of freedom from fear that the Lordship of Christ is above all wild spirits and superstitious did appeal strongly to the minds of the people.

Evangelists and early converts encountered tough resistance from the people who were not ready to abandon their traditional faith. The converts were persecuted in one way or the other. However, nothing would stop the evangelists from their love for mission. Despite all these problems, mission work makes considerable progress in the Zeliangrong territory.<sup>391</sup> Christianity invaded the traditional religion and shattered their faith from supernatural belief, and implanted the true faith of Jesus Christ:

- The fear of spirits eventually diminished as they accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- The new religion (Christianity) brought the message of love and forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus Christ.
- All their actions which were associated with some superstitions, witchcrafts, worship of spirits, etc, came to an end.

In this way their old religious beliefs, old attitudes and values are replaced by Christian faith and now they have a different outlook in life in terms of their spiritual experience in their Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity presented God Almighty and His Slavic work which strengthened the belief of the Zeliangrongs on supreme God called Charawang/Tingwang. They began to incline towards the concept of one God (this concept was not new to the people), and Christ being the begotten son of God. Christ and His message provided a new vision of life; implanted or strengthened certain values, such as a sense of providence, faith in a loving Almighty Father in Heaven, the concept of forgiveness, universal brotherhood, eternal life etc. Thus slowly majority of the Zeliangrongs were won to Christianity which made them completely washed away from the fear and worship of spirits.<sup>392</sup> The traditional religious ceremonies were replaced by fasting, prayer and sharing the Word of God in the Church, while feasts of prestige and traditional festivals were replaced by Christmas, Good Friday, New Year feast etc. Christianity broadened the mind of the people to

---

<sup>391</sup> Interview with Kaichung on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2012

<sup>392</sup> Interview with Kaichun on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013.

think religion from a broader perspective and understand religion in its universal perspective.

#### **4.1.4. Christianity and a New Life Style**

As noted earlier, education and literature were the main instruments to bring changes among the Zeliangrongs. Through the introduction of education and literature, a new Zeliangrong identity emerged. It can be argued that the feeling of oneness was already there from the beginning but it was confined only to their respective villages. Moreover, it promoted inter-tribal relationships. Schools served as a link between villages which were previously isolated because of different dialects. A paradigm shift has taken place with the introduction of Christianity and education. All the believers from different villages were encouraged to participate in Christian functions and meetings. The educated young people were pushed out to become social workers, political leaders as well as religious leaders in the group of mass illiterate community. It was with the spread of western education, there sprang up a native class of intellectuals. The education started by the missionaries enabled the people to know the world and understand the environment systematically and scientifically. Their knowledge about the nature and the world expanded.

Modern medical care was unknown to the Zeliangrong people.<sup>393</sup> Before the arrival of the British and Christian missionaries, there was hardly any consciousness of health care, prevention of sickness, diagnosis, treatment, care, dietary habits etc.<sup>394</sup> The people suffered from various diseases and sickness like cholera, malaria, and small-pox etc due to lack of proper medical facilities and treatment. The mission medical work helped a great deal in this regard. Their medical treatment helped to remove the superstitious beliefs and gained the people's confidence. The Christian mission introduced vaccinations and inoculation as a measure against small pox and cholera. When the orthodox Zeliangrongs saw that the general health of the Christians improved, they also began taking new medicine. Medical service saved the lives of many people. This led to a new approach to the treatment of sickness and to healing

---

<sup>393</sup> Interview with Kamwang Rentta on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

<sup>394</sup> Sebastian Karotemprel, "The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North East India" in *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1996) 28

among the people. When it became evident that the treatment offered by the mission was not only more effective than traditional sacrifices but also cheaper, people took this to mean that the new religious power was greater than that of the traditional priests. Personal cleanliness and community health was realized by the people through education. The general standards of sanitation and community health have been immensely improved as a result of their conversion to the Christian faith.

Rice beer was popular among the Zeliangrongs before the coming of Christianity.<sup>395</sup> Rice beer is related with their family and community life. They drink wine as a whole family, with friends and relatives. The parents give wine to their children with love and affection. The consumption of wine plays a significant role in all the festivals, family gatherings, community get-together, marriages, etc. It is accepted in their personal, family and social life. On the other hand, wine consumption leads to family quarrels, community violence and prolonged enmity with others, divorce, separation from the family, immorality, anti-social involvement, economic difficulties, etc. The missionaries and the local evangelists discouraged the habit of drinking wine to the new converts. Quarrels and fighting's as a consequence of drinking rice beer did go away, and better relationship between husband and wife restored. Among the Protestants this abstinence became one of the primary tests of the sincerity of the potential converts-and of the faithfulness of the church member.

In place of rice beer, tea became popularly used and individual lives underwent a radical change. Of course, it is true that in the modern days, rice beer is popularized again as a normal lifestyle of the people whether Christians or non-Christians, and the tribal people have largely reverted to drinking wine. However, the fact remain that Christians have not openly accepted rice beer as a normal life style of the people. The morality of drinking wine is rejected among the evangelical Protestants of the tribal society.

Visiting the sick and helping those in need especially those widows who were in want of household needs were some of the characteristics of the early Christians. Any dead within the village is the concern of the whole village or the locality. Though it has to

---

<sup>395</sup> Interview with Hugambo on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2010

go a long way still, the position of women have considerably increased with the message of equality. Woman began to participate actively in social and religious activities. Houses and buildings wrought changes gradually even though they were far from the modern structures. Better communication and effective administration was also made possible through missionaries with the help of British officials, link between village to village where they could move freely from place to another for commercial purpose too. The British introduction of roads, posts and telegraphs, books, journals and newspapers exposed them to contact with the outside world.

In the pre-Christian era, Zeliangrongs economic life was predominantly dependent on agriculture which was different from modern type of cultivation.<sup>396</sup> Their implements were unpolished which could hardly manage for livelihood. However, with the coming of the British administration and Mission activities it brought great progress in economic life among the Zeliangrongs. Many new crops were grown in the Zeliangrong area. People came to know the modern techniques in agriculture. Government encouraged the use of pesticides and fertilizers. The old Jhum method of cultivation was replaced to a great extent by permanent cultivation. Other methods of farming and planting were developed. Market place came into being. Changes took places particularly in three areas:

- The barter system in the villages has been turned to money market.
- The introduction of education provided the people to get government services.
- Besides, the government and Christian mission introduced small scale industries like handlooms, piggery, poultry, fishery, carpentry, carving, knitting, etc.

All these facilities helped to developed economic position. Christian mission in fact, contributed a lot to change traditional, social, religious, cultural and ethical values of the Zeliangrong people. Thus, the Christian Mission activities brought changes to all aspects of life.

---

<sup>396</sup> Interview with Elungkiebe Zeliang in December 2013. He teaches History of Christianity at Eastern Theological College, Jorhat.

#### **4.1.5. Transformation in Socio-Political Life of the Zeliangrongs**

Christian Mission has brought drastic changes in the Naga society and so among the Zeliangrong people. With the contact of the people from the west, the habits of unhygienic conditions were changed. The traditional houses which included the shelter of the cattle, pigs and fowls are now segregated from the dwelling houses, and separate sheds are constructed to shelter the animals. Earlier the unhygienic state of living conditions caused them suffering from cholera, malaria, typhoid, sores, small pox and other diseases, and to get rid of these diseases, they used to consult priestess and sorcerers for animal sacrifices and other religious ceremonies as the only form of remedy which was very costly. It was only after the establishment of the British Administration and the Christian Mission in the Naga Hills, dispensaries and hospitals were opened where the illness was treated by trained doctors and nurses with the application of scientific medicines.<sup>397</sup>

The living standard of the people have improved to a great extend. With the increase of market economy, the occupation of the people has changed and the living conditions improved a lot. As the living condition of the Zeliangrongs like any other Naga tribes improved, there was a drastic change in diet, dresses and dwelling houses. A simple house made of bamboo and thatch was replaced by plank and RCC buildings. Simple cotton clothes are now replaced by woolen blankets and quilts. The traditional fire-wood oven is now replaced by cylinder gas stove. With the construction of roads and communication facilities, the tribal centers and markets were established in the hills.

One important factor that contributed to the growth of political consciousness was Christianity and Western education. The inspiration for and the morphology of modern political organizations and structures came at least in part from Christianity. So Christianity brought with it the seeds of political consciousness. The process of creating political consciousness was accelerated by considerable educational efforts of the Churches. As a result, the people were able to discover their political identity, create political leadership, claim their political rights and contribute towards the

---

<sup>397</sup> A. Nshoga, *Traditional Naga Village and its Transformation*, (Delhi: Anshah Publishing House, 2009) 290-291

political and administrative re-organization.<sup>398</sup> It is obvious that the Naga patriotism and nationalism was the brain child of modern education. The idea to drive out the British from India gathered momentum from the beginning to the twentieth century. Amidst these developments, the Nagas too became aware of their identity and historical roots and had decided to settle their political future.<sup>399</sup> In the First World War (1914-1918), 2000 strong Naga labor corps was sent to France. They returned home with rich experience of the outside world. In the same year (1918) the Christian educated government officials and a number of village chiefs formed the Naga Club.<sup>400</sup> They discussed on social, economic and administrative problems. Two Tribal Councils followed it. The Lotha Tribal Council in 1923 and Ao Tribal Council in 1928. All these gave rise to the spirit of Nationalism among the Nagas.

A very popular movement spread among the Zeliangrong people under the leadership of Mr. Jadonang<sup>401</sup> and Ms. Gaidinliu.<sup>402</sup> The Zeliangrong movement led by Jadonang and latter by Gaidinliu was born in 1925 with its aim to unite the Zemes, Liangmais and Rongmais and fight against the foreign rulers in order to free themselves from the suppressive and exploitative foreign administration and to establish an independent Nagaraj. They preached on equality, freedom, rights and duties. To suppress the movement, the authority hanged peoples' leader; Jadonang at Guwahati on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1931. Gaidinliu was arrested in October 1932 and was imprisoned for life. However, she was released in 1947. Today, the Zeliangrong people are fighting for

---

<sup>398</sup> Sebastian Karotemprel, *The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North East India in Impact of Christianity on North East India*, (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1996), 23-24

<sup>399</sup> Visier Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation*, (Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1999) 127

<sup>400</sup> Pekito Sema, *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland 1881-1947*, (New Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1992) 142

<sup>401</sup> Jadonang was born in 1905 at Kambiron (Puiron), Manipur. Since childhood Jadonang was a deeply religious man. He had visited several animistic (religious places) like Bhubon Cave, Zelad lake etc. where gods and goddess were believed to reside in. Latter he won the confidence of his villagers through the revelation of his dreams to sacrifice mithuns to god for good harvest. For this act of confidence, people looked on him as a chosen spiritual leader or god sent man for the Nagas. He claimed himself to be Messiah king of the Nagas to liberate his country from the rule of the British according to what their tradition held. In 1925, after serving as a British soldier during First World War, he started preaching on equality, freedom, rights and duties. See Asoso Yonuo, *Naga Struggle Against the British Rule under Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu: 1925-1947*, (Kohima: Joseph Jasokie, 1982) 39-43

<sup>402</sup> Gaidinliu was born in 1915 at Lungkao, Rongmai Naga village in Manipur. After the execution of Jadonang, she took up the leadership of tribal religious reform and independence movement of the Nagas at the age of 17.

their own rights and identity. All these movements are directly or indirectly influenced through education. Today many educated Zeliangrong Christian leaders are involving in social activities.

#### **4.2. Negative Impacts**

The impact of westernization on society and culture of the indigenous people since the colonial period is significantly reflected in various aspects of socio-economic, political, cultural, educational and religious fields. The advent of the British administration and the Christian mission affected all aspects of indigenous society. The missionaries regarded the western culture superior to any other culture. Hence the missionaries who came to the indigenous people with a pre-determined idea of the darkness or uncultured view prevented them from seeing anything good in the local culture and society. To distinguish the difference between Christianity and Gospel, C.S. Song pointed out:

*“Christianity has been odds with culture, but gospel has not always been that way. The Christian Church has opposed cultures, but gospel has not basically been so. Christian teaching has rejected cultures, but the gospel has not followed that direction necessarily. Christian worship has alienated cultures, but the gospel has not by definition done so. The Christian way of life has estranged cultures, but the gospel has not axiomatically intended it. And it is we Christians who have kept cultures at arm’s length, but the gospel has not functioned except in close relationship with cultures.”<sup>403</sup>*

The people are indebted to the British administration and particularly to the pioneering mission activities for their work in the field of education and literature, medical service, humanitarian work, abolishing old ways of life<sup>404</sup> and in providing

---

<sup>403</sup> C.S. Song, “Do This in Memory of Jesus-The Gospel, Cultures and the Roots of the Reformed Heritage” (paper presented at consultation on Gospel and Cultures- World Alliance of Reformed Churches Theological Process, at Rantepao, Tana Toraja, Sulawesi, Salatan, Indonesia, February, 5-10, 1996), 2-3

<sup>404</sup> The British Administration initiated in abolishing the practice of headhunting. And the missionaries took this as a privilege by convincing their converts that headhunting is a sin. Thus, all those who embraced Christianity stopped the practice of headhunting. Moreover, the missionaries deserve the credit for stamping out certain traditional practices such as tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery. See M. Rongsen, “Tribal Culture and Spirituality” in *Encounter Between Gospel and Tribal Culture*, edited by A. Wati Longchar (Jorhat: Tribal Study Center, 1999), 30

enlightenment. However, the question is raised whether the process of change that came with the coming of the Christianity did justice to the traditional practices? Their efforts were linked with a deep feeling of superiority. An in-depth study and understanding of several of the tribal customs are pertinent in understanding the history and mission. The general approach of the mission activities was to renounce their respective beliefs and customs and to become Christian. Plurality is to be seen as God's gift and the Christian mission needs to respect the beliefs and customs of the indigenous people. The approach of the Christian mission was often perceived as being insensitive to the local cultures. The researcher is of the opinion that to become a Christian is not necessary /requires to renounce the traditional ways of life unless they are contrary to Biblical teachings, such as headhunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and superstitious etc.

#### **4.2.1. Cultural Degradation**

Although some attempts are being made to look into the question of impact, however, these attempts are again being largely confined to the views of outsiders. This study is an attempt to study from (critical) insider's perspective on impact of Christian mission on Naga society in brief and Zeliangrong Naga tribe in detail.

##### **4.2.1.1. Naga Context**

David Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* commented that "in the early years of its existence, the American Board distinguished between darkness, blindness, superstition, and ignorance among pagan nations, on the one hand, and light, vision, enlightenment, and knowledge in the west on the other. And it is virtually impossible, in this statement, to determine which of these depictions referred to the West's culture and which to its religion. The one set of characterizations presupposed the other". He further said that "just as the West's religion was predestined to spread around the globe, the West's culture was to be victorious over all others".<sup>405</sup> Culturally, it simply meant that non-western cultures were generally denigrated. C.S. Song in his book *Jesus in the Power of the Spirit* points out two errors on understanding of culture. On the one hand, it assumes that the Christian faith, since it is revealed, has to be free

---

<sup>405</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 366

from all cultural trappings, forgetting that even the Word of God became flesh and dwell among us. On the other hand, it dogmatically concludes that the images, symbols, values, worldviews and customs developed within cultures shaped by religions other than Christianity are to be rejected because they express nothing other than corruption on human mind and distortion of God's truth. He therefore argued that all anti-culturalism has done injustice to human beings as cultural beings. It has also done injustice to God, who is related to us human beings through what we are as cultural beings.<sup>406</sup> All cultures are usually a complex mixture of both the good and the bad. There are those things that are good even in non-Christian cultures. To write off everything in non-Christian cultures that appears to have some association with pagan religions is to adopt an over-simplistic view of reality. It represents not only a failure to take general revelation seriously, but also it fails to take the goodness of God's original creation seriously. What Christians (particularly theologians) have to do is to perceive, appreciate, criticize, and interpret the spirituality of a particular culture in the light of the biblical faith in God as the creator.

The Protestant Missionaries who worked among the North East people in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries generally fall within the wide spectrum of pietist-puritan evangelical theologies:<sup>407</sup>

- The message of repentance from sin and putting a break to one's past life served as the core theologies of the missionaries.
- The abandoning of the past was not limited to one's habits and lifestyles but it also meant dissociating from traditional cultural practices.

---

<sup>406</sup> C.S. Song, *Jesus in the Power of the Spirit*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 137

<sup>407</sup> Pietism is the name for a great religious awakening within the Protestant churches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the continent of Europe. Although the word *Pietism* was first used in 1689, there is such a thing as *Reformed Pietism*, the term generally refers to the movement on behalf of practical Christianity within the Lutheran Church of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or the endeavor for increased piety that in Lutheran circles was engendered by the 1675 writing of Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Deseideria*. Pietism was a reaction to what was perceived as a dead orthodoxism and lack of piety in the Lutheran Church of the seventeenth century. The Church was seen to be spiritually bankrupt and in need of spiritual reform within. Their mission also gave importance to education, care of the poor and orphans and promotion of foreign mission. From Germany, and especially from Halle, Pietism took roots in other parts of the continent. Both Pietist and Puritan theologies emphasized on the experience of spiritual rebirth and individual holiness. The pietist-puritan theology was carried over and further picked up during the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century in New England, America.

- Their theology was highly individualistic and anthropocentric where the creation-centered belief of the tribals was absent in their theology.<sup>408</sup>
- Moreover, the eighteen and nineteen centuries Evangelical theology affirmed and understood the Bible as an authoritative and dogmatic text, therefore, could not be questioned and required complete and unconditional obedience.<sup>409</sup> Such kind of interpretation of the biblical text has the impact and influence of its various readers and their institutions. The native people who were untrained were thus succumbed to the single axis western dominant interpretation.

The pietistic and conservative evangelical theological background still continues to be the dominant theology. Their theology is one-sided, that is mostly on spiritual life, and very seldom touch on physical, social, emotional and moral life of a person. Looking at the hermeneutics of the missionaries one cannot deny the fact that it is solely centered on soul winning and mission. No doubt, the teachings of the missionaries were Christ-centered, exclusive and spiritual. Preparing people's hearts and minds for the next life was the missionaries' primary responsibilities. Hence most of their sermons and teachings centered on life after death and saving souls. Personal piety, devotion to Christ, prayer and Bible reading were prioritized. However, it is a serious issue to be questioned of their unbalanced emphasis on the second coming of the Lord<sup>410</sup> and millennial reign of Christ and their reliance on visions and dreams at time that led them to subjectivism.<sup>411</sup> Their disregard for dogma often led them to serious departures from biblical interpretations on vital questions.<sup>412</sup> The theology of life after death is very important but the theology of life before death (life on earth)

---

<sup>408</sup> Yangkahao Vashum, "Naming the Native: Colonialism, Missionaries, Theologies and Indigenous" in *Garnering Tribal Resources for Doing Tribal Christian Theology*, Tribal Studies Series No.1, Edited by Razouselie Lasetso, (Jorhat: ETC Program Coordination, 2008), 52-55

<sup>409</sup> George M. Marsden, "Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 5, (New York: 1987), 190

<sup>410</sup> Some of the villagers stressed too much on the soon return of Jesus Christ sold their possessions. Moreover, there were parents who stopped sending their children to school. The message of second coming was not conveyed properly to the people.

<sup>411</sup> Pietism shifted emphasis from the objective truths of God's word to subjective experience and from a theocentric (God-centered) system to an anthropocentric (man-centered) system. Their theology emphasized more on *what Christ does in us* than *what Christ has done for us*. They emphasized holy living rather than the forgiveness of sins. Their theology and practice centered on sanctification (the work of the Holy Ghost in leading us to do good works) rather than on justification.

<sup>412</sup> F. Hrangkhuma, *An Introduction to Church History* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1999) 308

cannot be ignored. The prayer Jesus Christ taught clearly invokes the realization of the Kingdom of God on this Earth as it says, “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven”. Redemption is not only of salvation that lies beyond the present world (life after death), but also a salvation that begins in the present, including economic, political and socio-cultural life. The Kingdom of God needs to be centered in a place and a location here and now for a relevant contextual Christian theology. The Church must keep abreast with the signs of times, be attentive to local and global issues, and reinterpret the Christian message accordingly. Dehumanizing standards promoted by globalization, fundamentalism, and terrorism must be neutralized by faith, seeking justice, reconciliation and peace.

Another issue of pietistic theology is their idea that Christianity or God’s Law has no place for governance of society. They view involvement in public policy matters to be unspiritual. They believe Christianity be only a private and personal matter.<sup>413</sup> Moreover, their concept of salvation meant to escape from an evil world for a few election souls who banded together for spiritual communion and mutual edification, and these elect souls were not the Christian Church, but a small circle within the large body.<sup>414</sup> The Zeliangrong Baptist churches like many of the Naga Baptist Churches in Nagaland still loyally stick to certain old method of interpretation and faithful adherents to the classical missionary style. Hence the impact of missionaries and their teachings are still visible today. This one-sided emphasis on spiritual indeed can stop the people from being productive and relevant.

The argument is that Churches need to live in the real, present- day context and make the Bible relevant to the context. Interpretations of the Scripture need drastic change, theologically and biblically. Issues of social justice need to be emphasized instead of simply teaching about endurance of all suffering and injustices and about the life to come. Today, the Bible should direct people how to live in the present as well as how to bring the kingdom of God here on earth. Therefore, the message should revolve around the political, social, economic, and cultural liberation as well as moral

---

<sup>413</sup> Matt Trehwella, *A Brief History on Pietism and Statist Rulers: Why Rulers Promote a Pietistic Form of Christianity*. <http://www.mercyseat.net/pdfs/peitismgovart.pdf>

<sup>414</sup> A.C. McGiffert, *Protestant Thought Before Kant* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, ) 160

reformation. Cultural interaction has at times resulted in destruction of some tribal cultural elements, especially in the early stages of Christianity. Thus speaking of the early protestant attitude towards to local cultures, B. P. Misra says:

*“In many places of North East where Christianity has made numerically considerable progress, the early missionaries were not usually sympathetic towards traditional culture patterns even those that in no way interfered with Christian practice. It was only gradually that they learned the advantages of compromises made in favor of traditional dress, liquor consumption, dances and festivals”.*<sup>415</sup>

The real agencies which brought about considerable socio-cultural and political changes in Naga society were indirect agencies which functioned under the explicit protection of the British administration. Of these, the most powerful were Christianity and education. These two agencies had far reaching consequences for the Naga society. The missionaries insisted that a convert be restricted himself from traditional festivals and also had to stop tribal folk songs, dances and celebrations of various kinds. As a result many of the traditional festivals, customs, rituals and practices were removed from among the converts. The biggest blow was the abolition of the Feast of Merit and Morung system.<sup>416</sup> In spite of all their good works, the missionaries failed to understand and appreciate the cultural ethos of the tribal people which resulted in the loss of many tribal cultures.<sup>417</sup> Complacent in their cultural superiority, the early missionaries made little or no attempt to understand or acquaint itself with the local culture, customs and religious beliefs of the converts. It appears that the early missionaries hardly felt the need of inculturating (inculturation)<sup>418</sup> the Christian message.<sup>419</sup>

---

<sup>415</sup> B. P. Misra, “Society and Politics in the Hill Areas of North East India” in *The Emergence and Role of Middle Class in North East India*, edited by B. Dutta Ray (New Delhi: Uppal Publication, 1983) 27

<sup>416</sup> Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland*, 78, Also See, Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 268

<sup>417</sup> Thanzauva, K. *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology Theology in the Making* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2004) 224

<sup>418</sup> Inculturation is a dynamic process of insertion of the Christian message into the living culture of a people with a view to enriching that culture and enriching Christian life itself. It is an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interpretation and assimilation of the values of a culture with which Christianity is having an encounter. Inculturation entered the theological terminology in the

Writing of Christian mission, Brain Stanley asserted that “the Christian message was generally presented as an integral part of a package of European ‘civilization’ to such an extent that Christianity appeared to be an essentially Western product. This was despite the fact that Christianity had preceded the political expansion of Europe to Africa south of the Sahara and to Asia by many centuries: the faith was in Ethiopia from AD 340, South India from 350 at the latest, China from 635. But these ancient roots of Christianity in Africa and Asia were largely forgotten or ignored by the new forces of European missionary expansion. As a result, a false equation between Christian and western identity was propagated to Asia and Africa, with consequences that have been and continue to be immensely harmful to the Christian cause, especially in Asia”<sup>420</sup>. Therefore, he said that inculturation has become one of the most prominent themes of the Asian, African, Pacific and Latin theologies that are now so much a feature of world Christianity. The starting point for inculturation according to Brain Stanley is to recognize that the message about Jesus simply is good news for all people of all cultural backgrounds. If any cultural or ethnic segment of humanity is consistently hearing the message of Christ not as good news but rather as bad news, or simply as no news at all, the fault lies not with the message itself, but in

---

1970’s in an effort to spell two primary aspects of evangelization: the object and the process of evangelization. The process of evangelization is to enter a particular culture in such a way as to become a principle that assimilates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation. When the Christian faith becomes incarnated in the life of a particular people in their particular socio-cultural setting, they become local church. This process of the church becoming fully incarnated in the culture of the place is called inculturation. In the process of inculturation, there is always a triple dynamism taking place: (a) Exposure or encounter of Gospel values with the culture of a people. (b) Adjustment or adaptation to the positive values of the new culture. (c) Assimilation and integration of the healthy human values, while eliminating the inhuman and dehumanizing aspects of the encountering culture of the people. For details See, Thomas Manickam, “Inculturation: A Retrospection and a Prospecction,” in *The Church in India*, Paul Puthanangadi (Bangalore: Yesu Krist Jayanti 2000), 89

<sup>419</sup> Early American Baptist Missionaries failed to make a dialogue with tribal/ local cultures, traditions and religious beliefs etc. Creative minds like Robert de Nobili, J. de Britto, B. Upadhyay, J. Monchanin, made attempts to correct distorted images of the Church, to dispel prejudices that the Hindus held against the Christians and give a new face to the Church in India. Careful study of Hindu philosophy and the Indian lifestyle convinced them that Indian religious tradition, civilization and culture could most certainly be integrated into Christianity. For instance Matteo Ricci’s attempts at initiating a cultural exchange between the East and West were an inspiration. Ricci effected a real mediation making himself Chinese with the Chinese and creating conditions to make Christ known and to incarnate the Church and the Gospel message in the context of Chinese culture.

<sup>420</sup> Brain Stanley, “Inculturation: Historical Background, Theological Foundations and Contemporary Questions” in *Christianity and Cultures: Shaping Christian Thinking in Context*, edited by David Emmanuel Singh and Bernard C. Farr (Cumbrai: Regnum Books International, 2008), 40-41

some way with the institution and ideological structures and cultural forms in which Christians have enveloped, even disguised, the message.

Kwame Bediako argued that the right process of inculturation is from inside: that is, the process of reception, appropriation, and interpretation of the Christian gospel by indigenous people.<sup>421</sup> Inculturation is not the insertion of an individual into a culture but rather the process by which Christian faith and life become alloyed with the culture of a people. Transposition from anthropological ‘enculturation’ to the missiological and theological ‘inculturation’ suggests more than merely a change of subject that is, from individual to Church becoming bonded with culture. With its anthropological origins inculturation comes to imply a dynamic relationship between the Christian message and cultures, an insertion of Christian life into a culture and an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction between them. The pressing need of the times is to approach, penetrate, understand and evangelize contemporary society through its cultural context. Inserting the Gospel into cultures in order to let them grow to full potential is a challenging mission for every local Church today. The even more demanding challenge is to proclaim and live the Gospel in a rapidly changing society.

H. Carrier provides a working description of inculturation, “the effort to inject Christ’s message into a given socio-cultural milieu, thereby summoning that milieu to grow in accordance with its own values so long as the latter can be reconciled with the Gospel message. Inculturation seeks to naturalize the Church in every country, region and social sector while respecting the native genius and character of each human collectively.<sup>422</sup>” Experience of the Christ event is communicated from Palestine to all nations. Just as the Word becomes flesh in the Jewish socio-cultural and Roman political realities, dwells among us (John 1:14) and shares in the hopes and struggles of the Jewish people, the first Judeo-Christian community also becomes incarnated in the Palestinian context. It generally opens itself to people of different religions and cultures. There is an ecclesiological trajectory conditioned by local circumstances.

---

<sup>421</sup> K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Orbis Books, 1995)

<sup>422</sup> H. Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures: From Leo XIII to John Paul II* (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1989) 93

Faith frees itself from the Jewish traditions of circumcision. The Word enters new spaces and dwells among new peoples of varied religions and cultures- the Samaritans (Acts 8:15-17), the uncircumcised Gentiles (Acts 10-2), those living in the Greco-Levantine world of commerce (Acts 16:14-15) or in the cultured city of Athens (Acts 17:18-32); even those at the center of the great political turmoil of the Roman world (Acts 27:28). The pioneering step towards incarnating the Christian message and communities among non-Jews may be tracked back to St. Paul's debate with the Jewish Christians, over the practice of circumcision as in initiation ritual (Acts 15:1-30; 17: 22-28; Galatians 2: 1-4). The need of inculturation has been pointed out by K. Pathil saying:

*“During the colonial period Western missionaries planted the Churches in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America and these new Churches were made the exact replicas of the Western Churches. Conquest mentality of the colonial powers, superiority complex of the Western European culture, total ignorance of the values of the new peoples’ cultures, lack of sufficient number of the local clergy, and the ecclesiastical administration exclusively by the foreign bishops, all these factors prevented the inculturation process during the colonial period. Today with the end of the colonial era and the independence of the new nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America the churches in these countries too have become conscious of their own identity and autonomy, and the inculturation process is an imperative today”.*<sup>423</sup>

Planting of the Western Church in mission lands without any appropriate adaptation hindered the Christian faith in its encountering and dialoguing with cultures. Dialogue could not take place because the Church came to give and to teach, not to receive and to learn. Consequently the Church became a ghetto, excluding all creativity of local cultures. The outsiders regarded the tribal culture as a non-entity or uncivilized or uncultured or barbarous. Such negative attitude towards the tribal histories and ways of life has had far reaching psychological consequences for tribal people which

---

<sup>423</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, “Catholic Ecclesiology and the Challenges it faces today” Jeevadharma XIX, no.112 (July 1989) 300

manifests in feelings of inferiority and self debasement. The missionaries in their zeal to reform declared all the traditional customs to be evil. Their theology (western perspective) failed to suit the indigenous culture and customs. They consider themselves as ‘custodians of knowledge and truth’ and the indigenous people had to be taught and that they do not have much to offer to others other than some customs and cultures which is too inferior and not worth learning. They have rarely gone to a new culture with an understanding of learning from them. In short, they failed to insert the Gospel message within the socio-cultural and religious situations of a people. And anything that does not conform to the western way of life was considered heathen, old cruel faith and so old-time superstitious.<sup>424</sup> Speaking of the Nagaland context, Renty Keitzar, a prominent biblical and tribal scholar remarked:

*“Christianity is not indigenous to Nagaland because it was not born or produced in this place, it was brought from America with an American (or western) form of culture”.*<sup>425</sup>

The missionaries applied the transplantation model where there is no room for contextualization of theology. The theology that was constructed in the West has to be transplanted in a foreign soil, imposed on the people whether they understand it or not; whether it is meaningful or not, recipients have to learn and believe it. They regarded the western culture as the only valid expression of Christian culture and considered everything non Christian as the product of deprived human existence under the control of Satan.<sup>426</sup> Their preaching and teaching was galvanized by their own inherited social and religious prejudices and rivalries. This very legacy of the missionaries has been perpetuated by the indigenous people even until the present time. Their missiology was simplistic and hardly made any distinction between western culture and the gospel. It was a period of receiving without any question. Moreover, people were taught to receive normative interpretations of the Scripture by the experts. They are not taught to read the Bible from their own context. They made

---

<sup>424</sup> Mary Mead Clark, *A Corner in India*, 17, 61

<sup>425</sup> Renty Keitzar, *In Search of a Relevant Gospel Message* (Guwahati: CLC, 1995) 17

<sup>426</sup> John T. Seamands, *Tell It Well: Communicating the Gospel Across Cultures* (Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1981) 42

western hermeneutics as a universal tool and imposed western culture upon the indigenous people and ignore the social location of the people.

In regard to missionaries' activities in his context, Mojola critically commented in the following lines: "In the past and in most situations where the message of the Bible is received for the first time, the recipients were dependent on the missionary or the bringer of the message for all readings of the message, for all interpretations and applications of the text. The missionary in this case is seen as the authoritative or even the infallible teacher and interpreter of the Word".<sup>427</sup> The missionaries were simply occupied with the translation and transmission of the gospel as they understood it from their context and purview. The local culture of the indigenous people was just ignored because western culture was considered a superior culture. Missionaries have come and left behind not only the gospel but their culture which has become the dominant culture. To this day, most of the indigenous people think that to be a genuine Christian means to turn away from anything is of the past and hold whatever comes from the Christian west. Therefore, the new culture has produced a new generation of elites who abandoned their traditional dress, songs, ways of life, etc which led to the change in their mental outlook, and began to look with disgust at traditional practices. Today, some few serious thinkers are beginning to feel the need for reviving certain traditional values. The statements made both by the outsiders and insiders undoubtedly affirmed the negative impact of Christian mission on Naga culture and customs. In response to missionary's mission strategies, cultural anthropologist Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf describes the mission activities of the American Baptist Missionaries as destroying Naga culture and identify. Speaking of Naga festivals and institutions like Feast of Merit and Morung, Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf commented:

*"It is a pity that the American Baptist Missionaries had little sympathy with the aims of the Government and even less appreciation for the valuable elements of Naga culture. Many of its aspects conflict in no way with the principles of Christianity, and I believe that even some of the old feasts and*

---

<sup>427</sup> Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "How the Bible is received in Communities: A Brief Overview with Particular Reference to East Africa," in *Scripture, Community, and Mission: Essays in Honor of D. Preman Niles*, edited by Philip L. Wickeri (Hong kong: CCA/CWM, 2002) 67

*ceremonies-certainly the agriculture festivals-could have been adapted to the new faith, given a new meaning an retained by the Christian communities”*.<sup>428</sup>

Verrier Elwin, a British administrator who turned anthropologist, uses a much harsher tone as he writes: “The activities of the Baptist mission among the Nagas have demoralized the people, destroyed tribal solidarity and forbidden the joys and feasting, the decoration and the romance of communal life”.<sup>429</sup> Another prominent British anthropologist J. P. Mills who was critical of the missionary activities in the Naga hills writes: “Of the mistakes made by the Mission the gravest, in my opinion, and the one most fraught with danger for the future is their policy of strenuously imposing an alien Western Culture on their converts. I think I am right in saying that no member of the mission has ever studied Ao (Naga) customs deeply, but nearly all have been eager to uproot what they neither understand nor sympathize with, and to substitute for it a superficial civilization.”<sup>430</sup>

Hokishe Sema, the former chief minister of Nagaland is critical on mission activities when he writes: “Everything that is done in connection with the tribal ceremonies and festivals was regarded as an act against Christianity. The house decorations with animal heads, which the Naga valued as their trophies of valour, and the Mithun horns which were a symbol of their prosperity as well as objects of arts were destroyed. Even the wood carvings on the pillars of their houses were all ordered to be burned out. The weaving with conspicuous designs and colors and dresses for religious ceremonies were all discouraged. Their beautiful ornaments of great artistic and human value like ivory, scarlet hair and hornbills were all burnt as they were ornaments used for worshipping the spirits. The art of dancing and colorful social ceremonies were all given up. The result is that all beautiful art and culture of the Nagas nearly disappeared. Nagas started neglecting their own talents of weaving clothes and started following the western culture and cultivating the western outlook.

---

<sup>428</sup> Christoph von Furer-Haimedrorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT, LTD, 1976) 51

<sup>429</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Aborigines* (Bombay: Oxford Pamphets of Indian Affairs, 1994) 14

<sup>430</sup> J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1973) 420-21

The worst part of all of this is the loss of interest in their own way of life”.<sup>431</sup> Wati Longchar, a prominent tribal scholar observes that: “Acceptance of new faith was understood as rejection of the traditional festivals, songs, dances, sacrifices, observances and ethics. Any practice which did not conform to the western norm of Christianity was condemned as evil and thus abandoned”.<sup>432</sup>

The elimination and disappearance of the various practices of the tribals were motivated by two factors. Firstly, some of the practices were partly discouraged by the missionaries and early converts as against the Christian faith and partly by the administrator as their moral duty to eradicate the ill practices in their administered areas. The early missionaries supposed it necessary to give up completely the indigenous practices by the converts since the missionaries considered the traditional practices and that of Christianity to be contradictory to each other. The missionaries also felt that if the newly converts are allow to continue with their old practices, they might go back to their indigenous religion. Secondly, in order to show their sense of distinctness by the newly converts and to show their cultural segregation from their non-converts, they (people) themselves gave up their indigenous practices. The acceptance of ruler’s religion (Christianity) gave them a sense of religious superiority over the indigenous belief system. This false feeling of religious superiority supported by a sense of distinction from the believers of indigenous belief system motivated the converts to eliminate some practices even though they did not necessarily conflict or associated with the Christian faith. The dawn of the new era has shaken the indigenous lifestyle of the people in various forms- customs, rituals and polity. It compelled the abandonment of Morung learning gradually weakening its significance of traditional art and culture where people once maintained strict discipline. Due to the advent of colonial administration, certain feature of traditional set up of administration has been replaced by the modern hieratical governance. With the increase in modern schools and establishment of churches in the villages during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Nagas gradually cast away their indigenous customs,

---

<sup>431</sup> Hokishe Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the Future*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1986) 54-55

<sup>432</sup> A. Wati Longchar, “Interaction Between Gospel and Culture among the Nagas” in *Encounter Between Gospel and Tribal Culture*, edited by A. Wati Longchar, (Jorhat: Tribal Study Centre, 1999), 51

values and beliefs which were all described by the missionaries as being pagan, heathen and barbaric.

#### **4.2.1.2. Zeliangrong Context**

The rich contributions of the Christian mission have been widely acknowledged by the people today, however, there is criticism too. The argument is, “was there any space of adjustment/adaptation to the positive cultural values in the process of interaction between Gospel and culture?” Assimilation and integration of the healthy human values, while eliminating the inhuman and dehumanizing aspects of the encountering culture of the people is a necessary process and an integral part of evangelization. The process of change that came with the outside interferences has its own setbacks. The approach of the Christian mission was often perceived as being insensitive to the local cultures.

Writing of the theological formation in Northeastern India, O. L. Snaitang rightly states: “Christianity came to Northeast India from the West and native converts who were appointed as evangelists, teachers or pastors have carried on their work and preached the Gospel following the line and pattern of the missionaries and with convictions derived from Western theology. Tribal priests were trained in the region under Western type of teaching and pattern or were trained in the West. Most theological schools and colleges like the Welsh Mission School of Theology, Cherrapunji known today as John Roberts Theological Seminary, Mawklot; Eastern Theological College, Jorhat; Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram; Sacred Heart Theological Seminary, Shillong and others were started by the missionaries. It was therefore, not surprising that the introduction of Western theology become conspicuous in these institutions.”<sup>433</sup> Most of the early converts who turned evangelists, teachers and pastors were the products of mission schools. Some examples where the process of outside interference affected the Zeliangrong ways of life may be discussed as under:

---

<sup>433</sup> O. L. Snaitang, “Tribal Theology in Historical Perspectives” in *The Quest for Harmony: Christian and Tribal Perspectives*, edited by Alphonsus D’Souza, Yangkahao Vashum and Lalrindiki Ralte (Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Center, 2013) 77

#### 4.2.1.2.1. Erosion of Sharing Values

A Zeliangrong *Feast of Merit* in which a rich man, instead of hoarding his wealth, spends it for the benefit of the community clearly illustrates the value of anti-greed. The feasts were an act of charity in the best form for it was a means of feeding the poor and sharing wealth with the entire community. The feast also ensures that perishable foodstuff is not wasted in the hands of the rich people but it is shared among the entire village community. A wealthy Zeliangrong man does not gain social respect by just possessing of wealth, but only by spending it for the benefit of the community.<sup>434</sup> To gain the social prestige, a man has to give a number of feasts. By giving a feast of merit, a feast giver's status rises, ensuring he will be remembered even after his death. The one hosted a feast of merit, show his status through certain ornaments, clothes or house carving. The Feast of Merit is not simply feasting- it is based on an attitude, as Verrier Elwin comments:

*“The traditional Naga attitude to property is a rather charming one. The honorable thing was to get rid of it. The Feast of Merit which bestowed so much distinction on their donors showed that it was the distribution of wealth rather than its possession that was important. And this distribution included everyone, not merely one's own relations and rich friends, but the poorest and least important”.*<sup>435</sup>

The practice of the traditional Feast of Merit, one of the most important means of earning status in the society was discouraged by the early missionaries and evangelists as a result affected the mind of the people. With the removal of this noble practice, the community spirit has broken, and individualism began to assert itself. Critical of the American Baptist mission among the Nagas, Alemchiba says: “As religions played a strong part in every ceremony and as the religion was not Christianity they (the Christian missionaries) felt that every ceremony should be abolished. Such ceremonies as the great Feasts of Merit, at which the religious aspect was far less

---

<sup>434</sup> Interview with Hugambo chawang of Ntu village on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2013. A retired government officer who served as a pastor for 14 years.

<sup>435</sup> Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland*, 104

important than the social, had not been re-modeled on Christian lines but had been utterly abolished among the converts”.<sup>436</sup>

The distribution of wealth to the community by means of feast is supplanted by concentration of individual’s wealth today. Individualism replaced the communal activities and rituals in which the whole of the village or *khel*<sup>437</sup> come together. Speaking of the disappearance of tribal practice of sharing their wealth for the community, Furer Haimendorf wrote:

*“With the community spirit broken, individualism begins to assert itself and the western ideas of pride in the possession of goods replace the traditional pride in the lavish expenditure of his wealth for the community”.*<sup>438</sup>

Today the society is marked by hungry for wealth and comfort, and increasing consumerism. Many traditional values are getting lost and ignored in search for wealth. Such practice of sharing one’s belongings to the poor need to be retained. The Christians cannot claim to be followers of Jesus Christ if they talk only of spiritual life and neglect other aspects of life. True Christian life takes interest in the welfare of the poor and the needy by sharing their wealth and time. Love of God is inseparable from the love of one’s neighbor. A noteworthy element distinguishing the first Christian community from the Jews was the spirit of sharing. This was manifested in the sharing of goods and money from sale of property (Acts 2:45; 4:32, 36-37) with the poor and deprived (Acts 2:45; 4:37; 6:1), offering of one’s services to the needy (Acts 9:36, 39) and coming together for prayer, worship and table-fellowship (Acts 2:46; 20:7, 11).

#### **4.2.1.2.2. Communitarian Life to Individualism**

Writing of tribal communitarian ways of living together in the village, K. Thanzauva in his book *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making* explains that the members of a community live together under a common culture, they share their

---

<sup>436</sup> As quoted by K. Suresh Singh (ed), “Tribal Situation in India” (Simla: IAS, 1972) 479

<sup>437</sup> Traditional Naga Villages are invariably sub-divided into a micro administrative unit called ‘*Khel*’ or ‘*Sector*’. In other words, it can be described as a sub unit of a village, which is formed by a number of related clans.

<sup>438</sup> Furer Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, 53

patterns of living and ideas in common to a large extent. In the midst of diversity, people work for the common good. Their feeling for community is so strong that they give priority to their community rather than to their individual personal needs. As such, the individual was not above the community; rather community identity was above individual identity.<sup>439</sup>

One of the most beautiful ingredients of the traditional Zeliangrong village state was its community life.<sup>440</sup> Their social set-up is such that everyone knows all the members of the village, and they are by nature happy to share their possessions and also their services in times of both joy and sorrow. Each of them is very conscious that if one member is hurt or harmed it would obviously disturb the bond of the community, and thus every member maintained respect for each other. Moreover, all things were done in groups such as mixing and working together in the fields, house building, cleansing the village road, collecting the fire woods, community feasts and festivals, etc. This practice of coming together creates better understanding, love, harmony and even reconciliation. Community life is not only of togetherness. They help one another especially in times of difficulty and crisis. To cite few examples if a person had a poor harvest, he/she was given grain. If a house is burnt, the people set about with one accord to build a new house. People who were poor due to certain circumstances like sickness, destitution, accident etc were well looked after by their relatives as well as by the whole community. However, the community ethos has been changing rapidly. Individualism is becoming stronger. The social inequalities are becoming sharper.

Another serious issue is the disappearance of the concept of *Kitchen talks*. In the traditional Zeliangrong society, moral value teachings occurred informally during kitchen talks as the children sat around the kitchen fire eating and relaxing. Parents were primarily responsible in teaching social ethics and behavior to their children.<sup>441</sup> The kitchen, as such plays an important role in disseminating the dos and don'ts of the Zeliangrong society. Moreover, the kitchen portion of the house acted as an agent that facilitated socialization and transmission of folktales, folksongs, humors and

---

<sup>439</sup> K. Thanzaava, *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making*, (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997), 108-113

<sup>440</sup> Interview with Kwetzinbe Newme (78 years old) of Samziuram village on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

<sup>441</sup> Interview with Kamgi Chawang on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2014. He is 85 years old now

numerous cultural values and stories were done while sitting around the fire. It was considered good manners to give seats to visitors in the kitchen with a good fire burning not just for cooking purpose but for warming up people who sat around it and conversed. In contrast to the olden days, kitchen talks (family get-together) are disappearing and with it the essential tips of life are fast vanishing.

Today, much of the present generation parents seem to think that education begins when their children are enrolled in formal education (schooling). They have forgotten the fact that children in traditional Zeliangrong society receive much education at home from parents and other grownups in the family. The practice of affection between husband and wife, respect and love between parents and children (rejection of parents' advices) and the sweetness of domestic harmony are disappearing today. Hence, the result is unhappiness in the family and even to the extent of broken families.

As the concept of Kitchen talks started to disappear, with it taboos and other essential tips of life are fast vanishing with the change of time. The traditional value system that has been the key for a person's discipline, attitude and morality has been neglected leading to irresponsible citizen in the social sphere. Therefore, there is an urgent need to revive good practices such as kitchen talks for culture essentials to spread, imbibed and transmitted. There can be emulation of the same if the present generation shares and communicates to each other about the social evils, values and ethics from within the kitchen. Parents and elders ought to teach the children manners, obedience to parents, respect for elders, and importance of getting along with neighbors and peers, importance of community service, instruction on ethics, instruction in hygiene, and instruction on domestic works.

Individualism is becoming stronger today. The tribal community practice is shifting to individualism and this has lost the spirit of community life. The tribal solidarity based on village collectivism is gradually disappearing and individualism is making fast inroads. With the discouragement of certain noble practices, the community spirit has broken, and individualism began to assert itself. The strong emphasis on the primacy of individualism has replaced the communitarian spirit and the values which are the

hall-mark of indigenous people's community life. Communal/collective ownership of land is disappearing and its place individual ownership is forging forward. Moreover, communal reciprocal labor is being replaced by individual labor for cash payment. Amid individualism that has overtaken the modern society; the tribal tradition of a community has to be reinvented by rebuilding a new concept of class equality.

Today, people have to explore the Biblical teaching of community and compare it with the tribal concept of community life. The egalitarianism in Zeliangrong society was very much in line with the life of the early community of believers (early Christian congregation) when the believers shared together all that belonged to them and also it shared the same teaching with Christians that are all children of God. The Zeliangrong traditional ethos of democracy and egalitarian principles in the village administration system never prevented people to be part of the everyday activities. The "priesthood of all believers" which existed in the traditional society can guide Zeliangrongs to design an ecclesiastical structure and its institution. In a world torn apart by selfish individualism, the traditional community practices could make a very meaningful contribution towards the theology of community, more precisely towards the development of an authentic ecclesiology. The people quest for a community where justice is expressed in equality and sharing, and affirms a community economic system with reciprocal sharing and hospitality. A just community is possible only when people recognize that God is present in all communities and cultures, both to enlighten and judge and by becoming servant of the community.

#### **4.2.1.2.3. Loss of Egalitarian Values**

The core egalitarian ideal is treating people as equals.<sup>442</sup> Egalitarianism is one of the essential characteristics of the tribal society. Zeliangrong society is just one them. As there was no caste and class system in the traditional Zeliangrong society,<sup>443</sup> there was no distinction between the rich and the poor etc. They respect for every individual, whether young or old, rich or poor, male or female, all were accepted as equal members of the clan and village. There was no difference between the village

---

<sup>442</sup> Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: Equality in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 113

<sup>443</sup> Interview with Rev. Deuhing Nsarangbe (95 years old) of Benreu village on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

chief's children and the commoners in any competition or any aspects of life.<sup>444</sup> The same guideline or rule was applied to every individual without distinction. Each had a right and equal opportunity to climb the social ladder of recognition by mark of merit.

Writing of this beautiful practice of equality among the Nagas, Verrier Elwin, pointed out: "Each Village amongst the Naga is a small republic, and each man is as good as his neighbor, indeed it would be hard to find anywhere else more thoroughly democratic communities".<sup>445</sup> However, the ethos of egalitarianism is disappearing today. Today's society has changed completely. It is sad to mention that even in the Church services, there is a subjugation and class division. To cite an example, the front rows of the pews are always reserved for the so called V.I.P's, who are rich, powerful, influential and the like. Due to modernizing forces from outside, the egalitarian principle has been weakened and replaced by the alien values. Therefore, there is a need to revisit and incorporate the traditional egalitarian values into the Zeliangrong social and moral teachings. The traditional egalitarianism was very much in line with the life of the early Christian congregation when the believers shared together all that belonged to them.

#### **4.2.1.2.4. Morality and Ethical Issues in the Zeliangrong Society**

In the traditional Zeliangrong society, the people were much prone to the ethics; not to commit adultery, theft and robbery, stealing, and telling lies. They possessed the qualities to work hard, respect elders, help needy persons, simplicity, honesty and straightforwardness.<sup>446</sup> It is a person's good conduct when he sacrifices his needs and interest for the well-being of the weaker ones. It is a person's courtesy when he takes or help the load the elder is carrying. They strongly believed that man was the creation of the Almighty who is all powerful and capable of doing anything. God gives life, fortune and destiny. Such beliefs made them God-fearing beings. Though they were violent by nature, they love their family members, relatives, friends and neighbors. Moreover, the Zeliangrong people have a casteless and classless society

---

<sup>444</sup> Interview with Kwetzinbe Newmai on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015. He is 78 years old now

<sup>445</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969), 324

<sup>446</sup> Interview with Kaichun of Nzau village on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

and the social life is grounded in various forms of organization. They strictly maintained social life rather than individual which is vividly seen in their society. There was much respect for life and it was considered improper to kill anyone except in war. People who kill someone apart from war are not acceptable by the community. Stealing is not common. Their granaries were made outside of the house. They never lock their doors.

However, the above discussed qualities of the Zeliangrong people began to erode gradually with the rise of modernization. Therefore, a question of comparing between traditional society and modernization such as “did the traditional Zeliangrong society practice prostitution, abortion, drug addiction, pornography, hip hop, rock music and satanism before they came into contact with the western world?” is a serious issue to be dealt. The young generation has forgotten the rich values to be respectful, to be good and honest, to be polite, to put others above self, to think of common welfare, the benefits of hard work and diligence, to bind families together, to create harmony in relationships which makes the society strong and unite etc. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the family education which is one of the important agencies of Christian education. It is true that in early childhood the grace of God and moral values can be taught mainly through the mediation of parents. It is within the personal relationships of family life that a child’s relationship to God and friends is to grow. Moreover, there is a need to restructure Christian education in the churches. Children’s education should be brought to the center of Church’s ministry by recognizing children as important group in the Churches. The recruitment of Sunday school teachers must be done properly in the churches and proper teachers’ orientation training must be conducted time to time. Proper caring, molding and nurturing should be given to children in order to develop a balanced and harmonious growth in all the dimensions of life. Children are the hope of the Church and society; future leaders.

#### 4.2.1.2.5. Undermining Morung (Bachelor Dormitory) Values

Ursula Graham Bower, a British anthropologist who had spent a considerable time among the Zemes (Zeliangrongs) in the N.C Hills, recorded the Morung system of the Zemes (Zeliangrongs) in her book *Naga Path*:

*“The (morung) system taught early the meaning of co-operation and responsibility ..... They (morung inmates) are more self-reliant, with commonsense and better discipline, and above all their loyalty and sense of service to a corporate body is well developed.”<sup>447</sup>*

There are some people who doubted the authenticity of Zeliangrong traditional education by asserting that Zeliangrongs have no history, no civilization, no culture to perpetuate and therefore no education system to talk about prior to the introduction of western education. However, it is observed that the traditional society in some way or the other has values that have transcended generations. The way people view their world, their lives, in fact their world-view or philosophy of life influence the forms of socialization and education that they transmit from one generation to another. The form of education prevalent among the Zeliangrongs before the establishment of modern education system and Church was centered on Morung system (Bachelor’s Dormitory). This institution served the Zeliangrong society for centuries and incorporated in its functions time honored tribal values, life centered learning exposed to customary practices and experiences. Children were imprinted by their elders with patterns of thought and custom bound up with tradition and local environment standardized for each group. Much of the Zeliangrong culture, its customs and traditions have been transmitted from generation to generation through the media of folk music and dance, folk tales and oral historical traditions. Much of this teaching-learning process took place at Morung. The whole function of the institution was guided by two principles: community life and obedience. The Morung inmates were trained in every respect, from housekeeping to politics. Moral education was taught. Children grow up with a healthy knowledge of their cultures and a healthy sense of

---

<sup>447</sup> Ursula Graham Bower, *Naga Path* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1952), 75

roots and self.<sup>448</sup> A constant contact of the people within the village was made possible by Morung practice.

However, the missionaries considered Morung a place “where they could partake in activities that prepared them for war or in celebrations that involved intoxicants”.<sup>449</sup> The missionaries and the early local evangelists disapproved the Morung system and taught the new converts to forbid such culture practices on the ground that a Morung was a place of ‘vice’. They fear that the newly converts might reverse back to ‘heathenism’ if they (new converts) are permitted community singing and dancing which was very popular in the Morung. Is it justifiable to condemn the Morung system all together? In the true sense, they (missionaries) failed to appreciate the distinctive cultural uniqueness of the people. Moreover, it can be said of their ignorance of the indigenous rituals and practices which could not be understood by the outsiders. They evaluated the indigenous people on the basis of their own cultural and religious background.

The local people accepted without questioning or without a second thought by choosing to believe that their cultural practices were in actuality, savage, and primitive, and that the indigenous methods of educating their children were not as good as the westerner’s ways. And with the elimination and fall of the Morung system, the rich cultural heritage of the Zeliangrongs, such as handicrafts, handlooms, wood-carvings, folksongs, folktales, dances, dignity of labor, social ethos, and integrity of the people etc gradually started to fade. The younger generations have almost forgotten their own folk songs, folktales, dances and the most valuable oral traditions. The folkdance which was one of the remarkable cultures of the Zeliangrong practice during festival is replaced by classical and western dance. Today young people prefer western music and western ways of life. V.K Nuh is right when

---

<sup>448</sup> Interview with Hugambo Chawang of Ntu village on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

<sup>449</sup> Robert Eric Frykenberg, “Naga Baptist: A Brief Narrative of their Genesis” in *Baptist Identities: International Studies from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century Vol. 19*, edited by Ian R. Randall, Toiva Pilli and Anthony R. Cross (Keynes: Peterborough, 2006), 220

he said that: “The Naga cultural values of simplicity, honesty, trustworthiness and dignity of labor have been adversely affected by the alien culture”.<sup>450</sup>

In response to outside interference, Ramkhun Pamie in his book *The Zeliangrong Nagas* remarked: “Most of the material and non-material cultural values of the Zeliangrongs are disappearing today”.<sup>451</sup> Gangmumei Kamei, one of the prominent Zeliangrong historians also takes a similar opinion when he said: “The Christian missionaries in their mission to propagate the new religion tried to destroy the social and cultural life of the Zeliangrong people by discouraging the folk songs, folk tales, dances etc”.<sup>452</sup>

No doubt the western culture or new culture had disturbed the culture of the people in one way or the other. Achung Longmei uses a much harsher tone on mission activities that the “Christians condemned everything of the old practices and beliefs of the Zeliangrongs. The Christians looked upon their forefathers’ beliefs, rites, ceremonies, feasts, customs, and traditions of their ancestors as devil’s ideas, works and deeds. Christianity and British administration had come into direct conflict with the ancient faith and freedom firmly held by the Zeliangrongs”.<sup>453</sup> One negative aspect of modernization is not giving importance to the ways of the past where there were certain values, ethics, wisdom and life skills in it. They had a cultural and religious superiority that they carried with them to the indigenous people. The converts were asked to discontinue their folk songs, dances, celebration of various kinds of rituals and practices, construction of traditional houses, etc. The outsiders viewed that their culture and customs are better than the culture and custom of the indigenous people. The result has been a long lasting inferiority complex as regards anything to do with indigenous products.

It cannot be denied that some of the traditional practices are contrary to Christian beliefs but ‘why gospel songs with folk tunes are being discouraged in some of the

---

<sup>450</sup> V.K. Nuh, *A Theological Reflection on Naga Society* (Kohima: CNBC, 1996) 81

<sup>451</sup> Ramkhun Pamei, *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*. (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1996) 25

<sup>452</sup> Gangmumei Kamei, *A History of the Zeliangrong Nagas*, 300

<sup>453</sup> Achung Xavier Longmei, “Zeliangrong Movement: A Search for Identity” in *North East India Zeliangrong Naga Festival-cum-Seminar 1995*, (Imphal: Literature & Souvenir Committee, 1995) 13

Zeliangrong churches today? Traditional songs are un-preferred to the western music and songs in the most of the Zeliangrong churches today. M. M. Thomas, the former governor of Nagaland is right when he suggest for proper balance between tradition and modernity when he said that the rich resources of the western church should not be kept aside from the people, and at the same time the rich resources of the tribal indigenous music also should not be neglected.<sup>454</sup> He further said that Naga Christianity has yet to become truly indigenous by adopting the Naga arts and festivals and cultural artifacts into its life.<sup>455</sup>

Zeliangrong people should make an attempt to compose some indigenous songs (Gospel) and reintroduce traditional folk tune in the Church and Christian gatherings. The important reason why the people should use indigenous song in the church service is that it is their own music, which is created in the local culture by the common people for the benefit of the whole community. If people adapt and Christianize it, it becomes Christian. People should look back and learn to see the beauty of the traditional tune. Good and relevant tunes, what is fit for use in the Christian worship should be encouraged. When Zeliangrong people sing their own tribal tunes, they give importance not only to the music but also to the contents of the songs. They spread songs into the whole community. Therefore, songs with a gospel message should be carefully selected or composed in local tunes and should complement the biblical truth. In tribal society, the rhythm is as important as the lyrics or the melody as meaning is communicated through the beats chosen. The meaning of words change as beats changed. Through music they express their feelings, their intentions, and their faith. It doesn't mean that the people have to discard or abandon the western hymns but to make the relevant traditional folk songs and folk tunes as an alternative medium of communication in the Christian gatherings. At the same time using folksongs and tunes in the Church worship service will bring the worshippers into unity and meaningful interaction with God and their culture where they live and have their being. Today, mostly English songs and western music are used in Church worship services by the young people. Instead of imitating only

---

<sup>454</sup>M. M. Thomas (ed), *Tribal Awakening*, (Bangalore: CISRS, 1965), 184

<sup>455</sup> M. M. Thomas, (Unpublished Seminar paper 29<sup>th</sup> June 1991)

the western music, it would have been glorious for them to compose some indigenous songs or write songs in local tongue to utilize their inborn talent as gift singers and praise God in their rich cultural milieu. Church elders should encourage the young people to value the folk songs and music. Another challenging task today is to assimilate the socio-cultural values of the people and to proclaim the good news through them. The task of contextualizing the gospel and cultural situation of people still remains a predominant duty to be accomplished.

In the traditional Zeliangrong society, a person who became the member of the Morung refined his culture, rectified his demeanor, changed his attitude, polished his code of conduct, developed his conscience, nurtured his thought and action, realized his duties and responsibilities and latter became a successful man in the society. The present society need such a forum for young people where proper moral education and tribal ethics be seriously considered because youths are the future leaders. Special education and formation of leaders for the Zeliangrong community is a categorical task. Leaders lose their senses when elections are held and developmental schemes are shared. In the new endeavor towards building a better Zeliangrong Church and society, it is imperative that people morally upright, socially tolerant, and responsible for present and future generations are appointed or elected to lead the Church and society. Another essential aspect is the path of reason and objectivity.

It is pertinent to mention that there are certain traditional values which need to be revived. The rediscovery of cultural elements should not be understood as a revival of traditional culture into Christian traditions but it should be understood as a method of the interpretation of the Christian message comprehensible in the indigenous ways of life and ethos. One important concern of the Church is to educate the people by organizing seminars and workshops in various areas of life. The programs which are regularly conducted by the Churches are understood to be mainly for the spiritual enrichment of a person; however, other social and personal related issues are not given sufficient attention. Church need to organize training sessions and programs base on society, family and individuals which were daily features of life in the traditional society particularly at Morung. The principle of caring, sharing and

equality found in the traditional Morung should be adapted by the people of this generation. The spirit of hard work which was manifested in the Morung can be transformed and utilized by conducting seminars to the young people. The dignity of labor was the glorious heritage of the Zeliangrongs. “Work and Live” was the motto for the Morung inmates. Effort should be made to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage and willingness to accept and integrate all the positive elements of tribal cultures into Christian theology and belief system. Theological form, that is, forms of expressing tribal theology, should not simply be discussion, seminar, lecture and written articulation etc for it becomes only monumental. It should be expressed in arts, singing, dancing and lifestyle.

Valuable aspects of morung system/teachings such as moral values, principles of community life, respect and honor to the elders, the hands that they rendered to help the needy, sacrifice that they offered for others, obedience, morality, skills, integrity, accountability, self-esteem, hard work, folktales, folksongs and oral history, etc need to be included in the school curriculums (particularly mission schools) rather than limiting only to modern education system. The natural gifts of narrating stories, which are told and retold, needs to be revived; and this practice also needs to be incorporated into the Zeliangrong educational institutions and the churches. Inculcation of values, healthy attitude and emotions, and development of skills are sidelined in today’s education system. The traditional belief that wealth should be earned ethically through hard and honest labor need to be inculcated. Proper moral education and ethics need to be given importance.

The present Christian education system emphasize on one-sided education, that is mostly on spiritual life and very seldom touch on physical, social, emotional and moral life of a person. They are in the process of becoming, knowing, creating to be become matured and full personhood. They are also very vulnerable and so become victims of social evils. Children are growing up in the midst of globalization, a life style of consumerism, and powerful media influence. This important part of life should not be ignored by families, churches, schools and communities but seize the opportunity to nurture and mould them in the right way. Therefore, proper caring, molding, and nurturing should be given to them in order to develop a balanced and a

harmonious growth in all the dimensions of life. The state's authorities-politicians, policy makers, curriculum planners, educationists, parents and communities- must make an attempt to incorporate positive traditional values and practices into the formal school curriculum to ensure that individualism selfishness and corruption reduces in the society.

#### **4.2.1.2.6. Erosion of Native Cultural Values**

Culture is a difficult term to define, even describe. No society is strictly mono-cultural. The famous anthropologist Edward Taylor defines culture "as that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."<sup>456</sup> In other words, culture includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs. The idea of culture as understood today encompasses every aspects of human life: material, spiritual, social, political and emotional.

Traditional values refer to the standards and values which were embraced by most people in ancient societies from its earliest beginnings. Simply speaking, the term traditional values mean the values emanating from tradition. Traditional values are closely related to traditional society and folk culture of the fore parents. The word tradition comes from the Latin "tradition" which means to transmit, to hand over, to give for safekeeping. Thus tradition refers to specific values passed through generations. Value is something which is highly regarded and cherished in society. The term can be a set of values that have been traditionally followed by a community.

In the traditional Zeliangrong society, honor was life's most desired characteristic. This can be achieved through honesty, humility, truthfulness and hardworking.<sup>457</sup> Moreover, it was an honor to show hospitality to the guests especially to those who needed help and shelter. Hospitality and the culture of giving and sharing among the people is a value which has been nurtured by fore-parents. They extend help to each other at times of need during calamities, war and conflict. Young people were taught

---

<sup>456</sup> Edward Taylor, *Primitive Cultures*, quoted in Nicholas Lossky and others; *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 258

<sup>457</sup> Interview with Raibak Pame of Samziuram village on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

how to be respectful, polite and behave in socially acceptable ways; to be good and honest, to put others above self, and think of the common good because of the values they held dear. Respect for elders was a common value among the people. They highly value hard works and diligence. However, all this values have been lost today.

Immorality which is little known in the traditional society is now a common topic. Broken homes and broken marriages are visible signs among the people today. Drug, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS are some of the serious issues confronting today. The degree of influence by western culture is found to be very high among the youngsters. Most of the broken family relationship is due to such outside cultured practices. Most of the young people are confused and are searching for meaning and satisfaction in their lives. The greatest challenging task today is to assimilate the socio-cultural values of the people and to proclaim the Good News through them.

The Zeliangrong council village system is more egalitarian and democratic instead of the polity of Chieftainship. The village administration is democracy as far as the majority decision-makings were concerned because each decision was taken in public. Like many of the Naga tribes, Zeliangrong village council exerts authority (legislative, executive and judiciary).<sup>458</sup> The village council is responsible for any case and problems that arises in the village. Matters of law, justice and administration, civil, criminal, and political matters of the village were settled in the village court. They were judged in accordance with the tribal law. Issues like divorce, inheritance, homicide, adultery<sup>459</sup>, theft<sup>460</sup>, accidental murder<sup>461</sup> etc and all the disputes are settled by meeting of the elders according to the customary law.<sup>462</sup> The protection under customary laws was extended to all people irrespective of rich or poor. Every member has an equal voice in meetings; all opinions and agendas are heard and taken into account. The customary laws and practices which were very much geared towards the

---

<sup>458</sup> T. Lanusosang, *A Story of Social Geography*, (Kohima: Directorate of School Education, Nagaland, 1989), 163

<sup>459</sup> Rape/Adultery- Three years banishment from village.

<sup>460</sup> Theft/Stealing- Payment of Fine

<sup>461</sup> Accidental Murder- Seven years exile with family from the village

<sup>462</sup> Customary law (unwritten law) is the highest authority in the village and it is obeyed by all individuals, groups and clans. In the village, the chief and his councilors are custodians of customary law. Customary law is simply a code of conduct of the people living within the jurisdiction of a governing body. It cannot be mis-interpreted since it is the tradition of the people.

protection care of nature as well as community as a whole in the traditional Zeliangrong society were replaced by the new laws developed either in the west or in other urban context. Consequently the indigenous people were slowly alienated from the land and community centered laws and customs.

Today, strong customary bound society is the need of the hour to safeguard the cultural heritage. However, one should be conscious with certain restrictions pertaining to socio-cultural, political and religious aspects imposed on women. In the traditional society, women cannot inherit the landed property and women are restricted from being part of the village council. The reality is that customary laws are male centered which need to be evaluated and modify in certain areas giving space/platform to women in the changing circumstances.<sup>463</sup> The oppressive practices must be constantly challenged and transformed.

Socio-Cultural Organizations such as Village Council, Zeliangrong Hoho, Zeliangrong Students' Union, Tribal organizations, etc must play an important role to safeguard the traditional values of their people by framing the common guidelines for the people. More and more participatory approaches should be incorporated in the strategies so that the promotion of safeguarding the cultural values becomes a matter of personal and community concern for every citizen. Church leaders also should involve in the program in order to strengthen the messages with religious and philosophical dimensions.

Training programs and workshops can be planned for government, NGOs and voluntary agencies working to promote cultural values with various approaches and strategies. This task can be taken up by Tribal Research Center of Nagaland University who are well versed with conducting such training programs. Scholars and prominent leaders from Zeliangrong community who are interested in this field can be invited to share their own history and rich cultural heritages. Under extension

---

<sup>463</sup> Notwithstanding constitutional provision, parliamentary legislations, legal provisions in favour of women status and equality, there is still gender disparity in every society, where empowerment of women is needed.

activities of the schools and colleges with communities' participation, celebrations of important traditional festivals should be taken up.

It appears that the only task of the Church is to evangelize without considering the social, economic and political needs of the people. Many church leaders appear to believe that their only mission is to preach about heaven and not to involve themselves with social concerns. A paradigm shift in Christian ministry is needed in order to achieve the goal of holistic ministry. Every Christian should address not only spiritual, but also physical and social needs of the people. The Church has a role to play in making people conscious of the need to restore basic values and customs which have been lost from the Zeliangrong society.

Student's union with the support of the people can propose to introduce "Zeliangrong History" in the school syllabus (school text books) for students to learn about their own culture. Poems and Folktales by the Zeliangrong poets and scholars can be included too. It is important to priorities their own literature by their own writers, and books about their own cultures.

If people are to restore certain traditional values then the traditional way of making handicrafts and woodcarving can be considered a leading contender for attention. Training sessions can be given to the young people in making Zeliangrong handicrafts which will help the community preserve the beauty of their culture in the multifaceted forms of its traditional arts and crafts. Museum can be a very important tool for people to safeguards the rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the community as transmitting the knowledge keep the culture alive and identify intact. Traditional uses and habits, beliefs and values are the foundation of the identity. There is an urgent need to preserve the heritage resources which are fast disappearing. The historical places, flora and fauna, famous villages, festivals, music, folklores, folkdances, local cuisines etc are all a testimony to the cultural multiplicity in Zeliangrong heritage.

The researcher is of the opinion that the Zeliangrong people have not taken any serious steps to rediscover the beautiful traditional values. Theological reflection

based on tribal experiences and traditional heritage is an essential task of indigenous theology. Every effort should be made to reclaim the resources for the purpose of theological reflection. This search will involve processes of recollection, remembering and sharing with a view to formulating a theology that will ultimately be liberating and empowering. By writing the history of the Zeliangrongs it will be possible to bring back their past glorious into the present. However, one should be able to distinguish between good and bad cultural elements. One should be careful to guard against the dangerous tendency to assimilate unacceptable elements into the Christian faith because such interference may distort the gospel truth. The teachings of scripture cannot be compromise. The gospel must be rooted in the culture of any given community so that faith expression in the risen Lord will become more meaningful to everyone. The rediscovery of cultural elements should not be understood as a revival of traditional culture into Christian traditions but it should be understood as a method of the interpretation of the Christian message comprehensible in the indigenous and tribal languages and ethos.

Most regrettable aspect of the Zeliangrong culture is the gradual disappearance of their mother tongue. Many of the young people are unable to speak, read and write in their own language. Mother tongue is becoming a secondary language among them. Common people prefer to speak Nagamese. It is true to say that the people have lost their originality and culture in imitation of others. This issue must be addressed to the young people.

Folk tales and historical traditions should be narrated to the young people which have been the best and most effective means of transmitting events of the past to the present. Story-telling is part of entertainment in the Zeliangrong tradition. At times stories are repeated several times by the elders to the younger generation and parents to the children. In many villages there are people who are experts in storytelling. Some of their stories are real events that happened in the distant past and they are told and retold and thus passed on to different generations. The art and practice of story-telling need to be retained as it is an essential part of the education of the young, for it is in this way that they are introduced to the values and traditions of their cultures. Cultural stories that parallel the gospel message can be reinterpreted relevant to daily

life. As the children grow older, parents and elders should teach the moral values. Research scholars should collect the folk tales and oral traditions in written form and certain traditional values are to be included in the curriculum of the Christian schools. M. M. Thomas, the former governor of Nagaland is right when he said:

*“Naga Christianity has yet to become truly indigenous by adopting the Naga arts and festivals and cultural artifacts into its life. It has yet to know the other religion and culture in depth”.*<sup>464</sup>

#### **4.2.1.2.7. Insecurity of Life**

Disputes in the traditional Zeliangrong village are settled by the village elders according to the customary law.<sup>465</sup> Rape, adultery and theft were a rare occurrence in the traditional Zeliangrong society but it does occur and there are provisions in customary law to punish the culprit.<sup>466</sup> There was much respect for life and it was considered improper to kill anyone except in war.<sup>467</sup> People who kill someone apart from war are ostracized from the community, which is the ultimate shame for a tribe. However, today conflict and violence has become part of life. The people feel insecure in their own land because of ethnic conflicts, extortion and violence from militants and security forces, depletion of resources and greater social stratification.

The people’s movement for their rights is today engulfed by people’s resistance movements. True to say that these movements exist as parallel governments under which people suffer heavy taxation, rampant clashes, kidnap, capital punishment, court judgments, imposed law and order upon people from different movements. Ideological differences amongst the social leaders and intellectuals in regard to

---

<sup>464</sup> M. M. Thomas, a renounced theologian and a former governor of Nagaland. (Unpublished Seminar papers, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1991).

<sup>465</sup> Zeliangrong customary law is unwritten law which varies from village to village. Customary law is the highest authority in the village and it is obeyed by all individuals, groups or clans. In the village, the chief and his councilors are custodians of customary law. Zeliangrong customary law originated from the remote past and is handed down to the succeeding generations. This law is framed according to the lore, mores, customs, cultures, traditions and the local environment of the people that it is to vary from village to village. Customary law is simply a code of conduct of the people living within the jurisdiction of a governing body. It cannot be mis-interpreted since it the tradition of the people.

<sup>466</sup> Interview with Kamgi of Samziuram Viillage, on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013. He has a vast knowledge of traditional Zeliangrong culture.

<sup>467</sup> Interview with Kaichung of Nzau village on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

people's movement towards self-determination have generated unrest and even gruesome bloodshed. Factional violence has brought untold sufferings into the lives of the people. Life has become so uncertain and people have to live with fear. And the sum product of all these problems is the suffering of the innocent masses. Many people think that the headhunters have been evangelized and there is no more headhunting. However, the situation is perhaps worse than those days of headhunting. The traditional practice of head hunting is formally over with the advent of Christianity among the Zeliangrongs; nevertheless, the psyche of head hunting still pervades in a very subtle form and in a sophisticated way. It is now practiced in the form of ethnic and factional conflicts. The automatic weapons have replaced the traditional spears and daos. In such a situation, protection of people's rights requires people's involvement.

While an attempt to retrieve past heritage has been the major focus of tribal theology as of now, serious reflection on present-day problems is highly necessary. Peace Building is a serious issue to be dealt. The region has been rocked by violence and conflicts of various kinds. Civil societies like the Zeliangrong Hoho, Zeliangrong Students' Union, Women Wings and Youth Organizations etc can spearhead the fight against human rights violations. Moreover, the Church needs to play a prophetic role to bring peace and reconciliation among the people. In the true sense, the Christians cannot truly proclaim to the world that they are walking in God's path without making an effort to bring within themselves and among their neighbors. A just society is possible only when people reconcile with one another and shed any negative attitudes towards each other.

The Zeliangrongs like any of the other Naga tribes' boasts about their state "Nagaland" with Christianity majority. But where are the Christian principles? Should not the state with Christian majority lead the way in witnessing that the message and presence of Christ does make a difference in every aspects of life: in principles, laws, governance, conduct, and attitude? Rather today's society is filled with various types of violence and conflicts. The feeling of insecurity, uncertainty and threat is daily experience. Killing, stealing, injustice, corruption, etc, can be heard and seen in

Zeliangrong society. The conflict between the rich and the poor, people those in power and ordinary people are causing considerable conflicts in the society. Law is mean to help individuals to develop and the common good to be fostered. A peaceful and orderly atmosphere helps personal growth. In the traditional society, matters of law, justice and administration, civil, criminal and political matters of the village were settled in the village court under the law of land which is very much lacking in the present society. Therefore, there is a need for forming common and transparent written rules and regulations for the safety of the weaker sections. The intellectuals, village leaders and those who have knowledge of the traditional laws should come together for common discussion. It will provide good governance and basic rights and justice to the people, freedom of speech, freedom of movement as well as the right to live and the right to safeguard the property of the individuals. Attempts should be made to organize peace rallies, peace meetings and conferences.

Today the land is filled with fear and without right to live and perhaps in the last two decades more people have been killed than those days of headhunting. At this juncture the public leaders, thinkers, activists and students need to play a vital role to bring reconciliation through negotiations, seminars, writings and counseling to the younger generation to the negotiating table to bring understanding and unity among different insurgent outfits in the land. The conflict resolution and peace process needs to be handled with utmost care bringing the issue more closely to the people and creating a broader framework to resolve conflict once for all. Religio-cultural texts with the implicit or explicit ethical codes, the biographical memory of the ancestor, legends or myths upholding the value of responsible interventions in the society could be instrumental in creating such world-views of transforming the existing disorder into a new moral order. The Church can no longer remain indifferent to such situations. The Church should initiate steps at identifying the root causes of insurgency<sup>468</sup> or ethnic conflicts with a view to remedying them equipped with Christian principles of love and justice. The Church's voice should be heard in such a

---

<sup>468</sup> Many of the Insurgents are people in need of emotional and spiritual support which can only be provided by the Gospel. Therefore, the Church needs to reach out its mission to the young people who must find an answer to their problems and their demands not anywhere else but in the Bible. Any attempt to resolve conflicts outside the Word of God can only lead to utter failure and frustrations. Bloodshed need to be challenged.

time of misunderstanding, conflict and violence. What is required at this juncture is to reflect and remodel the concept of reconciliation from Jesus' own example of reconciliation and table fellowship which he shares with sinners and tax collectors. What is striking and revealing in Jesus' model of reconciliation is its unique focus on bringing all the different strata of people to one table, irrespective of who they are. Be it sinners, outcasts, and traitors, or be it the untouchables, Jesus welcomes them all. It is through this table fellowship that he establishes peace, relationship, forgiveness and reconciliation. And for Jesus reconciliation is so fundamental that one's offerings and prayers become null and void if he/she don't reconcile with their neighbors before coming to the altar.<sup>469</sup>

The olden days' method/process of reconciliation needs to be reconsidered for today's theological reflection. The representatives of both the parties bring their resentments and differences on the table to be reconciled. In most cases, a third person is involved to settle the problems. The third party is usually constituted by the elders of the village. After carefully studying the matter, the third party passes their wishes and most unbiased judgment over the dispute. The offending party submits their false, and the right party forgives the offending party unconditionally. Being truly reconciled mean to forgive and forget the past mistakes. They form a bond that binds them like brothers and sisters, which pass on to their generation and for generations to follow.<sup>470</sup> In such a time as this, the church should not remain as a silent spectator but speak out with courage and conviction. The church can play a vital role as third party in conflict resolution today. Peace is possible if the people take individual and collective responsibility for unity and reconciliation. Peace building is another important agendum for tribal theology.

#### **4.2.1.2.8. Exploitation of Community Land**

In the traditional society, land ownership and land use pattern can be broadly classified into community or village land, clan land, lineage or family land and then comes individual or private.<sup>471</sup> Since land holds family, clan and tribe together, it is

---

<sup>469</sup> Gospel according to Mathew 5:23-24

<sup>470</sup> Interview with Hugambo of Ntu Village, December 2013. He is the former pastor of Samziuram Liangmai Baptist Church.

<sup>471</sup> Interview with Kamgi chawang on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

the foundation of the tribal community. Hence, community land holds the greatest value and not the individual. Every member household of the community had the right to live, cultivate and hunt, and everyone was entitled to benefit from and utilize the resources and products of the community land, while no household had the right to sell or transfer. Land is very central to the Zeliangrong people, for land is the source of livelihood. Land is also the symbol of unity; it holds not only clan, village and tribe as one unit, but it also unites with Supreme Being, spirit, ancestors, and all creatures as one family. Land is a symbol of unity which gives identity to the community. A stranger on being enquired would tell the name of his/her village first, followed by his/her name. Further, the Zeliangrong people observe the number of festivals throughout the year and the festivals are not only for eating, drinking and merry-making, but are deeply connected and centered on soil invoking blessings from supreme being to be kind, generous and fertile. Therefore, for all these reasons, it is considered highly shameful and even punishable if any member of the community/clan or family sells or transfer the community land to others for any reason. In other words, it is strictly prohibited to sell the community land.

However, many of the Zeliangrong people are landless and poor today. What went wrong with the people? The outside culture which introduced a separation of the natural from the sacred into tribal societies had a negative impact.<sup>472</sup> A negative consequence of removing sacredness from tribal natural resources was to make it possible for commercial forces to destroy them later without the people fearing that their God or spirit would punish them. This separation removed the sacredness attached to the nature. And this is a pertinent issue which Zeliangrong people need to deal with today. Treating land as a commodity or greedily exploiting it strongly contradicts the tribal concept of the sanctity of land. To protect the land means to safeguard the roots, identity and dignity. Traditionally, every member or household of the community had the right to live, cultivate and hunt, and everyone was entitled to

---

<sup>472</sup> The nineteenth century missionaries (evangelicals) recognized God's revelation only in the Word of God and not in the total creation of God. This theology undermined the land-centered tribal religion, culture and ethics. Also, the salvific work of Christ is viewed from the anthropo-centric perspective. It was God who loved His people, not the world, that, He incarnated in Jesus Christ to save and give power to the helpless. This understanding indirectly supports the view that regards nature without any religious significance. It promoted dualism between the spiritual and the material, heaven and earth, giving so little importance to the thing of this material world or even regarding it as evil. See, Wati Longchar, *Gospel and Culture: A Tribal Perspective*, 5

benefit and utilize the resources and products of the community land, while no household had the right to sell or transfer. Rather, they shared rivers, forest, soil, fruits and any valuable resources the land offered for the nourishment of life.

One of the serious issues of the Zeliangrong people today is the selling of community lands or individual lands to the rich people and also to outsiders. Among the Zeliangrongs, much of the clan lands which were traditionally kept intact to be of help to any clan member, are getting sold to individuals for want of some immediate cash. This in turn has effect on community life itself. When the vices of egocentrism and individualism takes precedence over community wellbeing, seeds of negative virtues like selfishness, greed, covetousness, and the like begin to take root, giving rise to all ideologies and practices that cause more environmental destruction. Today, rich people have become landowners which includes valleys and even mountains. Moreover, unscrupulous rich and influential people including the village leaders collude with the contractors and sell out the village forest and the forests are depleted. Forest and its products are merely seen as commodities to fetch a sundry income for personal gain which is another factor leading to deforestation land, mountains, and rivers are being polluted and forests lay waste. Trees and forest are rampantly being denuded causing species extinction in most of the Zeliangrong inhabited areas. All this issues endanger the livelihood of the people particularly the poor and destroy the ecosystem and consequent massive upheavals.

#### **4.2.1.2.9. Ecological Crisis**

Culture as a vehicle of co-existence and life celebration occupies a vital place in society. Several factors contributed to cultural development that pervades and determines the order of human life. Ecology, in a fundamental way is the birthplace of cultures. In simple terms, culture could be described as the prototype of human response to its environment. There is a natural and strong bond between a people and their physical environment. Land (mother-earth), for instance, shapes the lifestyle of tribals in India, as the sea would of the coastal inhabitants and mountains of highlanders. The culture of rural areas, in a matrix of its environment, is described as 'sacred groves' of forests and village communities.

After God had created everything He saw that “it was good” and he blessed it (Genesis 1:3-25). In other words, the Bible affirms the intrinsic goodness of the whole creation. Psalm 104 acknowledges the colorful diversity of life which blossoms in their respective habitats that have been assigned to them by God. God’s care and concern for the survival of different species can be seen in the creation story of Genesis 1 and in the story of the flood in Genesis 7, where Noah was told to take pairs of different animals and birds into the ark with him. Thus the survival of the rich biodiversity in creation is the will of God; exploitation and destruction of this diversity is a sin, a rebellion against the will of God.

The traditional Zeliangrong society held that land is a gift from God to human beings to support and sustain their lives. Land is central to their lives. Their whole life and activities revolve around the land. It is central to their identity, history, spirituality, economy and their very survival. Land was sacred to the people and it could not be bought or sold. While for many modern cultures land is regarded as a productive economic resource; however, in the case of the Zeliangrongs (tribals), the concept of land is far greater and more inclusive. Their concept sees the land not just as farmland or as a grazing area, but also as territory, place, homeland, culture, spiritual settings, and living beings including animals. Land also encompasses all other resources, such as the water, forests, rocks, and stones on the ground, the minerals below ground, and the clouds and sky above ground.

Murkot Ramuny, in his book *The World of the Nagas* commented that “One of the most important aspects of Naga life is that each tribe has its own area of land. The entire area of Nagaland is divided into tribal areas and it is practically and morally owned by the tribe. No other tribe encroaches the land area of one tribe. No one will sell the land of one tribe to an outsider. Within the area of one tribe the land is subdivided and belongs to each village from time immemorial. No one encroaches another village land.”<sup>473</sup> The people perceived their life, nature and environment as a complete whole and totality. This understanding of human reality and the surroundings is seen in its triadic interrelated dimensions- the divine, the universe and

---

<sup>473</sup> Murkot Ramuny, *The World of Nagas*, (New Delhi: Northern Book Center, 1988) 5

the human. These dimensions, while being separate, are essentially dependent and interdependent. None can exist without the other. Though tribal belief does not look at everything as divine, it clearly accepts that the divine is present everywhere. The presence of the divine in the universe and the human world makes life integrally harmonious and healthy. This interrelated reality calls for mutual respect, cooperation and preservation, things that the tribes practiced since the ancient past. A significant aspect of this worldview is clearly seen in the area of preserving and maintaining the mother earth through the use of trees and other plants with a great sense of moderation. Hardly any of the Zeliangrong people in the past believed in ecological destruction. Though there was among them an understanding of the human inclination towards excesses that could damage biodiversity, in order to protect the mother earth from human greed, aggressive and destructive activities, they invested the forests with the divine (sacred) breath.

As stated above the Zeliangrongs were eco-friendly people who lived in corporate with nature. The land is the basic component of the spirituality of the tribal people. People believed that there was an intricate relationship among all things animate and inanimate, human and non-human, spiritual and material- that had always to be maintained in proper balance. Land gives value and their spirituality is rooted in the land. That is why people sing about land, dance about land, and tell stories about land. Land is their identity. To deny or uproot the people from the land is a serious violation of human rights; it is a denial of their spirituality. Moreover, land as a commodity that can be sold was not just strange but unthinkable. However, friendly attitude towards creation and nature is gradually dying down today. Today land is no longer regarded as a life sustaining entity.

In the past, the region had various traditional institutions and mechanisms for biodiversity conservation such as sacred groves and sacred forests. To cite few examples, killing of animals at certain stages of their life is prohibited. Hunting and trappings are tabooed during the breeding seasons; pregnant animals cannot be killed. Fishing and use of certain poisonous roots or leaves which kill fish during the spawning season is tabooed. Wanton (motiveless or meaningless) felling of trees and plants is strictly prohibited. Before clearing the jungle for cultivation and farming,

ceremonies are conducted to get the approval of the land. Only then the farmers begin their work. These institutions were supported by social, cultural and religious beliefs and values. But with the introduction of modern education (outside culture) and advance of market forces, the traditional ideas have disappeared and the mechanisms of conservation have become weak.

Western Christian interpretation of creation is anthropocentric- human is the reference point of all realities. Nature exists for human. There is no sacred and mystery in nature, but it can be manipulated and controlled for the benefit of human beings. This one sided theological interpretation justifies expansion of colonial power and exploitation of nature. The ideology of globalization and the expansion of global capital market are deeply rooted on this interpretation. The unprecedented exploitation of nature and present ecological crisis testify the failure of the Christian understanding of creation. Today the local people chopped down trees and bamboos in the forest as a source of cash income. Lumbering has become one most important occupation of the people in the Hills, which has led to the exploitation and deforestation. People with their gun shoot anything that moves in the forest. Rivers are poisoned to get fishes.

Thomas Samuel is right when he said that one of the reasons for the present ecological crisis is greed. It is greed that causes people to exploit resources. And the over- exploitation of resources is causing imbalances in nature.<sup>474</sup> The uncontrolled logging, indiscriminate use of chemicals in agriculture, inconsiderate disposal of non-biodegradable waste etc. due to negligence, ignorance or greed are destroying the ecosystem. The current flurry of environmental degradation in the tribal areas particularly among the Zeliangrongs such as exploitation of timbers, chopping down the trees, polluting streams and river sources of drinking water through poisoning to catch fishes, disposing of refuse into gutters etc have come under heavy criticism by concerned citizens who see these activities as a threat to life, property and to the survival of future generations. Logging business is causing much destruction to the

---

<sup>474</sup> Thomas Samuel, "Our Response to Ecological Crisis" in *A Christian Response to Ecological Crisis*, edited by Thomas Samuel and Mathew Koshy Punnakadu, (Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 2009), 9

environment. In the process, rich and beautiful flora and fauna are destroyed and the bio-diversity of the region is severely affected. Animals and birds of all types are found in the region, but their numbers are rapidly decreasing due to poaching and deforestation. The beautiful landscape of the region is rapidly changing; landslips, soil erosion and flooding have been occurring frequently. Climate change is another factor responsible for these changes.

What has the Church done in response to the rapid environmental degradation in Zeliangrong society? The Church seems to be slow and unconcerned about ecological issues. Probably, they think that it is nothing they could do about it because it is outside their religious or divine mandate. It could also be that they think they lack resources that would help to preserve the environment. The biblical account of creation reveals the responsibility that God delegated to humankind in the caring of nature. As such, creation does not only belong to God as the creator, but also to human kind as caretaker. Humanity is delegated the responsibility for tending creation (Genesis 2:15) with the understanding that creation is the possession of God which He has entrusted to humankind to maintain as its steward and not its exploiter. It involves personal, communal and social commitment. This is an area the Church's role must carefully be considered. A true Christian leadership concentrates not only with a doctrine of the church and about humanity but also with a doctrine of creation. We cannot truly understand what it means to be leaders unless we understand our place as human beings within the wider creation in which God has placed.<sup>475</sup>

Pope John Paul II once remarked that it is good for people to get away at times from routine and spend time close to nature. It is impossible not to think of God looking at the majesty of the mountains, the magnificence of flowing waters, and the splendor of sprawling fields that brings out a harmony with His greatness.<sup>476</sup> The question of ecology is yet to become an integral element of Christian experience. God's people are encouraged to look at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, and to feel and touch the natural world as part of their salvation history. Therefore, people must aim

---

<sup>475</sup> Dave Bookless, "Leadership and Environment" in *A Guide to Leadership*, edited by Titre Ande, (Delhi: ISPCK, 2011), 72

<sup>476</sup> "Pope: Environment Destruction is a sin against creation", *The New Leader*, 109/16, (Chennai: September 1-15, 1996), 6

to keep this beautiful world beautiful, and not to turn it into a wasteland. Church as stewards of God's creation must see to it environmental issues as their mission to develop strategies, educate, discipline and mobilize the people to community action. The Church should be an agent of change. When the Church sees the call to change as mission and educate her members on their relationship with, and obligation to creation or the environment, will bring positive and lasting change to their lives and will transform the way they think and relate to the environment.

In the present context, where Zeliangrong lands have been destroyed and nature has been disfigured due to human greed, there is an urgent need for an eco-theology to reinstate the importance of nature and to restore the elemental relationship that used to exist between nature and man. In the words of Wati Longchar "the lost of land and the destruction of the tribal peoples' environment is an affront to our identities, the lost of our spirituality and our self-determining existence. If the land is lost, the family, clan and village and the tribe's identity too will lost..... he/she is like a stranger without an identity and a home. Rejection of this spiritual connection with the earth's family in developmental activities will be a serious mistake for the future survival of the world".<sup>477</sup> Therefore, Longchar strongly commented that "unless we discover our spiritual connection with the earth's family, it is not possible to talk about liberation and a community where all people are treated justly. It is like attempting to liberate oneself after killing one's mother. That means from the tribal people's perspective an authentic Christian theology is possible only in relation to protection of the land."<sup>478</sup> Therefore it is everyone's responsibility to challenge the destruction of environment and bring forth environmental consciousness. To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures. There is a need to plant trees in the urban areas along every road and in open areas. Where trees have been cut down for road widening, new trees should be planted. In the rural areas where trees have been cut down for firewood, new tree

---

<sup>477</sup> A. Wati Longchar, "Inaugural Address" in *Challenges of Land Development in Nagaland: Selected Papers, Essays and Columns*, edited by Takatemjen (Mokokchung: Clark Center for Peace Research and Action, 2015), 9-10

<sup>478</sup> A. Wati Longchar, "Inaugural Address" in *Challenges of Land Development in Nagaland: Selected Papers, Essays and Columns*, 10

should be planted in those hills to give shade, convert carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide into oxygen and prevent soil erosion.

The Church can make a major contribution by preaching and practicing which promotes partnership with nature rather than exploitation of its resource. The Church can create consciousness through literature, action groups, study groups and preaching on social themes. The educational program of the Church should help people to become aware of social and ecological values. One may not fail to observe that the sustaining power of earth to nurture the life is being destroyed and ecological balance is being disturbed in the name of development and growth. Poverty of the under-privileged has to be highlighted, and the exploitative structures need to be resisted, and prevented, to take roots in the tribal society and community. Rediscovering community land ownership of the traditional Zeliangrong practice and devising a policy to prevent the growing trends of the privatization of land is needed for the people today. Moreover, selling of community land to the outsiders need to be taken care. Zeliangrong Hoho, Zeliangrong Student's Union, social activists, public leaders and liked minded people need to be united and raise their voice in such critical issues. Zeliangrong people need to know the values of land.

#### **4.2.1.2.10. Denominational Issues**

One serious issue of the Christian mission today is the engagement of denominational expansion rather than God's mission. The Christianity that the Zeliangrongs like any of the tribals were exposed to was a divided one; divided on historical, denominations, doctrinal, and ethical basis. Success in mission is measured by how many churches have been planted, converted and baptized. In the true sense, the denominational issue is one of the obstacles which hinder the Zeliangrong people to come together under one platform. Various denominational doctrines in Christianity and divisional disagreements among the Christians confused the mind of the younger generation. Christian denominational rivalry has prejudiced the idea of a coherent and peaceful community. There is hardly any common vision of a harmonious community, but rather sharp doctrinal divisions among the people. Some churches are cocooned or isolated in their own denominational beliefs and practices, incapable of accommodating others.

The traditional Zeliangrong society has a communitarian system through which they interact with one another. Through this code of ethics, they affirm and exhibit their oneness, unity and integrity of the village community.<sup>479</sup> Today, with the division of the churches (denominations), we see divisions in society as well:

- Members of the same village are now divided into groups for reasons of allegiance to their own denominations than their one united community feelings.
- There are problems in marital engagement or marriage. To cite an example, the division on denominational lines has taken with the result that many a times a Baptist young man cannot engage or marry a girl of another denomination (and vice-versa) even though they love each other.
- In the past when a villager dies it was quite unthinkable for any village member to go out of the village. Elders and youths will be available to render their services to the decease family. But the trend has completely changed today particularly in the big villages or towns. Due to division of the church, the feeling of comforting or helping the decease family becomes a concern only for the Church where the decease belongs and not the concern of the village community as a whole (except few elders and friends).
- Another serious problem in the church as a result of Church division is the stealing of sheep<sup>480</sup> i.e.; enticing some members of the one church to join another through various means. There are some churches who go after the Christians (belonging to other denominations) instead of going to non-Christians to proclaim the so called “true gospel message” by inviting them to join their groups. This, they do, firstly by pointing out the mistakes and shortcomings of other churches and saying about the positive aspects of their own church and thus many innocent and not-equip members are drawn to that church. It would not be exaggerating to say that almost all denominational churches are engaged in this form of what is popularly called “sheep stealing”.

---

<sup>479</sup> Interview with Kamgi chawang on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

<sup>480</sup> Interview with Rev. Izieteilung Terieng on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015. He is the executive secretary of ZBCC (N).

It is in such a context, that the Churches need to undergo still conversion- of its own ignorance and prejudices and fear and anxiety in recognizing and accepting what is good in others and enriching the gospel and the universality of the Christian message with local and contextual flavor in building up communities of faith as local churches. The Church leaders need to make a deliberate and sincere attempt of ecumenical witness in the Zelianrong Churches. This situation should be remedied by initiating ecumenical dialogue aimed at evolving consensus among different denominations in the Zelianrong region. Academic dialogue of the experts can be the starting point aims at widening their views and horizon in order to be more open and accommodative towards each other. It will give them an opportunity to know each others' traditions and practices. Moreover, it will help them to clarify each others' doubts, misconceptions and misunderstandings. Every local church will need to remain open to other local churches, for the sharing of faith experiences in Jesus Christ, supporting one another in times of needs, material needs and challenging each other to live as proactive Christian.

Another major issue is disunity among the church leaders. The researcher observes that most of the Zelianrong Churches are facing the problems of division or disunity among the Church leaders. There is a lack of understanding and co-operation among the church leaders. The evil practice of gossips and false reports breaks the relationship. It affects the congregation favoring their own leaders which leads to division in the Church. A leader cannot afford to carry the emotional baggage of unforgiveness. A leader should learn to be a good forgiver because a leader who has not learned to be a good forgiver will not be as effective a leader as one who has. Only when a leader lives a life of forgiveness will be able to help people to forgive one another. Unity and mutual understanding among the Church leaders is very important for the fellowship and to face today's challenges which come from outside the Church as well as inside the Church. Christian unity sends a message to the world of the Christian love and solidarity.

There are (few) things to be followed to establish a good relationship among the church leaders. Relationship should be based on trust. A personal bond grows stronger only when there is a mutual trust. Unnecessary arguments should be avoided.

Discussion helps to express one's ideas and also allow the other person's views to be expressed. Should show forbearance to the shortcomings and limitations of co-workers. In any meeting or discussion, one should refrain from passing hurtful remarks and using abusive language which is very common during the Church councils/meetings. Right values such as patience, tolerance, courtesy, loyalty, gratitude and forgiveness should be practiced among the co-workers. It enables to adjust their relationship with each other and to work together for a common purpose. Forgiving readily and reconciling swiftly when unpleasant circumstances call for healing. Should avoid hasty judgments. Hasty and baseless judgments are the most dreadful enemy to relationship. A leader should not become a dictator. Many leaders begin to act like dictators instead of shepherds. Should conduct a workshop on developing interpersonal skills. Team work spirit is the need of the hour in Zeliangrong Churches. It will strengthen spiritual growth, unity among the church leaders and members and also in developmental works.

#### **4.2.1.2.11. Lack of Guidance**

At the early period, people accepted Christ with different reasons. Moreover, many of the young people are Christian for name sake just because they are born from Christian parents. But now they must grow properly in spiritual life and scriptural knowledge. In the traditional society, parents and elders spent maximum time with their children teaching moral values. Such kind of practices is lacking today. Proper guidance and counseling to children is not given in many of the Zeliangrong homes and churches. The Church need to challenge, motivate and encourage the youth to be responsible men and women today. The task of the Church towards the youth is to relate to various needs of the young people. Young people should be provided with the knowledge and skills to make a difference in society, with moral and ethical courage to make difficult decisions and faith commitment to shape a more humane global community. One of the main purposes of the Church to the youth is for spiritual formation. The Church needs to help in influencing the youth in godly directions by organizing different relevant programs for them. They need to be introduced to activities that would provide participation, fellowship, discipline, spiritual insights and nurture their growth.

Another serious issue which often creates misunderstanding among the Church members is “should the Church involve in social reforms?” The Church must keep abreast with the signs of times, be attentive to local and global issues, and interpret the Christian message accordingly. Eradication of poverty and hunger, ending and resolution of ethnic conflicts, healing of enmities, overcoming divisions of gender and class etc are some of the key issues that the Zelianrong churches are called to actively participate. If the Church is to become the conscience of a new human and cosmic order, it must insert itself in the world. This insertion becomes productive when the Church learns from its involvement in the world. True spirituality is exercised by participating with God, in the process transforming the society. It means building strong human values in life, social concern and social participation, ability to question justice and become active players to bring about social transformation for a just and humane society. The church should join hands with all the secular and democratic forces, which are committed to the cause of the people. In order to involve in social reforms/social concerns and fruitful action, there is a need for a correct understanding of the human person in the light of the biblical teaching that the human person is more communitarian and is an animated body.

With the increasing influence and impact of materialism, secularism and liberalism, the Zelianrong people like any other community is experiencing challenges and stagnation in spirituality.<sup>481</sup> Therefore, there is a need of constant spiritual renewal in the Zelianrong Churches. Revival crusades, preaching, healing etc are very essential for the spiritual awakening. However, proper biblical and doctrinal teaching should be given importance which is lacking in many of the Zelianrong Churches. Jesus Christ performed miracles, was a healer, a worker of signs, and a preacher but always a teacher. As a teacher, Jesus Christ taught the people the things of God. His whole purpose of teaching was to teach the people to have new life through the experiences of being born again and to open up the whole issue of the kingdom of God for men and women who accept his teachings. His objective of teaching was not merely to impart information, but to change and transform people’s life, their whole perspective of life now and hereafter. And to carry his message into the entire world, He wisely

---

<sup>481</sup> It includes loss of focus in discipleship and spiritual formation, character and values, and infiltration of western culture and ideology.

chose and trained the twelve disciples. He lived with them, taught and trained them to teach others about the kingdom of God and His salvific plan for all humankind. He commissioned His disciples to teach the people to obey everything whatever He has commanded them.

In the context of the Zeliangrongs, there are just a few biblical research scholars and ordinary readers are the ones who controls biblical interpretation. The vast majority of these readers are unaware of the biblical context and theological issues within the biblical passage/text. They have no interest in the historical origins and transmission of the text. In such a context, there is a chance of wrong interpretation if the congregation is not nurture proper from the word of God. Sometimes, prayer groups give Bible verses to the people in distress as revelation from God. Regardless of the context of the text, people consider the verse/s as God's direct message to them. Therefore, there is a need to constantly organize Bible studies and conduct seminars in the Churches.

One of the draw backs in many of the Churches is lack of leadership commitment and training. The Church is not interested to send out or sponsor young people for higher theological education or leadership training. Theological education has a more direct bearing on Christian leadership than perhaps any other single factor. This is because the primary objective of theological institutions worldwide is seen as the equipping and training of church leaders. In theological training, a person is trained to become a pastor of an established church, a congregation. After the training he/she is equipped to handle pastoral responsibilities, to shepherd a congregation; conduct worship services, organize youth ministries, Sunday school and many others. Theological education is not only with Christian faith and beliefs but it is also concern with moral issues, with political and social questions.

The rich cultural practice and ethos of the tribal life is another serious issue. People should be encouraged to balance between western music and indigenous music in the Church. Theology must consider the local situation. Academic studies of the Bible, theology, history, mission and ministry must contextually address to the realities of the life of the people. Renty Keitzer points out that the tribal thought forms, ideas,

theological terms and life situations should be adopted with adaptations in interpreting Christian ideas, and so that the gospel truth can be made relevant to whom it is proclaimed.<sup>482</sup>

A Christian leader is expected to motivate and encourage the congregation members to become involved in missionary work. Combination of spiritual, servant leadership,<sup>483</sup> confidence, commitment and academic qualifications are the need of Church leadership today. Christian leadership focuses on showing rather than telling. Leader leads others by showing them the way, not just telling them the way. One motive for leadership should be to function as a model for others. Only a trained leader with biblical knowledge and understanding with strong commitment can lead the congregation which is very much lacking in the Zelianrong Churches. In missionary training, a person is trained to plant a church where there is no church. After the training, he/she is prepared to go to remote places and do grassroots level church planting ministry. Zelianrong Church should send out more missionaries and evangelists and be part of extending God's kingdom here on earth.

Love, care, provision, guidance and protection are expected particularly from the Church leaders as shepherds. Their duty also includes defending the congregation from false teachers. They have to watch over themselves for their spiritual growth and over the members of the church. Leaders are expected to be committed and skillful too. For many years even after their acceptance of new faith (Christianity) most of the Zelianrongs are still nominal Christian and hardly understand the implications of the Christian faith. Therefore, Christian leadership is the need of the hour. It involves in different activities such as teaching, pastoral care and counseling<sup>484</sup>, conducting Bible classes, organizing seminars, visiting the poor, needy and sick, relief and development work, administrative discipline, advocacy for the oppressed and much more. Steps to

---

<sup>482</sup> Renthly Keitzar, "A Relevant Theology" in *The Baptist Leader*, Volume. XXI, July-August, 1992, 23

<sup>483</sup> As one rises in leadership responsibility, his/her privileges decrease and responsibility increases. The higher it rises, the more others demand from a leader. Jesus Christ came as a servant. He washed the feet of His disciples and now calls us to lead as He led.

<sup>484</sup> Every Christian leader is urged to do as much as possible to develop himself/herself as a counselor through study, workshops and formal programs. A Christian leader has many opportunities for engaging in a wide range of counseling activities in his/her ministry. He/she is called upon for counseling by persons of all ages, troubled by many and varied problems. His/her responsibility is often to a large group of people who come from various backgrounds and who are grappling with various kinds of emotional disturbances.

building a healthy church should begin with vision and proceed to values, strategy and programs. Jesus Christ commissioned, enabled and equipped His disciples for ministry. He took time with His disciples, both men and woman, who accompanied and watch Him at work. Twelve and seventy disciples were sent on missions that were followed by reporting, reflection and learning.

#### **4.2.1.12. Gender Issues**

General attitudes towards womanhood as inferior to manhood have not changed in the minds of either men or women because of the patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy provides secure environment, however, it does not allow the full participation of women particularly in areas that development dimension seek as key driver towards gender mainstreaming and women do not enjoy equal rights as men. Zeliangrongs have customary laws and courts since time immemorial. However, there are areas in these customs and laws where women are left behind, never included in decision making and never given the right to inheritance especially immovable properties. This attitude continues even in the present society and Church. Moreover, mis-reading and mis-interpretation of the Bible in turn acts as a suppressive source of degrading women's dignity and status in the church and society. Whenever the question of the ministry of women is discussed, scripture is often used to justify their exclusion from leadership roles. There is always a tendency to take a few verses out of context, and ignore other verses that do not support the position they want to take. This makes it necessary for the Churches to critically examine the way in which they want to take. Writing of Naga context, in early March 2012 the Governor of Nagaland issued a notification on elections to the municipal councils with a third of the seats reserved for women. The tribal leaders (who are all Christians) protested and the Gaonburah Association passed a resolution opposing this move in the name of the customary law. They argued that it is against the customary law to allow women to get elected to the political bodies.<sup>485</sup>

When the state government of Nagaland decided to go ahead with the 2017 Municipal election and implement the 33% reservation for women, male tribal bodies

---

<sup>485</sup> News item, *The Nagaland Post*, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012)

spearheaded a series of protests. When the government allowed the elections to take place in certain districts, there was a call for protests by tribal bodies. Mobs organized by tribal associations burnt down public properties. The protesters blamed the government of Nagaland for failing to consult the 'people', in other words, the male tribal bodies and authorities. Condemning the government of Nagaland for being anti-Naga people' and disrespecting customary practices and culture, the violent protests intensified. As a result, the urban local bodies' election was postponed indefinitely and the Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. TR Zeliang was forced to step down and hand over power to his colleague Dr. Shurhozeli Leizitsu. It is not only men who are refusing to admit women at decision-making bodies but it is also the inclination to traditional way of life from accommodating women. And many a time women themselves feel that it is inappropriate to be part of the bodies that plans and does the decision making. It can be said that most of the women are accustomed to a socio-cultural set up in which they are assigned an inferior position that they simply accept it as right and feel comfortable with it. They themselves are made to feel that they are not capable of doing so. Education is considered to be the most important single factor which can liberate human beings from exploitation and more so in improving the status of women.

Many claim that Zeliangrong women enjoy equality with man in the family, society, church and other aspects of life. With the introduction of modern education many positive changes have taken place in the society. Today a number of well women hold responsible positions in the government as well as private sectors. Moreover, women are playing a very important role in the Zeliangrong Churches such as teaching the Sunday school kids, youth department, education department and many other programs of the Church. While there are others who think otherwise. This demands a careful and critical appraisal of the situation. The ground realities or the actual living conditions of the Zeliangrong women will be the defining factors to determine their roles and status in the society. This must include their experiences of power-sharing in policy and decision making at different forums and at various levels, privileges and opportunities in society, their hopes and aspirations. There are certain restrictions

pertaining to socio-cultural, political and religious aspects imposed on Zeliangrong women.

While there is no discrimination between boys and girls in education in terms of opportunity in well-to-do families, there is a preference of the boy rather than the girl in the poverty stricken households. All the valuable properties of the parents are registered in the name of the male (son) only. The right to ownership of land whether private, clan or community land always rests with men and is never owned by women. In short a woman cannot inherit the landed property. A woman is restricted from being part of the village council. Administrative post (position) like pastor in the local church and executive secretary in the association level are denied to women. The deacon board, which is the highest decision making body of the church congregation, is constituted only of men. There is no ordained woman among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland till today. The churches have long promulgated ideologies of the superiority of men and inferiority of women in the local church's organization as well as in the higher association level.

The existing patriarchal framework with its male-centered leadership that excludes women from any real-decision making process in the church and society needs radical transformation. The situation challenges to rethink all aspects of the Zeliangrong customary laws and culture, village council's norms and policy in relation to women, Zeliangrong Hoho and Zeliangrong Student's Union policies, Church practices, Christian theology and other elements that may be instrumental in keeping Zeliangrong women in their traditional and stereotype position. There are very legitimate concerns expressed as to why even when there is a growing number of educated women in the society and also when younger girls are oftentimes outperforming their counterparts in various levels of education, the number of women is still negligible in offices or decision making bodies. Can Zeliangrong people come out from their mindset of the traditional view that only man can take up the highest position? It is not only men who are refusing to admit women at the decision-making bodies but it is also the inclination to traditional way of life from accommodating women. And many a time women themselves feel that it is inappropriate to be part of

the bodies that plans and does the decision-making be it in the family, society or church. Women themselves must believe that the criterion for any activity is not the biological factor of being male or female, or the social construction of gender roles. Rather it is the divine intention being created in the image of God to participate equally in social as well as religious activities. Women need self-affirmation which enables them to affirm themselves to value their strengths, to nourish their self-esteem, to strive for self-fulfillment as the only genuine basis of helping others and involving in social, political and religious activities.

Though women are playing significant roles in socio-economic development and also making progress in the field of education, they are still left behind men in the field of socio-cultural and religion. From this perspective, the government particularly the policy makers and the academia is to investigate into and draw out a comprehensive educational plan from the foundational years to higher education that is progressive and gender sensitive based on social justice. Young boys and girls must be helped to develop healthy attitude and emotion. They must also be assisted to develop healthy self esteem and self concept. Gender-based components appropriate to the level of education need to be incorporated to the level of education need to be incorporated in curriculum. Gender sensitization programs and discourses on gender and education need to take place. Workshops and consultative programs should be organized to identify the socio-cultural and political churnings that are taking place in the region, national and international. The changes must start from the people; from the local or grassroots level to make people understand the issues. If both men and women are children of God, then gender disparity should not be raised in the family, church and society.

#### **4.2.1.2.13. Geographical Demarcation of Zeliangrong People**

To deal with identity or land related problems of the region would mean to critically examine certain aspects of British colonial policies. Many of the root causes of the social, economic and political problems faced by the people can be found in colonial

policies.<sup>486</sup> The British administration directly or indirectly divided the Zeliangrong land (boundaries) in three different administrative units viz; Assam, Manipur and Nagaland for their imperial interest which resulted in the separation of the Zeliangrong people from each other. The argument is: “Why Christian mission was silent to this serious issue? Further, after the independence of India, colonial policy and its framework was followed by the Indian government, ignoring the people to live together under one administrative unit.

The geographical division of the Zeliangrongs into three states constitutes the major problem of the people. This reduces the people to minority in all the three states leading to marginalization and alienation in their own lands. All these policies affected the Zeliangrong people to struggle from identity crisis. Moreover, the geographical division has cause misunderstanding and disunity among the Zeliangrongs. People living in Nagaland are not willing to accept their own brothers and sisters living in Manipur particularly when it comes to *tribe recognition and reservations* on the basis of Nagaland Zeliang and Manipur Zeliang (Zeliangrong).

#### **4.2.1.2.14. The Issue of Identity**

Nomenclature is another issue to be dealt seriously which confused the identity of the people. When the British Administration came in contact with the Zeliangrong people, they called them in different names.<sup>487</sup> As a result of the identity confusion created by the British ethnographers and the official chronicles of Manipur, at the end of the British rule in 1947, two nomenclatures “Kacha Naga” and “Kabui” remained to mean the Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei and Puimei. Today Zeliangrong people are recognized by different nomenclatures in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland:

---

<sup>486</sup> The British administration introduced a series of Acts and Regulations such as the Inner Line Regulation of 1873, the Scheduled Districts Acts 1874, the Government of India Act 1919, and the Government of India Act 1935. It was said to be formulated for the welfare of the people. However, this policy was framed in order to meet their administrative exigencies, to impose land tenure system, and to control the movement and settle of people under their jurisdiction. One can argue that imposition of entry restriction into the tribal land at the initial was not mean for the protection of the indigenous people from outsiders but it was rather a policy to protect their interests on the one hand and to experiment a new administrative model subservient to their formal colonial structure on the other hand.

<sup>487</sup> Namthiubuiyang Pamei, *The Trail from Makuilongdi*, 37

- “Zeliang” is given the schedule tribe status under the category “Any Naga tribe” in Nagaland where Rongmei is not included.
- The “Zeme” is given the schedule tribe status under the category “Any Naga tribe” in Assam.
- In Manipur the Zeliangrongs are recognized as schedule tribes by the nomenclatures of Kacha Naga (Zeme and Liangmai) and Kabui (Rongmei and Puimei).

Such wrong names are unacceptable to the Zeliangrong people imposed by the outsiders. Therefore, it is important to notice such wrong interpretation of the people. It is the responsibility of the Zeliangrong leaders with the support of the common people to reclaim their original nomenclature- i.e., “Zeliangrong” with an aim to liberate the people from oppression of a mistaken identity imposed by the outsiders. A search for one’s identity is a healthy trend. It is discovering oneself, one’s cultural heritage one’s strong points and weak points, one can take the needed steps to shape a worthwhile future. The Basques and the Catalans in Spain, and many ethnic and cultural minorities in other parts of the Eurasian continent and Africa are eager to be noticed and recognized. The need for such an effort is keenly felt by the Zeliangrongs today. It is by asserting the distinct identity of the community that it develops a sense of uniqueness. Since the time of British rule in India, the Zeliangrong people have been struggling from identity crisis. Therefore, to clarify the identity problem, the ‘All Zeliangrong Student’s Union’ (Manipur, Nagaland and Assam) proposed that<sup>488</sup>:

- The category of “Any Naga tribe” may cover not only Zeme but as Zeliangrong tribe in Assam (Any Naga Zeliangrong tribe).
- The category of “Any Naga tribe” may cover not only Zeliang but as Zeliangrong tribe in Nagaland.
- The Kabui and Kacha Naga<sup>489</sup> may be replaced by any Zeliangrong (including Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei) in Manipur.

---

<sup>488</sup> *A Brief Account of Zeliangrong Nagas*, (Dimapur: All Zeliangrong Students’ Union, 2009), 51

<sup>489</sup> The Zeliangrong Tribe Recognition Steering Committee (ZTRSC) has submitted a memorandum to Dr. Manmohan Sign, the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009 on recognition of “Any Zeliangrong Tribe” including Zeme and Liangmai in lieu of Kacha Naga and

To achieve the goal of recognizing the collective identity of the Zeliangrong tribe, all members of the tribe should forget their petty problems and personal grudges and start working whole heartedly for the unity and integrity of the Zeliangrong tribe. Apparently the common language problem faced by the tribe may sometimes threaten the unity and integrity of the Zeliangrong people. However, this problem can easily be sorted out if one does not take undue advantage and have a mutual understanding and respect for each other's local dialect. One of the best solutions would be to encourage all sub-tribes to learn the dialects of their counterparts.

#### **4.2.2. Christianity and Traditionalism in Conflict**

People faced certain hurdles when the impact in the society began to be felt. The new converts and those who still held the faith of their forefathers confronted each other. The confusion was mainly because of the difficulties in making distinction between religion, social and political elements.<sup>490</sup> Wati Longchar observed that “in Naga world view; there is no clear distinction between the sacred and the secular, between religious and non- religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. All cultural components are closely inter-related. If one element is affected, the whole cultural structure is affected”.<sup>491</sup>

- Traditional drum play a significant role in the Zeliangrongs life.<sup>492</sup> The sound has a significant note as a trumpet is to the soldiers. It was the custom of the Zeliangrongs that drum cannot be beaten anytime one likes, nor can it be used in a simple way for regular social gatherings. And so, when the Christians began to use drum in their church meetings, those who are rooted in the forefather's religion and beliefs began to object to it as it amounted to negation of their traditional culture.

---

Rongmei in lieu of Kabui. For details see, *Zeliangrong Student's Union Manipur Diamond Jubilee (1949-2009) cum 20<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the All Zeliangrong Student's Union (Assam, Manipur & Nagaland) 2009* (Manipur: Souvenir Committee, 2009) 136

<sup>490</sup> Th. Lamboi Vaiphei, *Advent of Christian Mission and Its Impact on the Hill-Tribes in Manipur*, (Imphal: Author, 1997) 147

<sup>491</sup> A. Wati Longchar, “Interaction Between Gospel and Culture among the Nagas”, in *Encounter between Gospel and Tribal Culture*, 48

<sup>492</sup> Interview with Dr. Elungkiebe Zeliang on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013. He teaches History of Christianity at Eastern Theological College, Jorhat.

- In Tamenglong district at Kaikao village (Zeliangrong village), Christians refused to respect/observe the village religious festivals which according to them were associated with demon worship. The village chief and other senior members of the village took it as open challenge to their traditional custom, and sought the way they could bring the people to book for violation of this sacred festival their tribe had been observing for many years. The non-Christians insisted that everybody belonging to the village must respect (observe) the ceremony and nobody should violate the ceremony by leaving the village on that day. Sunday observation remained unresolved issue where the parents are unbelievers and their children are Christians. The non-Christian parents did not like to stop the work during those days when the clearing of the forest for jhuming purposes and the work of cultivations during a stipulated time were very much needed. Under this situation, parents and children came often in conflict with each other. Haraka Movement<sup>493</sup> also was severely opposed to Christian faith.<sup>494</sup> Namthiurai in his book *The Great Awakening* recorded the incident that took place at Taosem village (Zeliangrong village) on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1963 where four Christian leaders were killed by the people who belonged to the sect of Heraka party.<sup>495</sup> Four Christians were killed as a result of disobeying the warning not to construct a Church building. Similar incidents of confusions and misunderstandings occurred in the Zeliangrong areas of Nagaland. However, not very critical as those in Manipur areas.
- Violations of socio-religious laws and customs which had already been in the expressions of taboos were considered a highly objectionable, detrimental to the peace and harmony within the village. Problems arose in many places amounting to expulsions from the village by the ruling chiefs on issues like cultures, customs and violations of traditional beliefs. The incidents were very common where the parents were not Christians but their children were

---

<sup>493</sup> A movement started by Judonang. Haraka movement was a revival of ancestors' religion which was actually influenced by Christianity and Hinduism.

<sup>494</sup> Namthiurai, *The Great Awakening: The Coming of Christianity in Zeliangrong Area, 1915-1971*, (Tamenglong: Zeliangrong Christian Association, 1972) 27-31

<sup>495</sup> Namthiura, *The Great Awakening*, 30-31

members of the church, the Christian community. As a result, several parents turned their Christian children out of their homes, and even the young married couples were forcibly separated by their conservative parents and in-laws for their behaviors.<sup>496</sup> F. S Downs in his book *“The Mighty works of God”* recorded that many of the new converts from Zeliangrong villages were driven out from the their own village.<sup>497</sup> All these issues brought disunity within the family as well as among the villages. Moreover, the newly converts were taught that their non-convert friends should be avoided.

Clark, the first American Baptist missionary to the Nagas in Nagaland admitted the mistake of founding a separate Christian village. In his letter to Home Board in March 1877, he wrote “Their village government is a government higher than even from the civilized nations. To build another village separate from the others for the sake of the Gospel creates division”.<sup>498</sup> In another letter, he (Clark) wrote, “To build a new village with the believers separate from non believers will not be fair to the Gospel. What I have done may have been a mistake.....<sup>499</sup>” It is observed that many conflicts and misunderstandings occurred among the converts and non-converts in Zeliangrong society both in Manipur and Nagaland. The consequences of conversion was social and cultural conflicts between the new converts and those who follow the traditional religion. The converts were warned to be driven out from their own villages. Their co-existence in the same village with parallel religious affiliation and practices could not go along smoothly.

Christian’s refusal to observe the traditional observances and vice-versa created social problems among the Zeliangrongs like in many Naga villages. To cite an example, a conflict occurred at Peren, Nagaland. Seven convert families were forced to live outside of the village when they refused to observe 70 non-Christian rituals/ghenas. As a result those seven convert

---

<sup>496</sup> Namthiurai, *The Great Awakening*, 28

<sup>497</sup> F.S Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, 147

<sup>498</sup> Quoted in Imchen, *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture*, 157

<sup>499</sup> Quoted in Imchen, *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture*, 157

families established a separate village in 1962, which came to be known as New Peren village. Even today Christians and non-Christians of the same village are living in separate colonies under Peren and Tening division. In the same village, people were divided into two communities- Christians and non-Christians. Here the issue is about enforcing new culture which resulted division among the people which would have done better by respecting the culture of the people. A theology of respecting another culture and contextualization are two serious issues which need to be dealt seriously.

### 4.3. Tradition and Modernity

Binod Kumar Agarwala argues that culture is always open, meaning open to other cultures.<sup>500</sup> Culture has at least three components: what people think, what they do, and what they produce.<sup>501</sup> Change is inevitable when encounter between two cultures and two worldviews. Change can be seen both positively and negatively. Some of the traditional practices like head-hunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery system are undesirable for the society which should be stopped.

In most cases, it is the dominant culture/worldview that impacts the lesser one in larger degree. Tribals uncritically surrendered many of their values when they encountered with modernism. Slowly people are coming to a stage of realization that their tradition had and has much to be appreciated and affirmed for a holistic life. Tradition reinforces values such as integrity, good moral value education, work ethics, personal responsibility, the value of being selfless, community living and hospitality.

The researcher holds that reclaiming those positive elements for meaningful engagements in today's society will be a path-breaking. There are numerous aspects of tradition in Zeliangrong society that can be recovered, reclaimed and reconstituted by the Zeliangrongs today in their endeavor to reproduce and better their lives. The cultural values have stood them in good stead and many of these are gaining relevance in modern society especially in areas of community living, peace building and

---

<sup>500</sup> Binod Kumar Agarwala, "Performative Culture of Tribes and Modernity in India's Northeast" in *The NEHU Journal*, Vol IX, No. I, January 2012, 15

<sup>501</sup> L.Imsutoshi Jamir, *Sites in Tribal Cultural Studies*, Mokokchung: TDCC Publications, 2015, 2-3

ecological concerns. The rediscovery of valuable cultural elements should not be understood as a revival of traditional culture into Christian tradition but as an attempt to retain certain positive practices. It is no mean to go back to that tradition in its pristine purity. That simply is not possible and at the same time undesirable. No culture in the world is static. One cannot find all answers in the tradition. Instead one begins with the traditional tribal value system and modifies it. Times are changing, therefore, there is a need to modify and refine the tradition to make it relevant for modern time.

In this global era, to be local is the real challenge. How can people remain open to outside influences yet rooted in their local traditions? First, a subaltern perspective is what people need to adopt. This will enable them to view and examine things not from top-bottom or centre-periphery but bottom-top or periphery-centre. It will enable them to see what the common folks and their traditions can positively contribute for the betterment of those at centre as well. Second, go glocal. That is the ability to discern and live a life deeply rooted in local values and principles (with knowledge that local traditions have much life affirming values and principles). There is always a 'local' (desi-ness) in people. Third, appreciation of their own traditions and cultures. Prominent traditional values which need to be retained are as follows:

**4.3.1. *Feast of Merit***, in which a rich man, instead of hoarding his wealth, spends it for the benefit of the community, clearly illustrates the value of anti-greed. However, the distribution of wealth to the community by means of feasts is supplanted by concentration of individual's wealth. Today the society is marked by hungry for wealth and comfort, and increasing consumerism. Traditional values are getting lost and ignored in search for wealth. Therefore, there is a need to retain the practice of sharing one's belongings to the poor. The Christians cannot claim to be followers of Jesus Christ if they talk only of spiritual life and neglect other aspects of life. True Christian life takes interest in the welfare of the poor and the needy by sharing their wealth and time. Love of God is inseparable from the love of one's neighbor. A noteworthy element distinguishing the first Christian community from the Jews was the spirit of sharing. This was manifested in the sharing of goods and money from sale of property (Acts 2:45; 4:32, 36-37) with the poor and deprived (Acts 2:45; 4:37; 6:1),

offering of one's services to the needy (Acts 9:36, 39) and coming together for prayer, worship and table-fellowship (Acts 2:46; 20:7, 11).

**4.3.2.** Another important value of the tribal socio-cultural life is *the strong sense of community*. Community which binds them together. All their activities, secular and religious, are within the framework of a community. Their feasts are characterized by fellowship, participation and sharing of resources. They help one another especially in times of difficulty and crisis. To cite few examples if a person had a poor harvest, he/she was given grain. If a house is burnt, the people set about with one accord to build a new house. People who were poor due to certain circumstances like sickness, destitution, accident etc were well looked after by their relatives as well as by the whole community. The values of the priesthood of all believers and communitarian life which existed in the traditional society can guide Zeliangrong people to design an ecclesiastical structure and its institution.

In a world torn apart by selfish individualism, the traditional community practices could make a very meaningful contribution towards the theology of community, more precisely towards the development of an authentic ecclesiology. Amid individualism that has overtaken the modern society; the tribal tradition of a community has to be reinvented by rebuilding a new concept of class equality. Today, people have to explore the Biblical teaching of community and compare it with the tribal concept of community life. The egalitarianism in the traditional Zeliangrong society was very much in line with the life of the early community of believers (early Christian congregation) when the believers shared together all that belonged to them and also it shared the same teaching with Christians that all are children of God. The people quest for a community where justice is expressed in equality and sharing, and affirms a community economic system with reciprocal sharing and hospitality. Today one has to go beyond the traditional view of sharing within the community, village or tribe. In the present pluralistic society one has to develop a new concept of sharing with all the communities around.

**4.3.3.** Traditional tribal societies were known for an egalitarian ethos and a community sense. The Zeliangrong traditional *ethos of democracy and egalitarian*

*principles* in the village administration system never prevented people to be part of the everyday activities. The core egalitarianism ideal is treating people as equals. A tribe is like a large family where everyone is respected and cared for. As there was no caste and class system in the traditional Zelianrong society,<sup>502</sup> there was no distinction between the rich and the poor etc. They respect for every individual, whether young or old, rich or poor, all were accepted as equal members of the clan and village. There was no difference between the village chief's children and the commoners in any competition or any aspects of life.<sup>503</sup> The same guideline or rule was applied to every individual without distinction. Each had a right and equal opportunity to climb the social ladder of recognition by mark of merit.

Today, strong customary bound society is the need of the hour to safeguard the cultural heritage. However, one should be conscious with certain restrictions pertaining to socio-cultural, political and religious aspects imposed on women. In the traditional society, women cannot inherit the landed property and women are restricted from being part of the village council. The reality is that customary laws are male centered which need to be evaluated and modify in certain areas giving space/platform to women in the changing circumstances.<sup>504</sup> The oppressive practices must be constantly challenged and transformed.

**4.3.4.** One of the serious issues of the Zelianrong people today is the selling of community lands or individual lands to the rich people and also to outsiders which is rare or uncommon among the other Naga tribes. Among the Zelianrongs, much of the clan lands which were traditionally kept intact to be of help to any clan member, are getting sold to individuals for want of some immediate cash. This in turn has effect on community life itself. When the vices of egocentrism and individualism takes precedence over community wellbeing, seeds of negative virtues like selfishness, greed, covetousness, and the like begin to take root, giving rise to all

---

<sup>502</sup> Interview with Rev. Deuhing Nsarangbe (95 years old) of Benreu village on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

<sup>503</sup> Interview with Kwetzinbe Newmai on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015. He is 78 years old now

<sup>504</sup> Notwithstanding constitutional provision, parliamentary legislations, legal provisions in favour of women status and equality, there is still gender disparity in every society, where empowerment of women is needed.

ideologies and practices that cause more environmental destruction. Today, rich people have become landowners which includes valleys and even mountains. Moreover, unscrupulous rich and influential people including the village leaders collude with the contractors and sell out the village forest and the forests are depleted. Forest and its products are merely seen as commodities to fetch a sundry income for personal gain which is another factor leading to deforestation land, mountains, and rivers are being polluted and forests lay waste. Trees and forest are rampantly being denuded causing species extinction in most of the Zeliangrong inhabited areas. All this issues endanger the livelihood of the people particularly the poor and destroy the ecosystem and consequent massive upheavals.

The traditional Zeliangrong society held that land is a gift from God to human beings to support and sustain their lives. Land is central to their lives. Their whole life and activities revolve around the land. It is central to their identity, history, spirituality, economy and their very survival. Land was sacred to the people and it could not be bought or sold. Land also encompasses all other resources, such as the water, forests, rocks, and stones on the ground, the minerals below ground, and the clouds and sky above ground. The Zeliangrong people live in close contact with nature and nature plays a very important role in their life. They derive their basic necessities like food, shelter, timber, medicines etc from nature. This is the reason why the tribals respect nature and consider her as a mother. The people in the olden days used to consider the earth as sacred and reverse nature as the abode of God himself. The region had various traditional institutions and mechanisms for biodiversity conservation such as sacred groves and sacred forests. But the situation has rapid changed in the recent times. The real destruction was caused by the individual values upheld by western education and by the commercial forces that used the absence of a sense of the sacred and the individual values to turn their resources into sources of profit for themselves. The tribal belief that God created and put the natural resources at the service of their communities to be managed as a sustainable resource needs to be retained while re-introducing a value of sharing. In the context of environmental degradation the traditional value system can be a step towards environmental theology.

The creation story situates humans in a privileged and responsible place in the world. It presents humans with twin commandments and responsibility “to till and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Stewardship as the prime responsibility needs to be emphasized in interpreting the biblical text today. Stewardship is a moral responsibility. Today one has to go beyond the traditional view of exclusive practices where land is not bought or sold to the outsiders. One can update and modify the practices by sharing (buying and sharing) certain space to the outsiders particularly in the urban areas. The argument is to know the value of land and to be protected.

**4.3.5.** The *morung system* which played a crucial role in the training of the youth was known for cooperative learning in imparting skills for life. Elders taught their history, legends, folksongs, cultural dances, agricultural skills, moral values, customary laws etc to the younger ones. Thus, their oral traditions were transmitted from generation to generation. A person who became the member of the *morung* refined his culture, rectified his demeanor, changed his attitude, polished his code of conduct, developed his conscience, nurtured his thought and action, realized his duties and responsibilities and latter became a successful man in the society.

The present society need a similar forum for young people where proper moral education and tribal ethics be seriously considered in educational reform for the tribals. Moral education and formation of leadership for the Zeliangrong community is a categorical task. The principle of caring, sharing and equality found in the traditional *Morung* should be adapted by the people of this generation. The spirit of hard work which was manifested in the *Morung* can be transformed and utilized by conducting seminars to the young people. The dignity of labor was the glorious heritage of the Zeliangrongs. “Work and Live” was the motto for the *Morung* inmates. Effort should be made to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage and willingness to accept and integrate all the positive elements of tribal cultures into Christian theology and belief system. Theological form, that is, forms of expressing tribal theology, should not simply be discussion, seminar, lecture, written articulation but should be expressed in arts, singing, dancing and lifestyle.

**4.3.6.** The art and practice of story-telling and retelling the story where elderly people narrates the great deeds of the past and the beautiful folksongs which reveals the historical background of the tribe need to be retained as it is an essential part of the education of the young, for it is in this way that they are introduced to the values and traditions of their cultures. Folk stories have lots of moral values to be taught to the children and adults such as courage and love, and consequences of mischief, greed and jealousy. It is one of the best ways of teaching, molding and disciplining a child's behavior and helping a child in reasoning. Parents and elders ought to spend quality time with children at home and impart knowledge and wisdom, proverbs and moral values etc. The Israelites did the same. They used their old nomadic festivals of the Passover to retell the story of their liberation from the slavery of Egypt. Furthermore, they retold countless times the story of their Exodus from slavery in different new contexts of their history. They retold it in the new context of their crossing over to the Promised Land (Joshua 3-4) and in the context of their return from Exile back to their homeland again in Second Isaiah.

**4.3.7.** Head hunting was practiced in the olden days. However, making peace with the other and *reconciling with their opponent* were integral parts of traditional Zeliangrong society. In the reconciliation process, the representative of both the parties agree on, both take initiative, both bring their differences and resentment on the table, not for discussion but to be reconciled. Both the parties are bound by the judgment of the board of elders from the village (unbiased village court) whether it is lost to one side or vice versa. Being truly reconciled mean forgiving one another and forgetting the past wrongs. The customary laws provide justice to the people without any partiality. Customary laws and ethics were related to individual and societal behavior which they always considered as the guiding principle for survival in their society. When law of the land is breached, the person concerned is looked upon as unworthy to be in the society and there followed a social sanction to punish the person according to the nature of the crimes. Customary laws and practices were geared towards the protection and care of the community as well as of natures.

Today the Naga society which includes Zeliangrong people is marked by a spiral of violence and ethnic conflicts, inter-tribal rivalry, and factional classes. No party is

ready to give up the hurt feelings or ready to wipe away the bitter memories of the other and become reconciled. Factional violence has brought untold sufferings into the lives of the people. Life has become so uncertain and people have to live with fear. And the sum product of all these problems is the suffering of the innocent masses. Many people think that the headhunters have been evangelized and there is no more headhunting. However, the situation is perhaps worse than those days of headhunting. The traditional practice of head hunting is formally over with the advent of Christianity among the Zeliangrongs; nevertheless, the psyche of head hunting still pervades in a very subtle form and in a sophisticated way. It is now practiced in the form of ethnic and factional conflicts. The automatic weapons have replaced the traditional spears and daos. In such a situation, protection of people's rights requires people's involvement.

What is required at this juncture is to reflect the concept of reconciliation that has been practiced in the olden days. Peace Building is a serious issue to be dealt. The region has been rocked by violence and conflicts of various kinds. Civil societies like the Zeliangrong Baudi, Zeliangrong Students' Union, Women Wings and Youth Organizations etc can spearhead the fight against human rights violations. Moreover, the Church needs to play a prophetic role to bring peace and reconciliation among the people. In the true sense, the Christians cannot truly proclaim to the world that they are walking in God's path without making an effort to bring within themselves and among their neighbors. A just society is possible only when people reconcile with one another and shed any negative attitudes towards each other. The Church can play a vital role of the third party in conflict resolution today. For Jesus, reconciliation is fundamental that offerings and prayers become null and void if people don't reconcile with their neighbors before coming to the altar (Mathew 5: 23-24).

**4.3.8.** In the traditional Zeliangrong society, *honor was life's most desired characteristic*. This can be achieved through honesty, humility, truthfulness and hardworking.<sup>505</sup> Moreover, it was an honor to show hospitality to the guests especially to those who needed help and shelter. Hospitality and the culture of giving and sharing among the people is a value which has been nurtured by fore-parents.

---

<sup>505</sup> Interview with Raibak Pame of Samziuram village on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

They extend help to each other at times of need during calamities, war and conflict. Young people were taught how to be respectful, polite and behave in socially acceptable ways; to be good and honest, to put others above self, and think of the common good because of the values they held dear. Respect for elders was a common value among the people. They highly value hard works and diligence. However, all this values are losing today.

The researcher is of the opinion that the Zeliangrong people have not taken any serious steps to rediscover the beautiful traditional values. Theological reflection based on tribal experiences and traditional heritage is an essential task of indigenous theology. Every effort should be made to reclaim the resources for the purpose of theological reflection. This search will involve processes of recollection, remembering and sharing with a view to formulating a theology that will ultimately be liberating and empowering. By writing the history of the Zeliangrongs it will be possible to bring back their past glorious into the present. However, one should be able to distinguish between good and bad cultural elements. One should be careful to guard against the dangerous tendency to assimilate unacceptable elements into the Christian faith because such interference may distort the gospel truth. The teachings of scripture cannot be compromise. The gospel must be rooted in the culture of any given community so that faith expression in the risen Lord will become more meaningful to everyone. The rediscovery of cultural elements should not be understood as a revival of traditional culture into Christian traditions but it should be understood as a method of the interpretation of the Christian message comprehensible in the indigenous and tribal languages and ethos.

**4.3.9.** *To put to use the indigenous tunes and music in the praising and worshipping the Almighty God.* Words can be set to suit the tunes. Zeliangrong people should make an attempt to compose some indigenous songs and reintroduce traditional folk tune in the Church and Christian gatherings. The important reason why the people should use indigenous song in the church service is that it is their own music, which is created in the local culture by the common people for the benefit of the whole community. If people adapt and Christianize it, it becomes Christian.

People should look back and learn to see the beauty of the traditional tune. Good and relevant tunes, what is fit for use in the Christian worship should be encouraged. When Zeliangrong people sing their own tribal tunes, they give importance not only to the music but also to the contents of the songs. They spread songs into the whole community. Therefore, songs with a gospel message should be carefully selected or composed in local tunes and should complement the biblical truth. In tribal society, the rhythm is as important as the lyrics or the melody as meaning is communicated through the beats chosen. The meaning of words change as beats change. Through music they express their feelings, their intentions, and their faith. It doesn't mean that the people have to discard or abandon the western hymns but to make the relevant traditional folk songs and folk tunes as an alternative medium of communication in the Christian gatherings. At the same time using folksongs and tunes in the Church worship service will bring the worshippers into unity and meaningful interaction with God and their culture where they live and have their being.

Today, mostly English songs and western music are used in Church worship services by the young people. Instead of imitating only the western music, it would have been glorious for them to compose some indigenous songs or write songs in local tongue to utilize their inborn talent as gift singers and praise God in their rich cultural milieu. Church elders should encourage the young people to value the folk songs and music. Another challenging task today is to assimilate the socio-cultural values of the people and to proclaim the good news through them. The task of contextualizing the gospel and cultural situation of people still remains a predominant duty to be accomplished.

**Conclusion:**

The impact of Christian Mission and Western education has been viewed with two reactions. On the one hand, some people have tended to glorify the contribution of Christian missions. Some scholars are of the opinion that the missionaries never force the people to accept the changes rather it was people themselves who accepted the changes with clear understanding. However, some scholars argued that missionaries or early converts convinced the ordinary people to accept the gospel along western culture which actually has damaged the beautiful traditional values of the people. Perhaps, there is some truth in both these views.

On studying the work of the missionaries, it is interesting to observe the impacts. One of the most important features of Christian mission lay in their contribution of education through schools. They were responsible for written language and observance of new lifestyle and clean living. Western education provided the means whereby local people were enable to disinter their own history, offsetting with a new pride the progressive development of their own society. Christianity and western education played a significant role in giving the people a sense of identity (though people already knew their own identity). Another striking mission activity was their stand against the social evils of the day. It was the missionaries who sowed the seed of the new religion and established churches. It provided a new vision of life; eternal life only through Jesus Christ. Love, forgiveness and that of universal brotherhood became the common message.

However, one can't deny the fact that activities of the missionaries and Western education have affected the customs and habits of the people. Christianity has been identified with western culture. It is true that the missionaries discouraged the tribal dances and songs and other indigenous customs. Once these were forbidden, something beautiful about the early stage of human civilization started to die out. All practices which is not conform to the western norm of Christianity were condemned as evil and thus started to abandon. Often the missionaries' when introduced the gospel to a particular tribe or race, they tried in their zeal to negate all that is there in that treating it as unchristian or heathenish, which is not always true. Some of the practices like head-hunting and inter-tribal wars had to be stopped and no one is sorry

to see them go. However, Christian mission in their zeal to reform declared all accompanying traditional elements such as feasting, dancing, singing, folktales, and even traditional dresses to be evil was a serious issue. Following the missionaries mission method, the early indigenous evangelists began to discourage their own old culture as most sinful, godless and useless. Most of the early indigenous evangelists were not properly trained and as a result they failed to appreciate their own culture. Without an in-depth understanding of several of the tribal customs, the missionaries forbade them as unchristian. Tribal songs, dances, feasts of merit, morung, religious ceremonies etc, were slowly removed from among the Christians.<sup>506</sup>

They decried their folk songs, folk dances and cultural melodies as evil and pagan. The new converts were discouraged not to participate in any traditional ceremonies or festivals. Without exception, converts who failed to observe Sunday and prefer to participate in traditional dancing and folk songs were threatened with excommunication by the church authorities.<sup>507</sup> The new concepts introduced by the missionaries affected the Zeliangrongs like any of the Naga tribes. The missionaries introduced their ways of life and culture to the indigenous people without reservations. When the Zeliangrongs accepted the new religion (Christianity), the new converts have been persuaded to abandon many aspects of their culture not inherently connected with Christianity like songs, dances, institutions, festivals etc. And the same messages and ideas became the part and parcel of the beliefs of the early converts and early local evangelists.

The most urgent question confronting the Zeliangrong people regarding their society today are: (1). Whether Zeliangrong people have anything to say to the present situation of the society such as erosion of values and ethics? (2). Are Zeliangrong people particularly the scholars, social activists, NGOs, students and Church leaders etc taking any serious steps for transformation? (3). Are the prominent people's movements and unions like Zeliangrong Students' Union, Zeliangrong Hoho, Mothers' Association and Youth Organizations etc have common mottos link to peace

---

<sup>506</sup> Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*, 153

<sup>507</sup> Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1974), 119

and unity to profess to fight against the contemporary issues such as economic backwardness, political unrest, corruption, identity crisis, environment degradation and strive for justice and constitutional rights of the people through a democratic process? The researcher is of the opinion that some of the movements (mentioned above) have become highly politicized and in most cases leaders are using this platform to project themselves into the political arena. Leaders of the tribe should not concentrate only for their personal gains but start working whole heartedly for unity, for equality, for justice and for common development of the Zeliangrong community. All forms of discrimination and marginalization based on ethnic identities, social and economic have to be resisted since God is actively present with the victims of systems in all historical context.

The ethos of democracy, communitarian<sup>508</sup> spirit and egalitarian<sup>509</sup> principles which existed in the traditional society can guide the Zeliangrong people to design an ecclesiastical structure and its institution where everyone enjoys equal opportunity. The traditional Zeliangrong concept of community life fits very well with the biblical view of sharing. Zeliangrong people like any of the tribals are basically identified not as an individual but as a tribe, a clan, or a family. The basic faith and foundation of the Zeliangrong society is egalitarian.<sup>510</sup> There society is highly community-oriented. They know very clearly that the growth and freedom of human beings is always in relation to other members of the human community. They are known for their close-knit community feelings and solidarity.<sup>511</sup> They work together, sing together and worship together. Social and economic survival can only be achieved in community. Community signifies the sense of belonging, interconnectedness and interrelationship.

---

<sup>508</sup> It was the spirit of sharing which kept Zeliangrong society communitarian. Sharing is the living soul of Zeliangrong community. However, when we speak about sharing in the traditional society, it does not mean that there were no poor people in traditional Zeliangrong society, but the concern for other members of the community, especially the attitude of the richer towards the poor and needy.

<sup>509</sup> An egalitarian is one who believes in the principle that all human beings are equal and should enjoy basic rights. An egalitarian is also the one who maintains that people ought to be treated as equals, as possessing equal fundamental worth and dignity and as equally morally considerable. The core egalitarian ideal is treating people as equals.

<sup>510</sup> Namthiubuiyang Pamei, *The Trail from Makuilongdi: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People*, 33

<sup>511</sup> Interview with Rev. Deuhing Nsarangbe (95 years old) of Benreu village on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

It is a dynamic relationship that binds people together. Community life is the basis of human dignity. Human togetherness, belonging to each other and living for each other are the values that lead to well-being of the whole. It is on this basis that Zeliangrong people search for society that responds to sensitivity, to the needs of the community and build bridges between communities based on faith and hope. Respect for each other and peaceful co-existence is the lifeline of the society. Everything is decided and done in community. They have a strong sense of justice and right. The chief of the village had great responsibility for his subjects. He was the leader during crisis, wars as well as the dispenser of justice. He rewards to those who achieved something noteworthy. Even though the chief in theory held power, in fact the village council takes final decision; the villages had democratic elements. Thus, the participation of the elders in the decision making process provided a broader representation of the people's interest. The whole village is like a family where everyone is respected and cared for. Though there were social divisions in the traditional society, there was a general sense of sharing and belonging. Everyone knows all the members of the village, and they are by nature happy to share all their possessions and also their services in times of both joy and sorrow. All their activities, secular as well as religious are within the framework of a community. Their feasts are characterized by fellowship, participation and sharing of resources.

The entire culture of the Zeliangrongs with its rich oral tradition of songs and energetic dances are fading gradually. Certain traditional values could have been adapted to new faith (Christianity), given a new meaning and retained by the Christian communities. Also in the rush of modernization, important Zeliangrong crafts like pottery, woodwork and basket-making are disappearing. Sad to mention but most of the younger generation has forgotten their own beautiful history and culture. The moral backbone of the Zeliangrong people seems to be breaking down. Therefore, research work on Zeliangrong people and culture demands people's involvement in re-reading and re-writing. R. N. Panikkar rightly remarked that: "Rewriting of history is a continuous process into which historians bring to bear new methodological or ideological insights or employ a new analytical frame drawn upon

hitherto unknown facts”.<sup>512</sup> The emergence of new consciousness for identity and preservation of culture within the communities becomes essential which need to be taken into consideration while writing history.

Zeliangrong history should be written from tribal perspective and not from the dominant view point. Zeliangrongs need to know their past and it is possible only when their history is their point of view that ‘views from below’. Such endeavor will require reclaiming, telling and writing tribal stories-myths, legends, songs, etc. By doing so, Zeliangrong people can learn to respect and appreciate themselves and their own culture. For the Zeliangrongs, telling the stories of the tribal from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustice done to them in the past are all strategies, which should be employed in tribal research work. Not necessary to accept the whole account of the ‘past’ and making the past essential for contemporary Zeliangrong people. However, it is a matter of reconciling what really is important about the past with what is important in the present.

In presenting the gospel, other culture must be acknowledged and respected. There is some strength in all cultures that one should not judge another culture by the values of their own culture. The argument is that the gospel must be rooted in the culture of any given community so that faith expression in the risen Lord will become more meaningful to everyone. Unless and until the transforming power of the Gospel has been expressed through the socio-cultural and religious idioms of the people of the indigenous people, there is not yet a truly local Church. The mission strategy of St. Paul to transform all human beings in the light of the gospel without underestimating other cultures and custom, if adhered to by the early missionaries, many of the indigenous cultures would not have been facing the situation of the threat of lost of culture today. The transformation in various aspects of human life has to be carried out with the full approval and willingness of the people. What can be done now is a proper contextual understanding of the Word of God. Christian mission cannot be reduced to winning individual souls alone. It must cover life in all its aspects: spiritual and physical, personal and social, economic and political.

---

<sup>512</sup> K. N. Panikkar, “Outsider as Enemy Politics of Rewriting History in India” *ICHR* 36/2 (December, 2002), 73

Although Christianity along with western education has brought about some unconstructive impact on the traditional practices, the contribution made through the introduction of written script, creation of indigenous literature, establishment of an extensive network of educational institutions, medical service, abolition of headhunting and superstitious beliefs etc was highly significant for the development of societies. The message of freedom in Jesus Christ will be remembered in the history of Zeliangrong people.

## CONCLUSION

The rich contributions of the Christian mission, especially in the areas of modern education, literature, health care, hygiene and social upliftment has been widely acknowledged not only within the Church, but even by the secular society and the state. The commitment, courage, sacrifices and love shown by the pioneer American Baptist Missionaries and early local converts in the Naga Hills was remarkable. The indigenous people particularly the Christians even today speak well of the American Baptist missionaries and local evangelists who first introduced to them the Gospel. Both British administration and Christian mission were responsible for eradication of ancient practices such as headhunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery etc. Moreover, the Missionaries<sup>513</sup> and the British administration<sup>514</sup> must be appreciated for their efforts to give the foundation of institutional education in the Naga Hills.

Today, education has brought tremendous changes in the Zeliangrong society. The schools and colleges have produced hundreds of Zeliangrong graduates and post-graduates who are shouldering the responsibility in different fields. Education has produced a number of administrators, engineers, doctors, scholars, theologians, businessman, politicians, social workers etc. One prominent figure to be mentioned is TR (Taditui Rangkau) Zeliang who was sworn in as the 16<sup>th</sup> Chief Minister of Nagaland on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2014. Education has also been able to create a group of intelligentsia among the Zeliangrong people who are able to motivate their people towards achievement of justice, peace, and development.

One should not forget the situation when the missionaries entered the Naga Hills and so among the Zeliangrongs; they came when the basic system of belief was the extreme attachment to superstitious. Their risks and sacrifices are highly appreciated by the people even today. Therefore, one cannot deny the rich contribution of the missionaries and early indigenous evangelists, however at the cost of gradual decline

---

<sup>513</sup> The Missionaries' thought that education would make the people able to read the Bible and that would help evangelism. Moreover, they needed some native evangelist to preach and teach in their own language.

<sup>514</sup> The British government needed educated Nagas who could assist the government in running the offices at least at the lowest level as clerks.

in creative tribal arts and crafts, and disappearance of social norms. When the local people accepted the new religion (Christianity), the new converts have been persuaded to abandon many traditional aspects such as morung system, feast of merit, folksongs and folktales, festivals, dresses, ornaments, etc. In the words of Visier Sanyu, the mistakes they (missionaries) made were due to a lack of distinction between religion and culture that there was a wholesale condemnation on their part of anything indigenous.<sup>515</sup>

In spite of all their good works and sacrifices, the early Christian mission failed to understand and appreciate the cultural ethos of the tribal people. They regarded the tribal culture as a non-entity or uncivilized or uncultured or barbarous. Such negative attitude towards the tribal histories and ways of life has had far reaching psychological consequences for tribal people which manifests in feelings of inferiority and self debasement. Some of the practices like headhunting, tribal warfare, inter-tribal feuds and slavery etc had to be stopped. But missionaries in their zeal to reform declared all the traditional customs to be evil.

One major criticism voiced today, is the way in which the missionaries imposed western culture as an integral part of the Christian faith, grossly undermining the cultures of the non-western societies. The general approach of the missionary movement was to lead people to renounce their respective traditional practices and to become Christian. The western missionaries brought the gospel along with their culture without considering the cultural values of the indigenous people. They neither understood the people's culture nor did try to understand the culture. The people were thus given the impression that their traditional ways and values of life were inferior to the new culture that was being introduced in the form of religion. And in this process many good values and practices of the people were simply done with. When morung system, feast of merit, festivals etc discontinued, it resulted in the fall of various traditional practices. Particularly, with the fall of the morung system, the rich cultural heritage of the Zeliangrongs such as folktales, folksongs, wood-carvings, dignity of labor, integrity, and social ethos of the people etc started to disappear. They did not

---

<sup>515</sup> Visier Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village*, New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 2003) 126

recognize the benefits provided by the morung system. The missionaries thought that the religious faith, culture and civilization of the Zeliangrongs were worthless. Therefore, it can be said that Christian mission gave the Zeliangrongs a new faith, a new life and a new civilization related to the western society, however at the cost of their cultural values and social norms.

In response to western missionary methods, the researcher is of the opinion that to believe and accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior, one need not require renouncing their cultural values unless they are contrary to the Gospel. Christ came to fulfill, not to destroy; to enrich not to impoverish. The Church must take deep roots in the cultural and spiritual soil of its locale, and assimilate all positive values. Believers are to become one with other communities (people of other faith) by respecting their positive religious, cultural and social values and customs. Following this directive, the Churches are to seek to ‘incarnate’ Christ in local cultures. It is certainly every believer’s responsibility of helping the common people and also those of other faiths to know Jesus Christ and become His disciples and to discern which practices are contrary to the teachings of the Gospel. To emphasize the importance of the Bible in the construction of African theology, John S. Mbiti said:

*“Nothing can substitute for the Bible. However, much African cultural-religious background may be close to the biblical world, we have to guard against references like “the hitherto unwritten African Old Testament” or sentiments that see final revelation of God in the African religious heritage”.*<sup>516</sup>

Similar to the African context,<sup>517</sup> most of the outsiders described the Zeliangrong people as uncultured and worshipper of demons etc. However, this may not be the proper way to describe the Zeliangrongs. They were critical with the ‘bad’ in others and overlook the ‘good’ in them. When one approaches a particular society (its culture), the basic theological question should not be whether this culture is good in

---

<sup>516</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1979), 90

<sup>517</sup> Missionaries enforced on Christian converts, a complete break from their traditional beliefs and cultures. For example, missionaries enforced the burning of medicine and charms. That’s the reason why majority of the African Christians, still view Christianity as the “white man’s religion” that brought new teachings and a new way of life and attempted to deliberately destroy the people’s culture.

itself, but what does it do with that particular people who live in it. Moreover, in dealing with other religious context, one has not only to focus on the beliefs and practices or institutions, but also to pay attention to the complex whole of life in which religion plays a critical and dynamic role. There may be elements of primal religious ideas present in the tribal religious practices and rituals but they have a concept of Supreme Being or High God who is also a creator, sustainer of living being on earth, the judge and at the same time loving and merciful.

Successive missionaries underestimated the tribal culture and required a complete abandonment of tribal culture and practices.<sup>518</sup> Attempts were not made to interpret the culture of the indigenous people. Then how is one to interpret the biblical message in the tribal societies today? A statement of an Asian theologian C. Michael Hawn rings true even in the indigenous people's context of the Zeliangrongs:

*“The Gospel is like a seed and you have to sow it. When you sow the seed of the gospel in Palestine, a plant that can be called Palestine Christianity grows. When you sow it in Rome, a plant of Roman Christianity grows. You sow the seed in Great Britain and you get Britain Christianity.... now when missionaries came to our lands they brought not only the seed of the gospel but their own plant of Christianity, flower pot included. So what we have to do is to break the flower pot, take out the seed of the gospel, sow it in our own cultural soil. And let our version of Christianity grow”.*<sup>519</sup>

---

<sup>518</sup> Religion is a way of life to the tribals. There is no sharp dividing line between religion and culture. Therefore, it is unthinkable to completely part with their beliefs and practices or completely replaced. They considered traditional religio-culture as their heritage. It is believed to be maintained by God and influenced by ancestors, and is being practiced in their homelands. No doubt there are certain beliefs and practices which need to be stop, but the complete renunciation of their God-given heritage in favor of foreign culture, as missionaries attempted, seems not appropriate, and is tantamount to losing their entire heritage and identity. As such, tribal Christian theologians and scholars, who are taking seriously to their indigenous heritage, are attempting to formulate their own theological expression rather than to borrow it from other cultures. These theologians argue that the traditional western theology does not adequately reincarnate the Word of God in the tribal context. However, the Bible must be the basis for determining the validity of any Christian claiming to be tribal.

<sup>519</sup> Quoted in Ron O'Grady, "Indigenization and Asian Culture", in *History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia* Vol. II. Ninan Koshy ed. (Hong Kong: World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific Region, YMCAs, CCA, 2004), 373

The interpreters of the Word of God must understand the socio-cultural and religious life of people and then only can they relevantly communicate the Gospel message. St. Paul's missionary method is one great example where he was quite positive to the customs of the people he went to win for Christ. He was willing to adapt his actions in any given socio-cultural situation in the interest of the gospel. Paul did not ask the Christian Jews to give up *Torah* observance and at the same time he did not encourage imposition of the *Torah* upon another culture as his stance against imposition of circumcision is revealed. He emphasizes on new creation and not legalism that imposes one's culture upon the other. He is certain that customs and practices relevant to a particular context can't be necessarily applied to another context in the same way.

It is noteworthy that Paul accommodates his living style so as to fit with the context in which he finds himself in. This accommodative method, however, doesn't hold back his theological and ethical principles. He had what he had to convey but when comes to the sensitivity of a cultural pattern of a given context, he accommodates himself within it. It can be argued that it is in adapting himself (Paul) to other cultures and accommodating the good values or customs of a particular given culture that made a successful missionary. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23<sup>520</sup> talks of Paul's commendable missionary stance. Adhered to this method, many of the tribal cultures might not have been put into a state of cultural disintegration like the indigenous people. The people of God live within particular cultural contexts and have a dual responsibility in carrying out their participation in God's redemptive work in the world. First, they must try to understand God's self-communication that is mediated through the Bible. Second, God's people must communicate the truthful reality of God's message to persons living within particular cultural contexts. This task makes it imperative that God's people understand the culture within which they live and minister. This is a

---

<sup>520</sup> "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel that I may share in its blessings". 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23 (NIV)

critical need to the present time for the churches to do so, gaining a careful reading of the culture in which we are located and by which our world is shaped.

One of the characteristics of the modern period is the vigorous awakening among the subaltern sections. Inspired by creative thinkers, scholars and theologians and of their own experiences, serious (few) people are now seen to be asserting themselves as subjects and agents of their own deliverance. A positive ray is that some still continue to cherish and long for the age old traditions in the midst of changing life styles in the modern turn. There are some educated people who are now conscious of their rich traditional values, seeking for unity among the people, and claiming that people's contributions were neglected in the making of the history. The emergence of new consciousness for identity and preservation of culture within the communities becomes essential which need to be taken into consideration while writing history; to re-read and re-write history from people's perspective. By rewriting the history of the Zeliangrongs from people's perspective, it will be possible to bring back certain valuable past glorious into the present. To achieve the goal of reclaiming the rich cultural values and to strive for Zeliangrong identity, all members of the tribe should forget their petty problems and personal grudges and start working whole heartedly for the unity and integrity of the tribe.

A cooperative research study consisting of a team of researchers should undertake this task apart from those individual academic researches. The theologians and historians as a facilitator can work with others like the social scientists, social activists, youths and tribal leaders in the task of combining their tradition and modernity. Moreover, the theological form, that is, forms of expressing tribal theology, should not simply be discussion, seminar, lecture, written articulation but should be expressed in arts, singing, dancing and lifestyle. The researcher strongly felt the need to organize "Zeliangrong Naga Festival-cum-Seminar" that the value and beauty of the society could be exhibited to the people. By organizing such cultural festivals, the people can protect the cultural values and also to endeavor to conserve their cultural identity. The highlights of the festival can include: (a) Exhibition of traditional handicrafts, shawls and instruments. (2). Cultural programs to include songs, dances, games and food

restaurants. (3). Paper presentations and publication of souvenirs base on Zeliangrong traditional values.

Like any of the Naga tribes, in the traditional Zeliangrong community, folk songs were regarded as more authentic and authoritative medium than verbal communications, because it preserved and transmitted their culture, the good and bad memories and events of the past experiences. The beautiful folksongs reveal the historical background of the tribe. The art and practice of story-telling where elderly people narrates the great deeds of the past. All those available resources need to be retained as it is an essential part of the education of the young, for it is in this way that they are introduced to the values and traditions of their cultures. Stories, songs and all the positive values that parallel the gospel message can be reinterpreted relevant to daily life.

Regardless of the colonial ideology deep-rooted in historiography in outsider's writings, their documents and official records laid the foundations of historiography, an opportunity for Zeliangrong historians and scholars to obtain entry in profession and into academic research. However, if a historian and scholar do not assess the sources before using them and does not become aware of the bias of the sources, then the resultant work will be far cry from the depiction of a historical reality. The uncritical use of official records would also lead to mere documentation of the available records of the period; it would not reflect the historical evolution of a people. To present this historical picture, all official records have to be used with due caution and have always to be used in collaboration with various other available sources of the time, so that the historical perspective is not lost. Similarly, the mission sources and earlier records have to be used with care. Such sources when critically reviewed from the native's eye can help to identify how it contributed to the general impressions and the milieu of ideas that have informed western knowledge and constructions of the people's history. It is here a re-reading of the so called history of the past becomes inevitable.

Philosophies of any race/tribe/community are derived from their legends, myths and stories. In the same way, the values of the Zeliangrong people, their moral and ethical

codes are derived from their legends, traditions, festivals and rituals etc. Unfortunately, many of their traditions, customs and practices are at the verge of disappearance. However, the Zeliangrong people can still call for restoration as they still have some available sources which are retained in the deep memory of the aged people, their language, certain cultural values etc. Some of the elderly people have an effective medium of communication and records that that has been preserved for centuries through the oral tradition. Any oral narrative of traditional history, origin and migration, formation of the village, festivals, and ways of life which includes their religion, socio-cultural and political life are transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another through songs, stories, sayings etc. Oral history has now become an important means in which ordinary common can actively engage in making their history. Importantly serves as an alternative to elitist form of historical writings. In other words, to write history from below; people's perspective. In this, the marginalized folk find space in the historical construction. Therefore, the younger generation of today particularly the research scholars should study and record down all the available folksongs,<sup>521</sup> folktales<sup>522</sup> and indigenous peoples' values from the elderly people who have a vast knowledge of their people.

One essential method of historical research is to take seriously the memories and experiences of the people. When the traditional resources are incorporated with the people of contemporary experience, it becomes possible to construct a better society. It is important to realize that Gospel and culture (positive traditional values) are never contradictory but that culture forms the substratum for the Gospel and the latter is the soul of culture. It is important to accept and integrate all the positive elements of the tribal cultures into Christian theology and belief system. As stated earlier, a proper

---

<sup>521</sup> Folk songs reveal the historical background of the tribe, the community, the village, the clan and certain successful individuals. Folk music is also called music of the heart because it communicates especially about the land, people, life, inner feelings and experiences, and about various events in the society. The simple catchy folk-tunes, conveying the feelings and sentiments of their ancestors, their lives and thoughts, their activities and achievements, their morals and discipline, are of great value. The songs were composed in a particular context with a definite purpose and meaning, which were intended to communicate to the people.

<sup>522</sup> Folklore includes not merely stories or myths of creation, origin and migration but also of heroes and ancestors. Folklore also includes knowledge about nature, flora and fauna, practices of food gathering and agriculture, treatment of diseases and ailments etc. There are folktales which tell about the deed of men and women, ill behavior of the stepmother, stories offering morals and ethical values etc.

method needs to be adopted in the process of writing and interpreting the people's history to distinguish between good and bad cultural elements. One should be careful to guard against the dangerous tendency to assimilate unacceptable elements into the Christian faith because such interference may distort the gospel truth. The teachings of scripture cannot be compromised. The gospel must be rooted in the culture of any given community so that faith expression in the risen Lord will become more meaningful to everyone.

To reconstruct a better Zeliangrong society, the task is twofold: to address both the social order and cultural order for the two systems are interlocked. Thus it needs teaching and action. All systems are not evil and at the same time all systems are not good. The greatest danger is when people accept the social organization and culture without being aware of it and thereby become its captive. All human systems need to be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His kingdom. The people of God must first experience transformation in oneself, society and their Church. Then they must act as salt in the land, interpreting the good values but discouraging the systems when they oppose the Kingdom values.

## Bibliography

### Books:

- Anderson, Gerald H. *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998
- Alemchiba, M. *The Arts and Crafts of Nagaland*, Kohima: Naga Institute of Culture, 1968
- ..... *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, Kohima: Naga Institute of Culture, 1968
- Ao, A. Lanu. ed. *Naga Cultural Attires and Musical Instruments*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1999
- Ao, Bendangyabang. *History of Christianity in Nagaland: A Source Material*, Mokokchung: Shalom Ministry Publications, 1998
- ..... *History of Christianity in Nagaland: Social Change, 1872-1972*, Bangalore: Shalom Ministry Publications, 2004
- Ao, N. Toshi. *125 Years of Molungkimong Baptist Church: The First Church in Nagaland 1872-1997*, Molungkimong: Molungkimong Baptist Church, 1997
- Barpujari, S.K. *The American Missionaries and North-East India: A Documentary Study 1836-1990*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1986
- Benjongkumba. ed. *Naga Society: Culture, Education and Emerging Trends*, Dimapur: Heritage Publishing House, 2014
- Brill, Eerdmans. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol. 1*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1999
- Cairns, Earle E. *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. Triuvalla: Suvarth Bhavan, 2010

- Cannon, William R. *History of Christianity in the Middle Ages: From the Fall of Constantinople*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960
- Chasie, Charles. *The Naga Imbroglia: A Personal Perspective*, Kohima: Standard Printers and Publishers, 1999
- Clark, Mary Maid. *A Corner in India*, Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907
- Chaudhuri, Nirad C. *Autobiography of An Unknown Indian*, Delhi: Jaico Publishing House, 2003
- Dena, Lal. *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in North East India with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988
- Dharmaraj, Jacob S. *Colonialism and Christian Mission: Postcolonial Reflections*, Delhi ISPCK, 1993
- Douglas, J.D. *New 20<sup>th</sup> Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991
- Downs, Frederick S. *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1983
- ..... *History of Christianity in India: North East India in the Nineteenth Centuries, Vol. V, Part 5*, Bangalore: CHAI, 2003
- ..... *Essays on Christianity in North East India*, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994
- ..... *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of the Baptist Churches in the North East India: The Mission Period 1836-1950*, Guuhati; Christian Literature Centre, 1971

- Elwin, Verrier. *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969
- ..... *Nagaland*, Shillong : Dutta for the Research Department, 1961
- ..... *The Aborigines*, Bombay: Oxford Pamphlets of Indian Affairs, 1994
- Furer-Haimendorf, C. V. *The Naked Nagas*, London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1939
- Ghosh, B. B. *History of Nagaland*, New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, 1982
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1, New York: Harpers San Francisco, 1984
- Hallett Carr, Edward. *What is History?*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962
- Horam, M. *North East India: A Profile*, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1990
- ..... *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas*, Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1988
- ..... *Naga Polity*, Delhi: B.R Publications, 1975
- Hough, James. *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1839
- Hussain, Majid. *Nagaland*, Delhi: Rima Publishing House, 1988
- Hutton, J. H. *The Sema Nagas*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968
- Imsong, Mar. *God-Land-People: An Ethnic Naga Identity*, Dimapur: Heritage Publishing House, 2011
- Imchen, Narola. *Remembering Our Foremothers*, ETC: Women Study Department, 2003
- ..... *Women in the History of Christianity*, ETC: Tribal Development and Communication Center, 2014

- Jmaes, Woba. *Major Issues in the History of Christianity in India: A Post Colonial Reading*, Jorhat: TDCC Publications, 2013
- Jamir, Imsutoshi. & C. Alitemjen (ed). *Communication and Naga Culture*, Dimapur: Tribal Development and Communication Center, 2008
- Jha, D. N. *Ancient India: An Introductory Outline*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1995
- Kamei, Gangmumei. *A History of the Zeliangrong Nagas: From Makhel to Rani Gaidinliu*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 2004
- ..... *The Zeliangrong Religion: Its Theology and Philosophy, Some Observations*, Imphal: Manipur University, 1992
- ..... *Ethnicity and Social Change: An Anthology of Essays*, Imphal: Pouganglu Gangmei, 2002
- Kaye, John. *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative*, London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1859
- Keitzar, Renthly. *In Search of Relevant Gospel Message*, Guwahati: CLC, 1995
- Lanusosang, T. *A Story of Social Geography*, Kohima: Directorate of School Education, Nagaland, 1989
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The Thousand Year of Uncertainty*, Vol. 2, New York & London: Harpers & Brothers, 1938
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New York: Crossroad, 1985
- Linyu, Keviyekielie. *Christian Movements in Nagaland*, Kohima: Author, 2004
- Longchar, A. Wati. *An Emerging Asian Theology- Tribal Theology: Issues, Nature and Methods*, Jorhat: TSC, 2000

- ..... *The Tribal Religious Traditions in North East India: An Introduction*,  
Jorhat: Author, 2000
- ..... *The Traditional Worldview and Modernity: Focus on North East  
India*, Jorhat: Jorhat: N. Limala Lkr, 1995
- Lonchar, A. Wati (ed). *Encounter Between Gospel and Tribal Culture*, Jorhat: Tribal  
Study Center, 1999
- ..... & Larry E. D (ed). *Doing Theology with Tribal Resources*, Jorhat: Tribal  
Studies Center, 1999
- Longkumar, Akumla. *Revival in Nagaland: Fact or Fallacy?* Mokokchung: Author,  
1986
- Mabry, Hunter P. *A Manual for Researchers and Writers*, Bangalore: BTESSC, 2009
- MacHaffie, Barbara J. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, Philadelphia:  
Fortress Press, 1986
- Makuga, G. *Introduction to the Rongmei Nagas*, Imphal: Mr. & Mrs. Makuga, 1994
- ..... *The Rongmei Customary Laws: A Collection of Ancient Rongmei  
Traditional and Social usages, custom and culture*, Dimapur: Jinkulu, 2007
- Moreau, A. Scott. *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Grand Rapids: Baker  
Books, 2000
- Mundadan, A. Mathias. *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for  
Autonomy*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2003
- Namthiurei, M. P. *The Great Awakening*, Tamenglong: Zeliangrong Christian  
Association, 1972
- Majumdar, R. C. *Ancient India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2013

- Norton, Peter B. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol.1*, Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1950
- Nshoga, A. *Traditional Naga Village and its Transformation*, Delhi: Anshah Publishing House, 2009
- Nuh, V.K. *A Theological Reflection on Naga Society*, Kohima: Council of Naga Baptist Churches, 1996
- ..... *Struggle for Identity in North-East India: A Theological Response*, New Delhi: Spectrum Publications, 2001
- Pamei, Namthiubuiyang. *The Trail from Makuilongdi: The Continuing Saga of the Zeliangrong People*, Tamenlong: Girona Charitable Foundation, 2001
- Pamei, Ramkhun. *The Zeliangrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity*, New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1996
- Perumalil, H. C. & H. R. *Christianity in India: A History in Ecumenical Perspective*, Alleppey: Prakasam Publications, 1972
- Philip, P.T. *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*, Guwahati: Christian Literature Center, 1976
- Puthenpurakal, Joseph. *Baptist Mission in Nagaland: A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*, Calcutta: KLM Private Limited, 1984
- Ramunny, Murkot. *The World of Nagas*, New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, Revised and enlarged 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1993
- Richter, Julius. *A History of Missions in India*, translated by Sydney H. Moore, London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1908
- Roa, O. M. *The Call to Ministry and Theological Training in India*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2002
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978

- Sangma, Milton S. *History of American Baptist Mission in North East India 1836-1950*, vol.1, Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987
- ..... *History of American Baptist Mission in North East India*, vol. 11, Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1992
- Sanyu, Visier. *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation*, Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1999
- Seamands, John T. *Tell It Well: Communicating the Gospel Across Cultures*, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1981
- Sema, Hokishe. *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the Future*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1986
- Sema, Pekito. *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland 1881-1947*, New Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1992
- Sharma, Manorama. *History and History Writing in North East India*, New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2006
- Sherring, M.A. *The History of Protestant Missions in India from the Commencement in 1706 to 1871*, London: Trubner and Co. 1875
- Sheik Ali, B. *History: Its Theory and Method*, New Delhi: MacMillan India Limited, 2004
- Shimray, R.R. *The Origin and Culture of Nagas*, New Delhi: M. Pamleiphy Shimray, 1985
- Sreedharan, E. *A Text Book of Historiography: 500 BC to AD 2000*, Delhi: Orient: Black Swan, 2009
- Sugirthrajah, R. S. *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology*, St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003

- Thapar, Romila. *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*. New Delhi: Orient Blackwan Private Limited, 2010
- ..... *Interpreting Early India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993,
- ..... *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, Haryana: Penguin Books, 2003
- Thanzauva, K. *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making*, Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997
- Thomas, V. V. *Understanding Subaltern History: Theoretical Tools*, Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2006
- ..... *Dalit and Tribal Christians of India: Issues and Challenges*, Kerala: Focus India Trust, 2014
- Thomas M. M. (ed). *Tribal Awakening*, Bangalore: CISRS, 1983
- ..... *The Nagas Towards AD. 2000*, Madras: Center for Research on International Economics Order, 1992
- Thong, Joseph S. *Head Hunters Culture: Historic Culture of Nagas*, Tseminyu: Khinyi Woch, 1997
- Torbet, Robert G. *A History of the Baptists*, Philadelphia: The Jordan Press, 1950
- Tungoe, Merithung. *Administrators Missionaries and A World Turned Upside Down*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000
- Takatemjen (ed). *Challenges of Land Development in Nagaland: Selected Papers, Essays and Columns*, Mokokchung: Clark Center for Peace Research and Action, 2015
- Vaiphei, Th. Lamboi. *Advent of Christian Mission and Its Impact on the Hill-Tribes of Manipur*, Imphal: Author, 1997,

- Venuh, Neivetso. *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005
- Walling, C. Walu. *All is Light! All is Light!: Source Materials of the History of Christianity*, Impur: ATKAR for ABAM, 2001
- Walker, Williston. *A History of the Christian Church*, New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1959
- Webster, John C. B. *An Introduction to History*, New Delhi: MacMillan India Limited, 1981
- Vashum, Yangkahao, Peter. H and Melvil. P (eds). *Search for a New Society: Tribal Theology for North East India*, Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Center, 2012
- Yonuo, Asoso. *Naga Struggle Against the British Rule under Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu: 1925-1947*, Kohima: Joseph Jasokie, 1982
- ..... *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study*, Delhi: Vivek Publishing House, 1974
- Young, Robert J.C. *Post colonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003
- Young, Robert J. C. *Post-Colonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003
- Zeliang, Elungkiebe. *Charismatic Movements in the Baptist Churches in North East India: A Zeliangrong Perspective*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2004

**Articles/Journals:**

- Ayrookuzhiel, A. M. A. "Dalits' Challenges to Religious System: A People Ignored by Church History", *Indian Church History Review* 23/2, December, 1989

- Barpujari, S.K. "Early Christian Missions in the Naga Hills: An Assessment of their Activities", *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. XLVIII, Part II, August, 1970
- Clark, E. W. "Beginnings of Naga Mission in Assam", *Assam Baptist Missionary Conference of the ABFMS Report of the Twelfth Biennial Session held at Guwahati, January 4-13, 1913*
- David, S. Immanuel. "History of Christianity in India: Changing Perspectives", *Indian Church History Review* 30/1, June 1986
- Downs, Frederick S. "Historiographical issues in the Study of Christianity in North East India" *Essays on Christianity in North East India*, edited by Milton S. Sangma and David R. Syiemlieh, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1994
- Guha, Ranajit. "Preface", in *Subaltern Studies 1: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982
- Guha, Ranajit. "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", in *Subaltern Studies 1: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982
- Jamir, L. Imsutoshi. "Developing Tribal Face in Tribal Cultural Studies: Few Footnotes," *The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia*, vol. 6, edited by A. Wati Longchar, 2007
- Karotemprel, Sebastian. "The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North East India" in *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1996
- Keitzar, Renthly. "A Relevant Theology" in *The Baptist Leader*, Volume. XXI, July-August, 1992, 23
- Keitzar, Renthly. "A Study of the North-East Indian Tribal Christian Theology", in *Society and Culture in North East India: A Christian Perspective*, edited by Saral K. Chatterji, Delhi: ISPCK, 1996

- Lanunungsang, A. "A Comparative Study of the British Government and American Missionaries over the Nagas: A Quick Overview," *Journal of Tribal Studies*, vol. 9, 2005
- Lasetso, Razouselie. "Pauline Perception of Religion and Culture as Revealed in I Corinthians 9:19-23 and its Significance for Constructing a Viable Tribal Christian Theology" in *Garnering Tribal Resources for doing Tribal Christian Theology*, Tribal Study Series No. 16, Jorhat: ETC Programme Coordination, 2008
- ..... "The Word of God and the Tribal Response", in *Dalit-Tribal Theological Interface: Current Trends in Subaltern Theologies*, edited by James Massey and Shimreingam Shimray, New Delhi: CDS and Jorhat: TSC/WSC, 2007
- Lasetso, Razouselie and Yankahao Vashum (eds). *Tribal Christian Theology: Methods and Sources for Constructing a Relevant Theology for the Indigenous People of North East*, Tribal Study Series No. 15, Jorhat: ETC Programme Coordination, 2007
- Massey, James. "History and Dalit Theology" in *Frontiers of Theology*, edited by V. Devasahayam, Gurukul: ISPCK, 1997
- ..... "Christian Dalits in India: An Analysis", in *Religion and Science* 37/3, September, 1990
- ..... "Revisiting and Resignifying the Methodology of Dalit Theology" in *Revisiting and Resignifying Methodology for Dalit Theology*, edited by James Massey and Indukur John Mohan Razu, New Delhi: CDS, Bangalore: UTC, 2008
- ..... & Samson P. "Preface" in *Frontiers in Dalit Hermeneutics*, edited by James Massey and Samson Prabhakar, Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI & Delhi: CDSS, 2005

- Minz, Nirmal. "Mission in the Context of Diversity- Mission in Tribal Context" in *Religion and Society* 36/1, March, 1989
- Nirmal, Arvind P. "Seminar Statement" in *Towards a Common Dalit Ideology*, edited by Arvind P. Nirmal, Madras: GLTCRC, 1989
- Nizami, K. A. "Bias in Indian Historiography" *Manthan*, 2, No. 1, 1979
- Oommen, George. "A Commentary on Subaltern Studies Collective: Methodological Implications for Theological research" in *Interweaving Methodology and Praxis-Exploring Disciplinary Options in Today's World*, Edited by Indukuri John Mohan Raju, Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2007
- Philip, T. V. "Christianity in India during Western Colonialism: Conflict, Reconciliation and Adjustment," *Indian Church Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, 1987
- Prabhakar, M. E. "The Search for a Dalit Theology", in *Towards a Dalit Theology*, edited by M. E. Prabhakar, Delhi: CISRS/ISPCK, 1988
- Saha, N. "Ethnographic Study of the Zeliangrong Tribes of North East India", in *The Tribal of North East India*, edited by Sebastian Karotemprel, Shillong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1984
- Said, Edward. "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community" in *The Politics of Interpretation*, edited by W. J. T. Mitchell, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983
- Samuel, Thomas. "Our Response to Ecological Crisis" in *A Christian Response to Ecological Crisis*, edited by Thomas Samuel and Mathew Koshy Punnakadu, Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 2009
- Shishak, Tuisem A. "Nagas and Education", in *Nagas at Work*, edited by R. Vashum & Friends, New Delhi: Naga Students' Union Delhi, 1996

- Sigh, Ivy. "Feminism: Various Approaches and its Values," in *Indian Journal of Theology* 37/1, 1995
- Singh, Upinder. "Changing Interpretations of Early Indian History," *The Hindu*, 30 June 2008
- Snaitang, O. L. "Theologizing in Khasi-Jaintia Context", in *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, edited by J. Puthenpurakal, Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publication, 1996
- Sword, Victor H. *Baptists in Assam: A Century of Missionary Service 1836-1936*, Chicago: Conference Press, 1935
- Terhuza, Zhabu. "Angami Baptist Council of Churches" in *From Darkness to Light: In Commemoration of 125 years of Christianity in Nagaland*, Edited by Alongla P. Aier, Kohima: NBCC, 1997
- Terhuja. *The Christian Church among the Angami Nagas in Tribal Situation in India, Vol. 13*, edited by K. S. Sign, 1972
- Thanzauva, K. "Methodological Issues: Subaltern Perspectives" in *Methodological Issues in Theological Research: An Exploration, Volume-2*, edited by H. Vanlalauva, Serampore: Department of Research/SATHRI, 2014
- Thapar, Romila. "Looking Back in History" in *Indian Women*, edited by Devaki Jain, New Delhi, 1975
- Thomas Samuel, "Our Response to Ecological Crisis" in *A Christian Response to Ecological Crisis*, edited by Thomas Samuel and Mathew Koshy Punnakadu, Tiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 2009
- Tiwari, Ravi. "Inaugural Address" in *Dalit-Tribal Theological Interface: Current Trends in Subaltern Theologies*, edited by James Massey and Shimreingam Shimray, Jorhat: TSC/WSC & New Delhi: CDS, 2007
- Vashum, Yangkahao. "Naming the Native: Colonialism, Missionaries, Theologies and Indigenous" in *Garnering Tribal Resources for Doing Tribal Christian*

*Theology*, Tribal Studies Series No.1, Edited by Razouselie Lasetso, Jorhat: ETC Programme Cordination, 2008

Wilfred, Felix. "Historiography of Indian Christianity: Some Reflections", *Vidyayoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol. 73, October 2009

### **Magazines & Souvenirs**

*A Brief Account of Zeliangrong Nagas*, Dimapur: All Zeliangrong Students' Union, 2009

*A Brief History of the Rongmei Baptist Association (1988-1998): God's Great Faithfulness*, Dimapur: RBA Nagaland, 1998

*A Glimpse of the Zeliangrongs: In Commemoration of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the Naga Students' Federation, Hallong 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> April 2001*, Souvenir, Haflong: Souvenir Committee, All Zeliangrong Students' Union, 2001

*Benreu Baptist Church Centenary (1997) Souvenir*, Benreu: Souvenir Committee, BBC Nagaland, 1997

*Guangphungning (Oklong) Baptist Church Platinum Jubilee (1938-2013) Souvenir*, Guangphungning: Souvenir Committee, GBC Manipur, 2013

*Liangmai Baptist Aruang, Silver Jubilee 1984-2009 Souvenir*, Tening: Souvenir Committee, LBA Nagaland, 2009

*Makuilongdi Zeme Baptist Church Silver Jubilee, (1984-2009) Souvenir*, Makuilongdi: Souvenir Committee, MZBC Manipur, 2009

*Rongmei Baptist Church Kohima Silver Jubilee 1970-1995, Souvenir* Kohima: RBC, Kohima, 1995

*Tening Village Baptist Church Platinum Jubilee 1925-2000, Souvenir*, Tening: Souvenir Committee, TBC Nagaland, 2000

*Zeliangrong Students' Union Manipur Diamond Jubilee (1949-2009) Cum 20<sup>th</sup>  
General Conference of All Zeliangrong Students' Union 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> March 2010,  
Senapati: Souvenir Committee, AZSU, 2010*

## APPENDIX

### **PIONEER AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES IN KOHIMA MISSION FIELD (1880-1954)<sup>523</sup>**

Charles DeWitt King and Mrs. King	1880-1886
Sidney White Rivenburg and Mrs. Rivenburg	1887-1923
Hary Bryan Dickson and Mrs. Dickson	1906-1908
Miss Narola Rivenburg	1908-1910
Joseph Eric Tanquist and Mrs. Tanquist	1913-1947
George Washington Supplee and Mrs. Supplee	1922-1949
Banget Ivar Anderson and Mrs. Anderson	1929-1933
Howard Houston and Mrs. Houston	1950-
Robert Fletcher Delano and Mrs. Delano	1951-1954

---

<sup>523</sup> The list of missionaries in Kohima Mission Field is taken from three sources:

- Philip Thomas Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland*
- Bendangyabang Ao, *History of Christianity in Nagaland*
- Joseph Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*

## **APPENDIX**

### **PIONEER AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES WHO TOURED (OCCASSIONLLY) ZELIANGRONG AREAS IN NAGALAND<sup>524</sup>**

Rev. Sidney White Rivenburg (Stationed at Kohima Mission Field 1887-19230)

Rev. Hary Bryan Dickson (Stationed at Kohima Mission Field 1906-1908)

Mr. George William Supplee (Stationed at Kohima Mission Field 1922-1949)

Rev. Selander

Rev. Joseph Eric Tanquist (Stationed at Kohima Mission Center 1913-1947)

---

<sup>524</sup> The list of Pioneer American Baptist Missionaries who toured among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland is taken from *Benreu Baptist Church Centenary (1997) Souvenir*

## APPENDIX

### **PIONEER LOCAL EVANGELISTS WHO WORKED AMONG THE ZELIANGRONGS IN NAGALAND<sup>525</sup>**

Rev. Keniese

Rev. H.K. Lungalang

Mr. Irangchangbe

Rev. Lungzie

Mr. Iloiheing

Mr. Wisung

Mr. Hugangbo

Rev. Turi

Mr. Gadaubo

---

<sup>525</sup>The list of Pioneer local Evangelists who worked among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland is taken from two sources:

- *Benreu Baptist Church Centenary (1997) Souvenir*
- *Tening Village Baptist Church Platinum Jubilee (2000) Souvenir*

**APPENDIX**

**Samples of Questionnaires**

***“A Critical Appraisal of the Impact of Christian Mission on Zeliangrong Society”***

**Questionnaire:**

Name: .....

Age: .....

Sex: .....

Denomination: .....

Occupation: .....

**Suggestions:**

1. Please answer all the questions
  
2. Place a tick mark for the appropriate answers
  
3. More than one answer may be selected, if needed
  
4. Please reply/response as soon as possible

## **APPENDIX**

### **PART-ONE**

1. Why did you accept the Christian faith?

- a) To receive money (Better life)
- b) Force conversion
- c) Lost faith in former religion
- d) By hearing Biblical teaching
- e) By experiencing miracles
- f) Through Faith in Jesus Christ
- g) Other

2. What was the religious practice you followed before becoming a Christian?

- a) Ancestor worship
- b) Idol worship
- c) Other

3. How has Christian faith affected the people's status?

- a) It has brought total changes
- b) It has brought partial changes
- c) Only Christian's conditions have improved
- d) Non-Christians conditions also improved
- e) Other

## APPENDIX

4. How do the Christians maintain relationship with non-Christian neighbors?

- a) Separate themselves
- b) Maintain good relationship
- c) Other

5. What role did the Mission play in order to educate the illiterate and children?

- a) Parents are motivated to send their children to school
- b) Children are motivated to attend school
- c) Other

6. How did the education affect the society?

- a) It has brought total changes
- b) It has brought partial changes
- c) Only Christian's conditions have improved
- d) Non- Christian's conditions also improved
- e) Other

7. What are the reasons for the economic development?

- a) Education
- b) Stopped drinking alcohol
- c) Hard work
- d) The guidance of Ministers
- e) Other

8. How does the economic development of the Christian affect the society?

- a) Motivated others to develop
- b) Does not give any motivation
- c) Became more selfish
- d) Other

## APPENDIX

9. What cultural changes did mission work introduce for the new Christians?

- a) Totally removed old cultures
- b) Did not change old cultures
- c) Introduced partial changes
- d) Certain inhuman practices have been removed
- e) Other

10. In what way did the missionaries/evangelists introduce the changes in the culture?

- a) By force
- b) By condemning the tribal cultures/practices
- c) By helping the believers to decide on the basis of Biblical teaching
- d) Other

11. How did the people respond to such (culture/practice) changes?

- a) Whole heartedly accepted
- b) Hesitant to accept
- c) Superficially accepted
- d) Some follow both customs/practices
- e) Other

**APPENDIX**

**PART-TWO**

1. Who is known as the father of “Zeliangrongs”?

.....

2. Who is known as the father of “Zeme”?

.....

3. Who is known as the father of “Liangmai”?

.....

4. Who is known as the father of “Rongmai”?

.....

5. What is the meaning of “Zeme”?

.....

**APPENDIX**

6. What is the meaning of “Liangmai”?

.....  
.....

7. What is the meaning of “Rongmai”?

.....  
.....

8. What was the common language of the Zeliangrong people before Makuilongdi migration?

.....  
.....

9. What were the main causes of Makuilongdi migration?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

APPENDIX

10. Is “Oklong” the only existing village (today) after the Makuilong migration?

.....

11. Name the first person/first village to accept Christian faith among the Zeliangrongs in Manipur state. Which year?

.....

12. Name the first person/first village to accept Christian faith among the Zeliangrongs in Nagaland state. Which year?

.....

13. Name the first person/first village to accept Christian faith among the Zeliangrongs in Assam. Which year?

.....

14. Name some of the important factors for the growth of Christianity among the Zeliangrong people.

.....

.....

**APPENDIX**

15. Name some of the important factors why some of the Zeliangrong people are not accepting Christianity.

.....  
.....

16. Name some of the positive impacts of Mission activities among the Zeliangrong people.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

17. Name some of the negative impacts of Mission activities among the Zeliangrong people.

.....  
.....  
.....

18. Do we need to condemn all the forefathers' cultures, customs and practices?  
Yes or No. Why?

.....  
.....

**APPENDIX**

19. Do we need to reclaim/reinterpret some of the valuable forefather's cultures, customs and practices? If yes, name some of the important elements.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

20. Did Christianity uplift the status of woman in the Zeliangrong society?

Yes or No. How?

.....  
.....  
.....

21. Can we restore certain values and elements from Morung (Bachelor's dormitory) for the enrichment of Zeliangrong Christianity community today? If yes, how?

.....  
.....  
.....

**APPENDIX**

22. Do we need to preserve the media of Zeliangrong folk music and dance, folk tales and oral historical traditions? If yes, ho

.....  
.....  
.....

23. Is it necessary to reject all the traditional festivals, songs, dances, observances and ethics after accepting the new faith (Christianity)? Yes or No. Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

24. Do we need to introduce vernacular (Zeliangrong) language as an optional subject in the school curriculum?

.....  
.....

## APPENDIX

### **HIGHPOINTS OF THE RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **Methodology and Data Analysis**

The investigator gave out the questionnaires personally and also through the post. After completion, the questionnaires were collected back by the investigator. Few questionnaires were received by post, where personal meeting could not take place. Opinions and observations with regard to the need and means of traditional cultural values were the important dimensions of the questionnaires. The prime object of the questionnaire was mainly to learn about the past and the need for preservation of those traditional values by the new generations.

Questionnaires were developed to collect opinions, suggestions, concerns and observations from the following: (a). Theologians (b). Laypeople (c). Senior citizens. The study was confined to 50 theologians, 50 laypeople and 50 senior citizens.

Majority of theologians, 85% laypeople and 80% senior citizens supported the view to retain the positive traditional values. Majority of them supported the view that positive traditional values should be included in the education system (syllabus), while 20% of the respondents wanted that school should go ahead with modern education system. Majority of them indicated that the positive traditional values such as honesty and integrity, hospitality and generosity, respect and care for parents and elders etc are on the verge of erosion.

#### **1. Opinion of the Theologians**

(a). The respondents were asked the impact of Christian mission on Zeliangrong society and the response were:

- Education and literature (positive)
- Social Transformation (positive)
- Erosion of tradition values (negative)

(b). The respondents were asked to suggest certain positive traditional values that are worthy of reclaiming and the following were suggested:

- Communitarian spirit.

- Egalitarian values.
- Ecological concerns.

(c). The respondents were asked to suggest ways for restoration of certain tradition positive values and the following were suggested:

- Cultural Programs. To organise cultural programs like “Zeliangrong Naga Festival-cum-Seminar” that the value and beauty of the society could be exhibited to the people. By organizing such cultural festivals, the people can protect the cultural values and also to endeavor to conserve their cultural identity. The highlights of the festival can include: (a) Exhibition of traditional handicrafts, shawls and instruments. (2). Cultural programs to include songs, dances, games and food restaurants. (3). Paper presentations and publication of souvenirs base on Zeliangrong traditional values.
- To Rewrite the Zeliangrong History. To write Zeliangrong history from people’s perspective using its own resources like customs, rituals, legends, songs etc. These tools of reading and re-reading the historical text should be incorporated in reconstructing the Zeliangrong historiography.
- Importance of Indigenous music. To put to use the indigenous tunes and music in the praising and worshiping the Almighty God.

## **II. Opinion of the Laypeople**

(a). The respondents were asked the impact of Christian mission on Zeliangrong society and the response were:

- Building of tribal identity (positive)
- Transformation in religious life (positive)
- Communitarian life to individualism (negative)

(b). The respondents were asked to suggest certain positive traditional values that are worthy of reclaiming and the following were suggested:

- Traditional way of conflict resolution
- Arts and crafts
- Honesty and integrity

(c). The respondents were asked to suggest ways for restoration of certain tradition positive values and the following were suggested:

- To give importance to mother tongue. Loss of language and inability to communicate in one's mother tongue are one of the serious issues among the young people in this generation. Being away from home for a considerable period of time, absence of books and other materials in one's language, absence of serious and systematic efforts by the community to teach and study mother tongue hasten the process of language death. Presently there are only four tribes namely, Aos, Angamis, Sumis, and Lothas which have developed mother tongue subject in their own languages up to secondary stage of school. In the same way, Zeliangrong people also need to develop their literature and produce mother tongue text book. Important topics/issues like origin and migration of the tribe, socio-cultural, political, economic and religious life of the people can be included in the syllabus.
- Training the children. Seminars, workshops and symposia on traditional moral values must be organized in schools in order to facilitate student's direct participation in the discussion on Zeliangrong culture.
- The need of reading materials. Written documents and books on the Zeliangrongs and their culture must be available for students in well equipped libraries.

### **III. Opinion of the Senior Citizens**

(a). The respondents were asked the impact of Christian mission on Zeliangrong society and the response were:

- Replacement of the traditional ways of life (positive)
- Christianity and a new life style (positive)
- Loss of egalitarian values (negative)

(b). The respondents were asked to suggest certain positive traditional values that are worthy of reclaiming and the following were suggested:

- Respect and care for parents and elders
- Dignity of labor

- Honesty, hospitality and generosity

(b). The respondents were asked to suggest ways for restoration of certain tradition positive values and the following were suggested:

- To retain the art of storytelling. The art and practice of story-telling and retelling the story where elderly people narrates the great deeds of the past and the beautiful folksongs which reveals the historical background of the tribe need to be retained as it is an essential part of the education of the young, for it is in this way that they are introduced to the values and traditions of their cultures.
- To educate the children. Parents have an important responsibility to encourage their children to learn traditional folksongs, folktales, folkdances, arts and crafts etc.
- To retain the positive morung values. The principle of caring, sharing and equality found in the traditional morung should be adapted by the people of this generation. Educational institution in the traditional society was so great as they constituted the sole agencies of training and molding individual personality and social habits. The present society need such a forum for young people where proper moral education and tribal ethics be seriously considered in educational reform for the tribals. Moral education and formation of leadership for the Zeliangrong community is a categorical task.